

**Minutes of Full Council Meeting
held on Monday 11th March 2024 at 7.00pm**

Present: Cllr Brake, Cllr Campbell (Chair), Cllr Irven, Cllr Johnson, Cllr Murphy, Cllr Richards, Cllr Westcott, Cllr Whetlor

In Attendance: Jo Grellier - Town Clerk, Annie Robinson – Deputy Clerk, County Cllr Davies – Somerset Council, Georgie Grant – Director of WCCT and Onion Collective, and 1 member of the public

24/140 To receive Apologies for Absence (LGA 1972, section 85 (1) –
Cllr Campbell proposed that **'apologies given by Cllrs Moss and Terrett are accepted'**. Seconded by Cllr Westcott. Carried.

24/141 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	24/147 A	Members of FOSL & WLF	Personal	Cllrs remained in the meeting and took part in the discussion and voting.
Cllrs Irven & Murphy	24/145 & 24/151(i)	Directors of WCCT	Personal	Cllrs remained in the meeting and took part in the discussion and voting.
Cllrs Johnson, Murphy & Whetlor	24/143 – Clerks report	Members of the Market House Museum Committee	Personal	Cllrs remained in the meeting and took part in the discussion and voting.
Cllr Richards	24/151(i)	Member of Memorial Ground Committee	Personal	Cllrs remained in the meeting and took part in the discussion and voting.

24/142 Town Council Minutes - To confirm and sign the Minutes of the Full Council meeting held on the 12th February 2024 (LGA 1972, Sch 12 Para 41 (1) (*circulated prior to the meeting via Appendix 1*))
Cllr Campbell proposed that **'the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 12th February are a true and accurate record'**. Seconded by Cllr Westcott. Carried with 3 abstentions.

At this stage Cllr Campbell, as Chair, proposed that **'due to the attending WCCT Directors 'having a subsequent engagement item 24/145 - Reports from Representatives of Outside Organisations is moved up the agenda for discussion as the next item'**. Seconded by Cllr Richards. Carried.

24/145 Reports from Representatives of Outside Organizations, Verbal

- Cllr Murphy as the Council representative on 'Watchet Coastal Communities Team (WCCT)' reported that a recent email was sent to the Clerk inviting her, as Town Clerk, to become a member of the Understory network Mapping project to aid the creation of a connection map of organisations that support the community which can provide helpful information for members and can also aid funding bid as able to show community engagement and support



networks. Cllr Murphy reminded Council that WTC was one of the original founders of Watchet Coastal Community Team and of this project in 2016 which is now being administered by WCCT and Onion Collective who have received lottery funding to carry out the project. Cllrs had raised concerns about the project. Cllr Murphy introduced Georgie Grant, Director to both WCCT and Onion Collective to provide further information. A short presentation and discussion ensued. It was established that the invite was a private invitation for the Clerk and will require her personal data so this is not a matter requiring a resolution from Council. Councillors may also receive invites to be party to the mapping, but it will be their personal decision if they wish to be part of the project. Cllr Campbell thanked Georgie for her attendance and detailed presentation.

Georgie Grant left the meeting at 7.30pm

24/143 Reports:

- Chairs report – verbal
Cllr Campbell as Chair informed Council that due to personal reasons she has been out of action this month but thanked her deputy, Cllr Whetlor for stepping in to chair the Full Council meeting in February. The only engagement booked this month is for the Chair and Deputy Chair to attend the annual Legal Service at Wells Cathedral on Sunday 17th March 2024 at 3pm.
- Clerks report – *See Appendix 2 – updates & recommendations*
The Clerk reported the following:
 1. Lease for the Market House Museum
New Clerk details provided to ensure that the new license can be legally signed but no further paperwork received to date. Chased on Thursday 29th February and advised by Risdon Hosegood that they have not yet heard from Foot Anstey but will be chasing.
 2. Assets- front office
Email sent to Onion Collective again on 29th February again requesting that a date is organised for a meeting to discuss the most recent GTH Market Valuation. To date no response.
 3. Update on casual vacancies – update
The co-option notice has been erected in the noticeboards around the town, and on the WTC Facebook page and website and reposted to increase interest. An email was sent to the Free Press Office requesting it be published in the next edition on 22nd February but due to email issues this was only published on WSFP online, the physical advertisement was not published until 8th March. With the in mind, it has been agreed to extend the deadline for applications to 31st March 2024. The Co-option will still take place at the April Full Council meeting. A revamped poster which is more interesting and eye catching has been submitted and replaced in the noticeboards (tabled). To date we do not have any applicants.
 4. Annual Town Meeting - update
The Annual Town Meeting will take place on Tuesday 16th April 2024 at 7pm. Please can I ask that all Councillors submit their nominations for Best Shop and Milling Shield awards along with suggestions for up to two community organisations to invite to report on their activities over the past year and any future events. This is also a reminder to all Committee Chairs to begin drafting their reports. Please contact me if you require assistance with this.
 5. Watchet Marina correspondence – update & recommendation
At the February Full Council meeting the Council passed a resolution to support a further meeting with The Marine Group, Somerset Council, WHAC and other organisations who attended the meeting held in December 2023 to establish the current position with the Marina following Chris Odling Smee's refusal to attend the Full Council meeting if attended by the Press. Watchet Harbour Advisory were informed of our interest to support a follow up meeting and we have since received an invite to appoint up to two members of the Council to attend a meeting arranged for 14th March at 3.30pm. Please be advised that Chris Odling-Smee has stressed that if Cllr Richards is in attendance he will not attend. Cllr Whetlor, as WHAC Chair advised Council at the meeting that she has been given approval from the WHAC Committee to increase the invitation to 3 WTC representatives if required. A discussion ensued. Cllr Campbell proposed that **'Cllrs Brake, Murphy, and Irven are appointed as WTC representatives to attend the meeting'**. Seconded by Cllr Westcott. Carried with 2 abstentions

24/144 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

County Cllr Davies reported the following:

1: Potential closure of our Household Waste Recycling Centre.

At full Somerset Council meeting on the 20th of February No Decision was made, negotiation with Somerset household waste recycling Centre Contractor will continue before any savings in the area are taken forward.

2: Major announcement:

Plans that the Gigafactory will be built in Puriton, near Bridgwater, who could become the UK's largest producer of electric vehicle (EV) batteries and will be another major employer in future years in Somerset.

3: Further good news:

The government have agreed that Somerset can sell off assets up to £77 million and allow this sum to be use for revenue. Also, there is an opportunity to borrow but not seen any details to date. Will pass on further news on receipt of same.

4: NHS Dental Recovery Plan Overview.

This is a Somerset Stakeholder briefing Press release. Tabled at the meeting and circulated to council prior to the meeting.

5: HPC Community Bus service roadworks – service disruptions:

Priory Hill (Stogursey) on 13th & 14th March due to utility works relacing telegraph poles the Community Bus will not serve Stogursey Village. Doniford Rd (St Audries) Friday 15th & Monday 18th March due to roadworks the Community Bus will not serve Haven Caravan Park and Doniford Farm bus stops.

Questions from the floor: None

- 24/146 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)
None to report
- 24/147 Reports from Working Groups and appointed representatives: - Any relevant paperwork will be issued prior to the meeting:
- a. Watchet Library – *Update and recommendations*
Nothing to report
 - b. Wheeled Park – *Update and recommendations*
The Clerk reported that she had contacted Maverick Skate Parks to discuss the possible reduction of the project to see what plans they can present within a reduced budget due to the current skate ramps coming to the end of their life span. We are awaiting more details from him. He spoke very highly of Crowdfunding and gave details of the Crowdfunding director who has offered to provide additional guidance. This is ongoing. Letters to local Community Groups/CICs are being drafted and will be sent this week to gain support with funding applications where a Statutory Body is unable to apply.
 - c. Climate Change- *Update and recommendations on de-carbonisation action plan*
Nothing to report
 - d. Watchet Task Force – *Update and recommendations*
In the absence of Cllr Terret, WTF Chair, Cllr Murphy gave the following update:
 - The WTF funded 'Word in Watchet' literary event was a huge success. All 18 events, using 8 venues in the town, were ticketed except the Children's trail, Andrew Homer's animation and Children's competitions. To make the Festival accessible and ticket prices low were important factors. The 7 charged events ranged from £7 to £10 (which included afternoon tea). In total Words in Watchet involved over 500 people. Breakdown of attendees can be seen in the full report that the Clerk will distribute to Council. Visitors came to Watchet from Porlock, Minehead, Lynton, Bridgwater, Taunton, Yellow, Stogumber, Cullompton, Bristol, Cornwall, Sussex, Oxford, Plymouth, Milton Keynes, Swindon, Carmarthen, Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire and London. Some had rented Air B&Bs, cottages, or used other local holiday accommodation. Anecdotally the cafes etc were busy over the weekend.
 - Urban Design company FERIA has confirmed they will be attending a consultation event to meet with Community Groups and organisation on 21st March at East Quay creator Space to ascertain their vision and aspirations for the future of Watchet Town Centre – the Town Clerk has been sent an invitation for Town Councillors to attend. A time slot of 10.40am-12noon has been booked and all Councillors and staff are welcome to attend to have an input.
 - e. EH&S Policies – *Update*
Nothing to report
- 24/148 West Somerset Railway working group:
- (i) Working group meeting - *verbal update from Cllr Irven*
Cllr Irven attended a meeting as WTC representative with partners -West Somerset Railway PLC Heart of South West Local Enterprise Partnership and Somerset Council. The full report of the meeting was circulated to Council prior to the meeting. Main update included:
Main aim/objectives:
 - Supporting the long term sustainability of the West Somerset Railway
 - Economic regeneration (West Somerset poorest area in England for social mobility)
 - Support sustainable tourism and leisure
 - Accommodate housing and population growth
 - Traffic congestion A358/A39/B3227
 - Need to address net zero commitment -Transfer from road to rail
 - Improving access to, and usage of the West Somerset Railway as a leading major tourist attraction for Somerset supporting its future sustainability. Other objectives enhance the case for public funding
 - Improving prospects-better access to employment, education and services
 - Better economic prosperity by improving access both in and out of the area
 - Improving the health and well-being of the local community by enhancing transport options

- Reducing the adverse impact of transport (road) on the environment and contributing to carbon emission reduction

Proposal:

- Shuttle service between Taunton and Bishops Lydeard operated by Great Western Railway synchronised with West Somerset Railway services added to the national timetable
- Targeted additional commuter services to be run both when WSR is operating and also when not
- Consideration in later phases of extending service model to include holiday based services to Minehead and from destinations beyond Taunton. If agreed, these will operate to the WSR Light Railway Order and Safety Case

- (ii) WSR funding letter of support request - *Update and recommendations*
Cllr Richards proposed that '**the Council approve a letter of support to aid WSR with funding applications to help the working group achieve their goals as set out in the report**'.
Seconded by Cllr Murphy. Carried.

- 24/149 Councillor Surgeries – update from Councillors who attended the Surgery held on Saturday 2nd March 2024 and any matters arising.
Cllr Brake apologised to Cllr Johnson and Council as he had forgotten to attend the surgery along with Cllr Johnson. Cllr Johnson reported that there was no public attendance at the Councillor Surgery this month.
- 24/150 Non-Committee access to information – report from Cllr Richards and response from the Town Clerk - (See Appendix 3) circulated to all members prior to the meeting.
Cllr Richards presented his report as circulated to Council as appendix 3. A discussion ensued. Cllr Johnson proposed that '**the recommendations provided by the Clerk that for the purpose of transparency and openness, agendas of all Committee meetings are issued to non-committee members for information**'.
Seconded by Cllr Murphy. Carried with 1 abstention. The Clerk advised Council that Minutes of Council meetings are accessible on the website once they have been signed off by the committee by formal resolution.
- 24/151 Community Ownership Fund:
(i) Potential bid by Watchet Town Council (WTC) and Watchet War Memorial Ground Management Committee (WWMGMC) – *verbal update by Cllr Irven if required*
Cllr Irven reported that they are working hard on progressing with the funding application, working with architects to ensure accessibility to a public toilet. Costs are escalating due to additional costings for damp proofing (approx. £20k), and still require guidance as to VAT liability as this could possibly increase the project by 20% if Vat cannot be claimed back by the Council. All EOI's have been cancelled by COF so the Committee will need to resubmit their bid, intend to put in a higher bid to cover the increasing costs. The closing date for the April window is looking difficult, so it may be submitted within the July second submission window.

Community engagement is required. A Business plan survey was completed by 50 members of the public at the March Street Fair, and they plan to attend April's Street Fair to increase the feedback numbers.
- 24/152 Somerset Council Budget cuts:
(i) Williton Recycling Centre potential closure – *verbal update*
This item was covered during the County Cllr report so no additional information was provided.

(ii) CCTV concerns – *Verbal report from Cllr Richards*
Cllr Richards raised concerns regarding the recent news that Somerset Council had planned to switch off CCTV as it is not a Statutory responsibility of the Council. A discussion ensued. Cllr Richards proposed that '**WTC request a meeting with Somerset Council to discuss the current situation of CCTV in Watchet and plans for the future**'. Seconded by Cllr Irven. Carried.
- 24/153 Policy Review:
(i) Financial Regulations – to note Finance & Staffing approved amendments circulated via Appendix 4
The Clerk informed Council that following a trailer scam in October 2023 the Finance & Staffing Committee conducted a review of the Financial Regulations has been conducted and although scams of this kind are almost impossible to prevent, a slight adjustment has been made to the financial regulations until a new updated model is introduced by NALC. A discussion ensued. Cllr Murphy proposed that '**the recommended amended Financial Regulations is adopted**'. Seconded by Cllr Campbell. Carried.
- 24/154 Watchet Community Centre CCTV:
(i) To endorse the release of approved 2024/25 Earmarked reserves to purchase CCTV for Watchet Community Centre - (*circulated prior to the meeting via Appendix 5*)
The Clerk advised that a recent bid for Hinckley Point C funding for WCC CCTV was declined. In preparation for this outcome, the Council earmarked £5,000 in the 2024/25 budget to ensure the purchase and installation of this much needed asset goes ahead. A discussion ensued. Cllr Irven proposed that '**the Council endorse the release of up to £5,000 from the approved 2024/25 earmarked reserves for the purchase and installation of CCTV at the WCC**'. Seconded by Cllr Whetlor. Carried with 1 abstention.
- 24/155 Matters of Correspondence for Report - Correspondence is addressed daily and filed - *The Clerk will report on any relevant correspondence.*
None

24/156 Accounts for payment:

- (i) to approve the February schedule (paid in March) – *The schedule circulated to all members prior to the meeting for their consideration.*
Cllr Johnson proposed that **'the February Accounts for payment are approved, signed and duly paid'**.
Seconded by Cllr Campbell. Carried.

- (ii) to approve all payments made outside of Full Council meetings (February - March) - *The schedule circulated to all members prior to the meeting for their consideration.*
Cllr Johnson proposed that **'the payments of accounts made outside of Full Council meetings (February – March) are approved'**. Seconded by Cllr Campbell. Carried.

24/157 Matters for the next meeting – no discussion or decisions made

- Liaise with Clerk

The meeting closed at 8.35pm

Signed



Date.....

15/4/24



