

# WATCHET ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

Held at the Methodist School Room, Harbour Road, Watchet  
on 18 April 2023 at 7.00pm

**Present:** Cllr Campbell (Chair), Cllr Irven, Cllr Johnson, Cllr Richards, Cllr Summers, Cllr Westcott, Cllr Whetlor

**In attendance:** Sarah Reed Town Clerk, Government Electors of Watchet.

## 1. Chairman's Welcome and Address – Councillor Olivia Campbell

The Chair started by thanking Sarah Reed, Clerk and the other members of the Council staff, including the Deputy Clerk and a new member of staff Ami Bowsher, who is working out on the reception. The new reception area is open during office opening hours and has proved useful for the public. Thanks also to the Groundstaff who maintain the grounds so well for the Council, they also keep the flower throughs watered and generally keep the Council property clean and tidy and do a fantastic job.

The Chair thanked her fellow Councillors and Deputy Mayor, Cllr Whetlor for their support over the last year. Cllr Whetlor's guidance, support and general knowledge of how everything runs has been invaluable and because I still work full time, she stepped in quite often on occasions and attended events that happen during the day, so we would have been lost without you this last year. And mostly thank you to the public, for your vote, your support and general interest at how the Town Council runs, so lovely to see you all here.

2. To adopt the Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 12 April 2022 as a true and correct record and matters of report from the minutes – Martin Brake proposed that **the 'minutes of the meeting held on 12 April 2022 are adopted as a true and correct record'**. Seconded by Eleanor Crane Carried. They were then signed off by the Chair of the meeting.

## 3. Reports from Committee Chairs on the Committees' activities during 2022-23

### • Environment & Planning Committee – Cllr Dave Westcott

The Committee comprises of 7 Councillors including one new elected Councillor Moss, and I would like to thank them all for being so pro-active during 2022-23. It has been a busy year for this committee, with many large planning applications debated and decisions made on many matters and issues that affect Watchet and I will now highlight some of them for your information:

#### Planning

The Committee reviewed 34 plans over the last year and submitted their recommendations and comments to the Planning Authority for consideration.

There has been some great working relationships formed between Watchet Town Council, Somerset West & Taunton (now Somerset Council), Somerset County Council, and Williton Parish Council over the last year with collaborative meetings held to discuss planning Development applications affect both Watchet & Williton Parishes.

#### Allotments

The severe failure of the cliff along Cleeve Hill and West Street this year has resulted in the unfortunate closure of the West Street Allotments.

The Environment and Planning committee commissioned Geckoella, local Ecologist and geologist experts, to conduct 6 drone surveys over the past year to monitor the subsidence of the allotments and the Council took the expert advice provided in the reports to make the decision to close the allotments permanently to ensure the safety of the public.

Geckoella will be providing more details on the situation in their presentation later in the meeting but the primary reasons for the cliff failure along this stretch of coast relate mainly to a combination of geological and environmental factors. Some of these factors are unquestionably related to climate change, and one of the challenges now facing Watchet and other coastal communities located on these types of soft cliffs, is how best to adapt to the changing environmental conditions.

The Committee are working hard to try and establish any other possibilities for additional land for the use of allotments.

#### West Street Residents Car Park

We were able to increase parking spaces from 70 to 79 for rental by residents of West Street and surrounding roads, including 6 x Caravan spaces, and 3 short stay spaces available for visitors.

Work was undertaken to the car park to include scraping off mud and vegetation, the removal of a bank at the lower end of the car park and laying and compacting a new sub-base allowed for 9 additional spaces to be created increasing the total spaces to 79.

Herras fencing has been erected to the allotment boundary for Health & safety reason due to the failure of the cliff edge.

Ongoing Health & safety checks are being conducted to ensure the fencing is safely located. In time this may need to be moved in-ward and spaces re-positioned.

### **Cleeve Hill**

A working group was set up to commission a consultant to produce a traffic analysis report and a letter of objection to the proposed Cleeve Hill development and with a collaboration of many committed members of the public and other working groups the application was finally refused.

### **Report on West Street Car Park from Councillor John Irvén**

Following further significant rainfall and land slippage in March, Geckoella recommended that the final survey 6 was undertaken for WTC. This was actioned under delegation by the committee clerk under advice from the EH&S Officer. The detailed survey is held in confidence by the clerk & EH&S Officer and is available to view on request by members. Key elements from this survey were used to produce this report and its recommendations.

#### **Key survey 6 findings -**

Further significant falls of rock onto the beach and slippage of slump blocks has occurred.

The secondary scarp fault line is extending eastwards towards the pigeon loft. Significant new cracks have been observed in the cliff face above the existing cliff, where vandals have removed the warning sign erected by WTC, the secondary scarp line, which should be considered as the new cliff face, has moved to within 6.5 metres of the previously repositioned Heras fencing located at the boundary of the car park

#### **Discussion**

The survey report indicates that the site is still active and should continue to be monitored, with some immediate corrective actions undertaken. In terms of safe distances for people and assets located near a cliff edge, there seem to be no definitive guidelines or recommendations, being left to landowners and local authorities to undertake their own risk assessments. Locally, 5 metres reduced to 3 metres was specified for park homes licensed to be sited near cliff edges. No specific guidelines are available for what constitutes a safe distance from a cliff edge for a car park where weights of vehicles and movement pose a higher risk level. It is understood that some coastal authorities have specified fencing 5 metres from a cliff edge to deter/ prevent vehicles accidentally driving over it.

It could be considered that the current 6.5 metre distance from the Heras fencing to the new cliff edge is currently a sufficiently safe distance and the car park is in a low risk, no risk zone as defined by the Geckoella assessments and therefore the car park left 'as is' whilst we monitor further erosion rates. However, this delays the inevitable, and a more sensible approach is to take a more proactive stance now and plan for movement in a manageable timescale (within the next 3 months). Liaison with tenants to schedule work would be required.

#### **Recommendations**

1. That E&P delegate the clerk and ground staff with advice from EH&S officer to move the fence by an extra 3.5 metres into the car park, leaving a full 10 metres from the prospective new cliff edge as shown in fig 4. This is one standard Heras panel width. Cost would be for extra panels & supporting stays and ground fixings as necessary. Cost up to £300
2. Reconfigure the car park layout. This fence movement has the immediate impact of reducing by 17 the number of parking spaces in the car park as shown in fig 5. However, by reconfiguring spaces as shown in one possible layout in fig 6, the total of 79 spaces can be restored. New bay markings would be required. Heavier campervan/caravans to be moved initially to Eastern end and then phased out. Need to check whether accessible access spaces are provided sufficiently. Cost up to £1,500
3. WTC reinstate the warning sign – if necessary, purchase a duplicate from Active signs and ask them to fit with a larger number of security bolts to the sea wall. Cost £200
4. WTC to commission Geckoella to undertake ongoing monitoring of car park on a 3 monthly basis – quote via clerk and budget up to £1,000.
5. WTC write to SC copying the Geckoella and this report, recommending that they review the situation above the sea wall.

### **Finance & Staffing Committee – in the absence of Cllr Murphy, Cllr Campbell presented the report.**

This report is written by Cllr Murphy who was elected the chair of the committee for the 2022 - 23 year. The finance and staffing committee consist of councillors Ellwood, Irvén, Ward, Westcott, with councillors Campbell and Whetlor as ex officio members being chair and vice chair of the Council and I would like to thank them all for their support and contributions during the year. The committee is clerked by the Responsible Finance Office, Sarah Reed, without whose support, the committee and Council would not function so well.

The main task on the finance side is to recommend the annual precept or Council Tax to the full council to approve. This year we recommended that the amount raised was the same as last year at £192,980. There are now more households eligible to pay Council Tax because of new houses being built in the town, so the amount paid per household for the Town Council part of the precept went down. However, the total

Council Tax bill went up due to others levying to pay for their services, such as Police, Fire, District and County Councils.

The Committee also recommends to full council how to manage the Council's reserves. This year, reserves were earmarked - or put aside to deal with - the following eventualities: repairs to the Council's buildings, taking on new assets from the District Council, recovery work from the allotment landslip and the closure of the B3191, CCTV, Climate Emergency, consultancy fees, and the King's Coronation.

Local groups can apply for grants from the Town Council and the committee determines the applications. Amongst those successful applications received were those from Watchet 1940s Home Front Group, Watchet Carnival, Seeds of Hope, Watchet Sea Scouts, Watchet Bowling Club, Knights Templar Swimming Pool, Watchet Summertime, Watchet Community Cinema, The Salvation Army (for Warm Spaces provision).

The staffing side of the committee is carried out by the Personnel Committee reporting to the monthly meetings of the Finance & Staffing Committee. As chair of F & S, I am also the chair of Personnel and I was supported this year by councillors Campbell and Ward. Staff appraisals are supervised by the Personnel Committee and in the case of the Town Clerk, it is councillors who carry out the appraisal. Salary levels are recommended in the precept. This year, a second member of staff obtained a significant professional qualification and moved onto a national salary scale. Watchet Town Council is one of the few town or parish councils in Somerset that have more than one member of staff so qualified.

The continuation of hybrid working following the Covid pandemic has been supported but the Council has provided an open door to members of the public, Monday to Thursday mornings as it did before the pandemic. The decision was taken to improve the area where members of the public come and talk to the Council and a new Reception area was developed in the old taxi office. A member of staff was appointed to staff reception following an advertisement and interviews carried out by the Personnel Committee.

The Council staff consist of:

Town Clerk (and Responsible Finance Officer)	Sarah Reed
Deputy Clerk	Jo Grellier
Groundsman	Niall Watson
Asset Co-ordinator	Lucy Taylor
Operations Assistant	Paul Flynn
Administration Assistant	Ami Bowsher

On behalf of all councillors and residents of Watchet, the Committee want to thank all the staff for their continued dedication to their work to serve all members of the public.

- **Recreation & Tourism Committee- in the absence of Cllr Terrett, Cllr Whetlor presented the report.** I apologise for the lack of attendance at this year's annual town meeting. The date booked for the meeting unfortunately clashed with an already planned family event so I am unfortunately unable to attend tonight. I have asked Cllr Whetlor who is a committee member to read out the report on my behalf.

#### **Review**

It's been a successful 2022/23 season this year from a Recreation & Tourism committee point of view.

#### **Monarchy**

We have as a town, celebrated the Queens Platinum Jubilee in typical street party fashion and have commemorated her successful reign in the form of a plaque that can be seen embedded within the jubilee stone outside the boat museum.

In the same breath we have unfortunately had to say goodbye to our much beloved monarch and have paid tribute to her with a memorial bench that has been placed within the memorial ground.

#### **The Coronation of King Charles III**

**Celebration event** - Watchet Town Council approved a budget to organise and fund a Coronation Celebration event on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> May between 2pm-5pm on the Esplanade. WTC created a Coronation working group to come up with ideas for this event and help organise along with office staff. The town is set to be awash with entertainment, crafts, refreshments, flowers and bunting. There will be a silent disco, walkabout magical theatre entertainer, brass band performances, and a singer on the Esplanade throughout the afternoon, refreshments and cream teas at the Phoenix Centre, Crafts and fun town trail from the Visitor Centre. Please do come down and enjoy this event.

**Commemorative Gifts** - The Town Council will be gifting the children of Knights Templar First School and Little Vikings Nursery with a commemorative boxed pin badge on 5<sup>th</sup> May 2023. And collaborated with Williton Parish Council to present a commemorative mug to the children of Danesfield School as a memento from the historic event.

#### **Town Projects**

**Benches** - Over the last couple of years, the committee have been in the process of replacing the old wooden benches when and where required. The memorial ground and children's play area have had the older benches that have long served its purpose replaced with a new recycled plastic alternative and we will continue to do so as we go into the new year. It is one of the many ways we as a town are looking to become more eco efficient where we can.

**Wheeled Park** – In the process of replacing the skate ramps at the Henry Davey Playing Field which have come to the end of their shelf life. The project for the new wheeled park is well under way, with concept designs approved and 2 town consultations completed. I believe we are moving swiftly onto the

preparation stage for a funding application with the help of our Council rep Cllr Sarah Ellwood & Deputy Clerk Jo Grellier, who are heading up this exciting project in partnership with Maverick Skateparks. The Committee believe that this facility will be so beneficial for locals & tourism as it will give the town an additional visitor attraction to add to our current portfolio.

**Esplanade Street Trading Licencing/planning permissions** – With SW&T council becoming a part of the new Unitary council under the new name of Somerset Council on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 there were many areas which had been overlooked by the previous SW&T council when it came to organised events. WTC have had a management agreement in force with SW&T since 2002 to manage the bookings of Events for the Esplanade albeit SW&T land. Recently it has arisen that for events which involve any traders must have a Street trading licence and if more than 28 events (14 of which are markets) must also have planning permission. Watchet Town Council has recently applied for a street trading licence for the Esplanade, and after research applied for a Certificate of Lawful Development rather than planning permission, as the Markets have been running for in excess of 10 years. This is to ensure not only the WTC organised Wednesday markets can continue but all the other wonderful, organised events that currently take place on the Esplanade. We are awaiting the results of these applications at present.

Due to TENs licencing rules and restrictions, it was very disappointing to have to remove the sale of alcohol from the WTC Wednesday Markets, but this was done to ensure all other events were able to offer this.

**Road Closure**

With the recent Cleeve Hill - Road Closure still fresh in our thoughts we as a town find ourselves having to change our tourism focus and our strategies from a 'short stay destination' to more of a 'long stay' destination. We are looking at short term and long-term solutions to help us through this inaugural year of change and beyond. An attractive new signage package will be soon implemented in favour of utilising the existing tourism logo for Watchet, as it is striking and recognised as the Watchet tourism brand. It was agreed that the concept of combining old with new (brand colours with historic images) was the way forward in promoting the town. Once concepts and pricing are approved, locations need to be finalised, checking the relevant permissions are sought including checks on whether Planning permission is needed for some locations. An idea of displaying historical pictorial signs on current vacant shops was agreed, and permissions would be explored with premises owners. Funding has been allocated from the town council reserves to help with marketing and promotion of our wonderful town, including extra floral displays and planters. We feel that community events & projects are going to have to play a huge part in the survival of Watchets tourism so would encourage anyone who would like to be a part of or has an idea they would like to share, to contact the Council office, or come along to the monthly Councillor open session surgeries where your ideas will be listened to. Thanks for your time and all the best for the year ahead.

**Assets Management Committee – Cllr Irven**

This was a newly formed committee in June 2022 after the election of the new council in May 2022. It has taken on responsibility for managing all WTC assets previously handled by other committees. Responsibilities and activities of the committee in the last year

Watchet Library	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Operated as a CLP with SCC who staff the library, offered as community space for hire outside of opening times</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Procedures inc risk assessments for hire to community groups put in place in time for a first booking by Watchet Summertime/WCCT for a BSL course in Aug.</li> <li>New bookings coming in for 2023</li> <li>70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Library re-dedication on 5 May 2023 planned</li> <li>New external tap installed such that watering of planters on Esplanade can be undertaken by grounds staff</li> </ul>
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Council Offices		
Harbour Road toilets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Operated by WTC staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discharge of chemical waste from campervans addressed with district council</li> <li>Refurbished facilities including new safety floor, maglocks, cubicle locks and drainage, repairs to doors</li> </ul>

Watchet Community Centre & MUGA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Located on Memorial ground where we are holding trustees,</li> <li>• WWMGC being managing trustees.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New pitched roof to side elevation erected.</li> <li>• Side entrance door shutter replaced</li> <li>• MUGA bars replaced after vandalism</li> <li>• New shelter at side for spectators built, then repositioned.</li> <li>• New charging rate for floodlights</li> <li>• Youth provision via M EYE continued 2 nights a week</li> <li>• Letter of support to M Eye for funding bid for facility improvement</li> </ul>
Henry Davey ground & changing rooms		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approved a request to re-site a defibrillator to the outside of the building, with part cost covered by WTC</li> </ul>
Cemetery & closed churchyard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We are the statutory burial authority for the cemetery</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Replacement tree commemorating 20 years service of head groundsman</li> <li>• Amended fee structure agreed</li> <li>• Dead roses replaced to commemorate memory of Queen Elizabeth</li> </ul>
West Street car park & allotments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• E&amp;P reported on subsidence and closing of allotments and ongoing monitoring of car park.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 9 new spaces, total 79</li> <li>• New barrier and fobs after vandalism</li> <li>• New temporary Herras fencing erected</li> </ul>
Watchet War memorial		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No maintenance costs other than internal staff cost for cleaning.</li> </ul>
cctv		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CCTV at MUGA approved</li> <li>• Temp cctv at West street car park</li> <li>• Push for reinstatement of cctv at Goviers Lane</li> </ul>

The following was agreed as the budget for the committee in the 2023-24 precept.

<b>Precept request 2023-24</b>	<b>Budget</b>
Watchet Community Centre- operation	£18,000
West Street Car Park	£2,000
Cemetery and Closed Churchyard	£1,000
Watchet Library	£14,000
Harbour Road toilets	£12,000
Henry Davey Changing Room Facility	£500
CCTV	£3,000
MUGA	Repairs covered by an ear marked reserve
War Memorial – maintenance	Funds still available from the disbanded Remembrance Project Group- monies transferred to the Councils current account

I would like to thank all the members of the committee, the clerk and all staff for their support during the year.

The Chair thanked Committee Chairs for their informative reports.

#### 4. Update from Principal Authority Members- Somerset Cllr Woods –

I was elected to the Somerset County Council in May of last Year after a hard-fought election which saw 11 candidates stand for 2 places. So I was elected together with Cllr Hugh Davies and we have represented

you for the past year. The Watchet and Stogursey Division covers 8 parishes 7 of whom meet regularly. My initial thoughts were that myself and Cllr Davies would take it in turns to attend and report to Parish meetings and I am glad to say that from last month's meetings Cllr Davies has now agreed to this.

I have found this a busy and at times frustrating year, but we are now finally through to the point where we are one Council. The Somerset Council.

My time as a Somerset County Councillor has been extremely interesting, I have majored on Adults and Health where I chaired the Scurtyny meetings for Adults and Health, this is an area which I felt would help the population of this area, which has an aging population. I have been well briefed on the problems we have attracting carers, to help those who are served by the County and also those who have to find their own care. I appreciate all the work done by the Micro Providers carers. The County has been awarded over 19 million pounds towards the training of Carers for this area and we are working on having a facility in Minehead and Bridgwater to deliver this training.

I also led meetings of Scurtyny for Adults and Health where we have been briefed on the way in which the NHS and Social Services will work in a partnership way to enhance the services available. I must say that it has taken me nearly a year to get the Ambulance service to the committee to answer questions and we have now insisted that they return after another six months to see how things are progressing.

I have been pleased that the County have been able to attract Government funding towards our buses which mean there is earlier and late buses operating at present between Taunton and Williton/Watchet plus a £2.00 flat rate fare. I am very disappointed that there have been no regular buses available to the upper part of my Division between Bridgwater and Watchet through Stogursey. I hope that we will learn more from the Chairs presentation, (Holford).

I found it amazing how much money comes from National Government to fund our local services. At present we are awaiting the final figures from the County Budget to see if this past year actually balances. The last figures that were released show the balances as at two months ago and at that stage we had a deficit. We were still awaiting the final Adult and Health figures.

During the year the Council have been busy setting up the Local Community Networks. The Watchet and Stogursey Division have been divided into two sections. One that runs from East/West Quantoxhead down to Minehead and the other which runs from the Quantoxhead up thorough Stogursey taking in Cannington /Chilton Trinity over to Enmore. If you want the detail, you can find this on [www.somersetintelligence](http://www.somersetintelligence). We are expecting the Division to be realigned within the next couple of years and I will expect it to be aligned in line with the LCNs (but this is not certain in anyway) there will not be a change in the Divisions until the next elections in 4 years' time.

We had an update on LCNs earlier today and we will be having support from a dedicated officer shared between two Divisions, the LCNs meeting will commence from 8<sup>th</sup> June onwards. They would like us to suggest priority issues for our areas, (Hot Topics) they are expecting LCNs to meet about 6 times a year.. Watchet

The important development is the closure of the coast road. At the time when the closure was announced we had a Scrutiny budget meeting and I tried to find the Coastal Protection Figure in the budget and couldn't find it. I have been told that any money for the Coast Road must come from National Government. I have been lobbying about this without any success, the meeting the County had in Watchet 23<sup>rd</sup> March was very useful but no new information came to us from this. I think for the moment we must assume that we are on our own!!

Looking forward, as we speak, I am on the Harbour Advisory Board and the Harbour Board, but these seem to be having a takeover by the Full Council I will be lobbying the Council on the state of the Marina. The Somerset Council seem to be changing position by the minute, I was appointed to the Coastal Communities Team and then I was asked to change committees because there was only one post for the Council on the CCT and Cllr Davies was keen to be on it.

I am to be on the Planning Committee for the West of the County, Planning is going to be divided into four parts, mirroring the four district council areas.

I find that I am not kept up to date on meetings that take place on the issue of coastal protection. I have asked Cllr Davies as part of withdrawing from the CCT that he keeps me informed.

I find that our officers for the new County are working extremely hard, but I would expect the Councillors to lead and the Officers to implement their decisions. I await this to be the case.

5. Reports from community organisations on their activities over the past year and future events to note:

(i) **Geckoella**- Director Andy King presented the following report:

Geckoella was commissioned by Watchet Town Council to conduct a series of 6 drone flights over West Street Car Park where the land has slipped away. The last drone flight was undertaken in April 2023, where the footage demonstrated an active slip along the whole cliff area. This is unprecedented. A 3-dimensional model was displayed on screen, so those in attendance could see the cliff movement. There are a lot of surface cracks which geologists would expect, but in this area, there is no structure or strength, and deep fissures are cutting into the land which is red mudstone. He continued, that there is a lot of slumping vegetation coming down on to the beach area, the whole system is quite dynamic.

The data collected can be mapped out to identify fractures and give a more accurate picture of how the cliffs are behaving. It is anticipated that there will be an extension of fractures continuing eastwards. With regard to West Street Car Park, the fractures are getting closer to the bank which delineates the car park and the integrity of the land south of the main scarps are also in question. The drone data can be utilised to produce geological risk maps, but there is a strong likelihood that there will be a failure in parts of the cliff, moving southwards eventually into the car park area. Dr Andy King then moved onto the land at Cleeve Hill, as the meeting were interested in being updated about this area. This area is above the Watchet Faultline and is affected by several factors:

1. Erosion from the sea
2. Natural softness in the rock, further weakened by the Faultline
3. Hydrology and drainage (heavy rain saturates the cliffs)

There are signs of a significant slip in this area and the whole block of cliff is moving seawards. There is a buckle in road surface which has contributed to the cracking in the bank. Dr King concluded that he understood that Somerset Council were looking at options for road re-alignment, but this will prove very challenging.

(ii) **Knights Templar Community Church School and Nursery** – Linda Bulpin, Chair of Governors presented the following report

Thank you very much for letting me come and speak to you.

I'm not sure how many of you are aware of the school, no doubt you think it is there to educate children and that we just get on with business up there. But I think now is the time for people in the town to become aware of the financial constraints.

I have been associated with the school before its inception, more than 40 years ago. The Nursery, which is now part of the school, was originally set up as a Sure Start Nursery, owing to a change in Government policy the school took on the Nursery, that now forms part of the school. Prior to Covid, the Nursery just managed to break even, Covid came. We had to keep open for key workers children, this has led to a severe loss in income, as a working parent, kept up the bulk of our income, direct hit on our services. The ratio of children is for a 1-year-old, we have to have 1 adult to 3 children. For a 2-year-old, 1 adult to 4 children, 3-year-old 1 adult to 8 children, so as you can see furloughing staff is impossible to work with these hours and the ratios of children involved.

Each year we have to find £20,000 in pension deficit to pay back, before we've got a penny to spend. Last year the increase was budgeted at 4%, but it was double that. In 10 years, the funding for a 3-year-old, in 10 years has risen by 50p a child per year. That is the Nursery.

Our Utilities, over the last year, I appreciate everyone has an issue with that, but to the school increased by 287%, not in our budget. We enquired about solar panels, but as we own a joint residency they could not be installed. The County Council own the land on which the building is built. We couldn't get Solar panels put on so we couldn't take any profit from them.

The pay increases again for the school, this is very helpful for our lower pay staff because for TA's and Nursery staff are just paid the basic amount for what they must do, and this was double what was predicted in the budget. Our staff costs are 71% of our budget. Premises 8%, Supplies and services was 12% last year, but due to a change, all those totalled £30,000. This year it is in excess of £50,000 with no more money.

Our deficit for the full accounts, next month, when the accounts are finished is £54,000, our deficit for last year. Carrying that deficit forward to 23/24 our deficit will be £248,000. Our 2-year deficit forward 24/25, our deficit is projected at £487,000. For 25/26, when you got 3 years of deficit behind you is £737,000.

The impact of Covid on children's behaviour at school has been a severe detriment to the school, absolutely to the Nursery and to reception years, who have missed out on vital social interaction.

Attending the meeting today, projected for next year 20% of our children will either be a special educational needs child, or have an early health care title. That means those children basically need 1 to 1 education, how can we not have staff, when you have children that need to learn.

We did say we wouldn't take on new paid staff, but when you are talking figures like this, a TA staff salary is a drop in the ocean regarding the education of children, this must come first.

Dragons Den that's our out of hours provision, for the working parents and vulnerable children during the school holidays, which we fund, is available at 8 in the morning to 5/6 o'clock at night for parents that work, again hit by Covid, we had to provide care for vulnerable children to key workers. We just about now managed to claw back the deficit of that, so we can have a level playing field going forward. Swimming Pool, anyone knows anything about swimming pools, you can't just turn a swimming pool off. Through Covid we reduced the temperature, but it still had to be cleaned, still had to be tested, all those things going forward. It costs the school, remember what I told you we had, out of our budget of £24,000.

Most people wouldn't be aware of those figures, you would have no interest if you don't have children at the school, but I think it is important, everyone sees how other services have been affected, schools are being severely impacted. I sat in a meeting with other Chairs of Governors from all over Somerset and one school, one secondary school, the budget for this year is impacted by £248,000.

This is our children's education, that we should be talking about, in an area that has again hit the

headlines with severe deprivation.

What are we doing? We are not spending our time so much worrying about the education of the children, as a Governor it is not our strategic role, we are having to source grants to help run the swimming pool. The Chancellor says yes, we are going to help swimming pools in the Spring Budget, but you try and access that money, it's impossible. The school is available for lettings, we are doing a big thing for that, if anyone has a use for the school, please come to us, we would be glad to host any meetings that you may have. Thank you very much for your time.

Chair thanked the representatives for their reports.

6. **Presentation of the “Best Shop” Shield for 2022-23-** This was awarded by the Mayor of Watchet to Gavin Walsh, the proprietor of the ‘Veggie Patch Farm Shop’
7. **Presentation of the “Millington” Shield to a local organisation in recognition of its services to the community in 2022-23–** This was awarded by the Mayor of Watchet to the ‘Community Travel Scheme’, Vehicle Co-ordinator, Donna Stevens and volunteers Sam Searle and David Knight
8. **Open Forum –** registered electors of Watchet were given the opportunity to raise their concerns and ask questions of their elected representatives, including:
  - Closure of the B3191 at the top of Cleeve Hill, how can the community get the message to Somerset Council that Watchet is worth fighting for. There were several questions raised by the public regarding this matter. At this point, County Cllr Woods offered information and proceeded to direct inappropriate comments to a town councillor, her behaviour resulted in several members of the public leaving the meeting in protest. The Chair asked County Cllr Woods to refrain from making further comment, but she continued and remained in the meeting.
  - ‘No access’ signs at the entrance at the top of Goviers Lane
  - Lack of allotment sites in the town.

The Chair pointed out that all concerns highlighted were under the jurisdiction of Somerset Council and would be raised.

9. **Chairman’s closing address-** Cllr Campbell thanked everyone for attending the meeting, for all the presenters for their efforts, and all councillors and staff for their hard work all year. She hoped that everyone in attendance had found the meeting helpful and been able to see better what their elected representatives were involved in on their behalf. She concluded by wishing everyone a safe journey home.

**The meeting closed at 9.00pm**

**Signed:** .....

**Date:** .....