

WATCHET ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

Held at the Methodist School Room, Harbour Road, Watchet
on 16th April 2024 at 7.00pm

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

In attendance: Jo Grellier Town Clerk, Government Electors of Watchet
Annie Robinson Deputy Town Clerk

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

The Chair opened with a welcome and introduction.

It has been a challenging year for Watchet, continued cliff erosion saw the controversial Cleeve Hill development shelved, but has led to the closure of the B3191 which has had an impact on access between Blue Anchor and Watchet. The people of Watchet are known for their proactivity and resourcefulness however, and, with the help of the Unitary Council, set up a Task Force to build sustainable tourist and leisure opportunities within the town, emphasising that Watchet is a destination, not just a through-route. We are delighted that the road has now opened up for walkers to enjoy this popular coastal route.

The ongoing problems with the build-up of silt in the Marina has blighted one of our most attractive features, talks are ongoing however, and we hope to see this formerly popular and bustling harbour returned to former glories.

We held our last Music Festival and are beset by planning proposals that look to increase housing and population by a frankly unsustainable amount, we continue to represent the views of our community on these plans.

On a positive note, we are seeking funding to restore the Memorial Ground Pavilion from the national Community Ownership Fund, the Town Council is working closely with the Management Committee to look at reinvigorating popular past community events such as a Flower Show and introducing new inclusive events such as a Beer Festival, maybe even a dog show.

We welcomed a new Town Clerk, Jo Grellier and a new Deputy, Annie Robinson. We thanked the outgoing Clerk, Sarah Reed, for her loyal, knowledgeable and steadfast service over the last 20 years.

I am always heartened by the community spirit here in Watchet, with 140 volunteer organisations working among us, including the newly formed Watchet Wildlife Group which is proving popular with children signing up to the Mini Beast Safari. I hope that this interest in our flora and fauna will help combat the loss of species and habitats due to changing weather and climate.

Whether you want to sing, paint, craft, watch a film, recite or listen to poetry, see an art exhibition, meet other new mums, exercise, have a community meal with like-minded people, sail, shop, study in the library, listen to music with a craft beer or cider...there is something here in Watchet for you.

2. **To adopt the Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 18 April 2023** as a true and correct record and matters of report from the minutes – Jane Austin proposed that **the ‘minutes of the meeting held on 18 April 2023 are adopted as a true and correct record’**. Seconded by June Prior. Carried with 2x against. 2x abstentions.

3. **Reports from Committee Chairs on the Committees’ activities during 2023/24**

Environment & Planning Committee – Cllr Loretta Whetlor

The Committee is made up of 7 councillors which includes the Chair and Vice Chair of the Council as ex officio. I would like to thank them for their work and support to me in the past year. I would also like to thank the Clerk, who during that year as Deputy Clerk was of enormous help to us.

Planning Applications

Throughout the year the Committee has dealt with many planning applications, some quite contentious. The Committee worked hard on these and submitted strong recommendations and comments to the Somerset Council Planning Authority.

Watchet Town Council E & P has continued its collaboration along with Williton Parish Council regarding planning applications which affect both our parishes.

We have appointed a member of the Committee to be the WTC representative on the Parsonage Farm Action Group to aid with the objection to the Parsonage Farm Housing Development

Cleeve Hill

The B3191 was closed permanently to all traffic in 2023, including walkers. This made life very difficult for everyone and businesses in the town suffered.

Fortunately, in March of this year with the help of the Watchet Task Force and the Town Council, Somerset Highways agreed that part of the road was to be opened for walkers only. Somerset Council and Highways said they were reviewing the situation and would hope to allow cyclists to access this area later in the year. Motorbikes and cars were still unable to use the road.

Geckoella are still working with WTC via an annual SLA and are now commissioned to work with Somerset Council to monitor the ongoing situation of the full stretch of the Cleeve Hill coastline. When drone surveys are completed, relevant data, and expert advice is given to Council so that we are well informed on the ongoing situation and able to monitor the safety of the West Street resident's car park. Last year we experienced some of the worst wet weather recorded and we continue to be on the alert for problems.

West Street Residents Car Park

This remains untouched by the slippage of the cliffs although it is still be monitored on a weekly basis by the grounds staff and the Council's Health and Safety Advisor.

Watchet Town Council through its Environment and Planning Committee remains vigilant in monitoring the cliff erosion.

Road Marking consultations

The Clerk and Cllr Murphy spent a day with Somerset Highways conducting a walkabout of the town highlighting parking issues raised by residents over the past 2 years. This was a very productive meeting and many areas highlighted. Somerset Highways has taken note of the issues being experienced and want to help with solutions. To amend the current traffic orders this will take many months of consultation with those in the affected areas. Stage one of the consultation has taken place with letters from WTC being distributed to individual households in affected areas to establish their views on the recommendations put forward by Somerset Council Highways. The results are being collated and will be passed on to Somerset Highways for to aid their consultation process. This is ongoing.

Streetlighting

The office has received many complaints regarding the streetlights on Maglands Road/Reed Close being out for extended periods of time. The streetlights are owned by Somerset Council, the office has raised enquiries on many occasions that there are issues. Some remedial work has been completed but still a large number of lights are not working. We have been informed that this is an underground issue that national grid who will continue to try to fix the situation.

Finance & Staffing Committee – Councillor Murphy

The Finance and Staffing Committee looks after the financial affairs and the staff of Watchet Town Council.

It was appointed in May 2023 and consisted of Councillors Campbell, Ellwood, Irven, Murphy, Westcott and Whetlor. I was elected as Chair and became Chair of the Personnel Committee which oversees staff appraisals, Conditions of Service, welfare and appointments. Councillors Campbell and Irven joined me on the Personnel Committee.

In the May F&S Committee meeting, we reviewed the Council's insurance requirements.

In June we had presentations for grants from Watchet Summertime and Watchet Community Cinema - we approved grants to them both in July.

Council committees do not meet in August so in September we discussed the procedures to appoint a new Clerk and Deputy Clerk. Sarah Reed had served for twenty years and for all the time I have been a councillor, so this was a big operation and we needed to get the process right.

In October, we approved a £1000.00 donation to the Seeds of Hope Group.

In November, following the resignation of Cllr Ellwood, Cllr Brake joined the committee. We reviewed staff appraisals and the SLA with West Somerset Citizens' Advice. The Council recognizes the invaluable support given to Watchet residents on benefits and debt and makes an annual payment to WSCA to enable them to continue their work. As part of the Council's support for the Memorial Ground pavilion refurbishment project, we approved a grant to the Management Committee for preliminary work. We also completed our request for precept funding for the next financial year. In December, the Committee considered the proposals from the Clerk assisted by myself for the Town Council's precept for 2024 / 25 - this is the Town Council's part of the Council Tax. We aimed to make a modest increase on this occasion building on the standstill budget last year. This was achieved despite making provision to mitigate the closure of the B3191, taking over the employment of the

Community Vehicle Coordinator from Watchet Coastal Community Team and preparing to take on assets from Somerset Council. We were able to protect Watchet rate payers from a larger increase in their Council Tax than would have otherwise been the case. Other parishes raised their precepts considerably more than we did. The Committee approved the proposals, and they were recommended to Full Council in January and adopted.

In the new year, the Committee approved a grant to the Carnival Committee to help the funding of Carnival in 2024 and reviewed the Risk Management Policy.

In February, we reviewed and amended the Council's Financial Regulations to better protect us from online fraud. Staff pay increases budgeted for in the precept were approved.

Last month, we approved a grant to the Knights Templar Community School Association to support the refurbishment of the swimming pool as we recognized it as a valuable community resource. We also approved a grant to Watchet Conservation Society to assist with the replacement of the information board on Splash Point.

I would like to finish by thanking my fellow councilors and both Clerks, Sarah Reed and Jo Grellier for their support for the work of the Committee during the year.

Question from the floor raised issue with Annual Report figures. Councillor Murphy confirmed the sum was 192k and not 1.92 million as written.

Recreation & Tourism Committee- presented by of Councillor Sean Terrett.

It has been discussed whether the R&T committee should remain or be disbanded since the formation of the Assets Committee in 2022, moving the agenda across the remaining four other committees to streamline administration activities for the staff and ensure that all Council are aware of Events taking place on the Esplanade. This caused a fair bit of debate and mixed opinion within the councillors, and it was agreed that we would retain the R&T Committee until May 2025 where this will be reviewed again.

With Somerset Council stepping back on numerous projects due to lack of funding the Town Council, this year, supported Somerset Council with financing some of the cosmetic maintenance requirements on the Esplanade by financing the painting of the shelters, benches and basic touch ups throughout this area. The funds provided were financed by the Wednesday Market pitch fee profits. The Committee suggested welcoming a request from Somerset Council for further financial assistance in future for Esplanade maintenance needs and this will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and financial position of the Market profits.

The annual play equipment inspection has taken place on the play areas at the memorial Ground, Henry Davey, and Doniford Married Quarters. Although the Memorial Ground and Henry Davey playground equipment was reported as safe to use and in good/reasonable repair apart from some small cosmetic maintenance required, it was reported that the Henry Davey Skate Park is showing further signs of deterioration with a reduced life span and remedial works to take place in the short term. The Married Quarters play area was reported to be in a very poor state of repair with 2/3 items of equipment being removed due to rot. The future stages of the Liddymore development will include a brand-new play area. A questionnaire has been distributed to the residents in the area to establish if they wish for the play area to remain or if there were any other further suggestions for how the land could be utilised. If the feedback given is for the play equipment to be replaced, this will be researched and budgeted for in the 2024/25 precept or potentially taken from reserves if immediate action required. Consultations are ongoing.

Esplanade bookings remain very popular with some brilliant events put on over the past year alongside the ever-present Street Fairs and Wednesday Markets. As reported at the 2023 Annual Town Meeting, Watchet Town Council managed to obtain a Street trading licence for the Esplanade and permitted development to ensure that there were no longer restrictions to the number of events/markets held on the Esplanade. The Committee welcome the public to get in touch with the office staff if there is an event they would like to pursue or have any suggestions on how to continue the success of this wonderful community space.

As we all adapt to the permanent B3191 Road Closure the committee are trying to find new ways to help reduce the impact that it has on tourism and trade. We are liaising with the Market Traders to investigate the possibility of additional market trading in the Winter months, as well as liaising with the towns numerous committees with the view to expanding on the event & trading calendars which could benefit both the community and visitors, however this will be confirmed in due course.

Wishing everyone a prosperous 2024/2025

Assets Management Committee – Councillor John Irven

As chair of Assets, it is my pleasure to make this report to the meeting on behalf of the committee which comprises of Cllrs Brake, Campbell, Irven (Chair), Murphy, Richards, Terrett, Westcott, and Whetlor with Annie Robinson Committee clerk. Members are elected from other committees alongside the chair and Vice-chair of council as ex officio members. It manages WTC's assets, including: Council Offices and shared space; Harbour Road toilets; Watchet Library & war memorial; Henry Davey playing field and skate park; Children's play areas; Cemetery and churchyard grounds maintenance; Vehicles and grounds equipment; Allotments; West Street car park; Community Centre; MUGA; Tennis courts; maintenance sheds on memorial ground, and act as trustee for the ground itself which is managed by WWMG Committee.

Activities included-

West street car park & allotments

Revised West Street car park boundaries due to erosion of cliff and loss of adjacent allotments that had been closed in 2022/3. Moved fencing inland to keep 10m barrier to new cliff edge reducing car parking by 17 spaces, but by reconfiguring and relocating campervans managed to retain current 79 spaces. A revision of charges was agreed to reflect the additional costs of maintaining a safe car park.

Community centre/MUGA

Agreed to fund 2 summer holiday sessions per week for children providing Football; Tag rugby; Dodgeball; Archery; Cricket; Summer games, and expenditure for CCTV for the MUGA area following repeated vandalism.

Library

Agreed to proceed with renovation of damp and cracks in Library parapet.

Cemetery

Addressed breaches in cemetery policy by a resident who had without permission erected memorial kerbing around a grave. As the cemetery has been classified as a lawned cemetery from its origin, where spaces between graves are returned to lawn for the peaceful enjoyment of users and ease of safe maintenance, the holder was instructed to remove the monument. This met the guidance of the UK professional body for cemeteries BRAMM – the British Register of Memorial Masons, noting that only accredited, licenced and insured masons are permitted to erect monuments. The Committee mindful of the distress that the removal caused the family and offered a memorial tree of their choice to be planted in the Memorial Garden at no cost. Other breaches of cemetery regulations were addressed, with revisions allowing natural materials e.g. silk but not plastic flowers due to ban on single use plastics coming into force and to follow Watchet's Plastic Free status. Approved increases to cemetery fees and clarifications to cemetery policies.

Asset transfers from Somerset Council- The committee considered and progressed discussions with for Courtlands & Kingsland paly areas, Old pound., Market Street Toilets, Sea Scout changing rooms & boat storage.

We agreed the asset transfer of The Sea Scouts premises to proceed as soon as possible, and the Town Clerk issue a letter to Sea Scouts confirming WTC's intention to issue a long lease in support of their funding proposals. Aim is to help sea scouts with asset and lease retained by WTC to protect it as we have with Library, toilets and WCCT CIC have with 7 Esplanade Voluntary Bookshop.

Play areas – A survey was undertaken to understand residents' views on the future of each play area (i)Kingsland -residents would like the area to remain as it is used especially for the under 5s, but needs an upgrade to the equipment. (ii)Courtlands–more support for use as allotments with additional parking.

Other matters – The chair of Assets is leading the bid by WTC in partnership with WWMG Committee for funds to renovate the pavilion on the Memorial ground which is a war memorial as well as sports changing rooms. WTC are holding trustees, but the WWMGC as a registered charity run the ground under the terms of the original trust conveyance 'as they see fit' as a recreation ground for the people of Watchet. They are responsible, not WTC, for all costs of operation. As the building is over 100 years old and requires spending in excess of WWMGC's financial means, we have been approved to bid for over £200k from the Community Ownership Fund and received a small initial grant which allowed us to instruct surveyors and architects to draw up plans obtain a fully costed quote as the basis for our bid. This must be shown as community asset available for all, not just sport, so WTC and the committee have been consulting about the needs for how new events and accessibility can be improved, with wider community involvement in the committee's running of the ground, and how further matched financial contributions from the community can be achieved.

A member of the Public arrived at 7.22pm

The Chair thanked Committee Chairs for their informative reports.

4. **Update from Principal Authority Members- Somerset Councillor Rosemary Woods**

Somerset Councillor Rosemary Woods offered a short public apology regarding her behaviour at the previous Annual Town Meeting and gave a short report within her remit covering traffic safety, new electric buses coming to Somerset to service the no.28 Taunton-Minehead bus route in the future, purple chair incentive for Libraries across Somerset, the financial difficulties faced at Somerset Council, and many asset transfers to Parish and Town Councils due to take place in the future, but pleased to see that Watchet Town Council is working hard to cover multiple areas already.

5. **Update from Principal Authority Members- Somerset Councillor Hugh**

Somerset Councillor Hugh Davies agreed that Watchet Town Council are a fantastic Council and gave a short report within his remit, such as the relocation of Williton Library, the Registration Office, and Sure Start to West Somerset House, and Beckett House to be sold. He also noted the relocation of the vets from the Williton Industrial Estate to the West Somerset Magna Office. And a final reminder to vote on 2nd May to elect the new Crime Commissioner, those wishing to use the postal vote service must be register by Midnight on 16th April. A handout was given to residents who may wish to attend the Hinkley Point B Decommissioning consultations due to take place on 19th and 25th April.

County Councillor Rosemary Woods stood to address the floor and announced she would be leaving the meeting, stating 'I do not feel after last year's episode, I can trust myself to stay calm, so we will be leaving right now'. She and one member of the public then left the meeting at 7.56pm.

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

(i) **Watchet Task Force** – Cllr Terrett as **WTF Chair** presented the following report:

The task force was set up by Watchet Town Council after concerns were brought to our attention by local traders about the impact the B3191 Road Closure will have on the Towns Trades (both Consumer & Tourism). The Council then sought a collaborative team consisting of Watchet Town Council Reps, WACET, Coastal Communities Team, independent traders, Onion Collective, Marine Group & Visitors Centre members. We were all tasked with trying to mitigate the pending closures negative effects.

An interesting and challenging first year the Watchet Task Force working group. Some of the projects taken up have been a resounding success, some have been a little trial & error, and some have been controversial. But no matter what the opinion is, I can promise that these have been achieved with the towns best interest at heart.

The year started off with Watchet Town Council allocating £15k from its reserves to aid the TF with possible projects deemed an emergency requirement. Next came the well-publicised £30k funding and Media support from Somerset Council. However, this came with clauses. Watchet Town Council had to be the responsible authority for the funding, and it has to be used in the promotion of the Town as a response to the closure of the road. It couldn't be used to reroute cycle paths or offer cash donations to businesses subject to some reports.

We set ourselves short, medium, and long-term targets and thus far have been a part of the following projects –

Tourism – The blue signage that has appeared in the areas such as the Visitors Centre, Harbour Road, Esplanade and Swain Street was decided upon, based on a day visitors journey. They would be coming down into the Harbour Road car parking area into the VC and setting of on foot down to The East Quay & Esplanade area and round to the corner of Swain Street and Market Street where they can pick up the High Street or pick up the signs to the attractions within Market Street. The signage is Blue to match the Watchet Scratch branding and its existing visitor amenities colour. They also feature Watchets own local legends to give visitors that additional bit of insight into the historic people who once graced the area with their presence.

Highway Signage - We have liaised with Somerset Council Highways to address the issue of the Brown & White Signage within other local communities. We felt that by plastering No Through Road & Road Closed in places such as Williton and the area around Tropicaria would deter visitors from visiting the area. This has seemingly been rectified and updated. Also highlighted by the task force was the reprioritisation of the road from Swain Street (which is now effectively a cul-de-sac road) down to the Harbour Road Car Park to allow for Bus & Visitor traffic priority. Somerset Council Highways surveyed, agreed, approved planning and implemented this request. With a future view to having a Hybrid walking road for Swain Street now being investigated which would allow both vehicles and pedestrians a safe visit around the High Street & surrounding areas.

Marketing & social media – As part of the Somerset Council funding scheme they offered to support us not only financially but technically as well. Andy Doyle the Communications lead at Somerset Council has been instrumental in getting the Town out there with regards to local & national press releases as well as introducing the group to the Visit Somerset & Exmoor national media team.

To increase tourism interest from other areas of the country and to get the extra footfall, we trialled a Social Media team within the group. Consisting of Jennie Jukes (local business owner and local influencer with a large social media following), Fiona Payne (Visitor Centre and LoveWatchet.co.uk media manager) & AJ Sylvester (a local external designer) the working group allocated £12k of funding for this team to promote Watchet as a destination with professional images and increased social media presence. Jennie Jukes is here tonight and has kindly agreed to share with us the sub team's success stories.

Jenny Jukes – **as WTF Social Media project contractor** presented the following report:

The lovewatchet social media project was instigated by Watchet Task Force to promote Watchet in a positive, informative and visual way using funding provided by Somerset Council after the road closure on Cleeve Hill.

Lollisocial supported by Jennie Jukes (Myself!) were tasked with using video and professional photography to showcase Watchet events, businesses and scenery, selling the wonderful Watchet 'lifestyle' to viewers, both locally and further afield. Increasing Watchets Social Media presence and encouraging more visitors to the area.

We have gained nearly 4000 followers on our social media accounts to date.

We recently ran a 'Watchet Giveaway' on the account, with 14 town centre businesses involved, with prizes such as a night's accommodation, Sunday lunch, haircut and much more. These prizes come at no cost to the project. This competition post has been shared 250 times, reaching the social media accounts of all those shares. If everyone that shared has just 200 'friends' that is 50,000 accounts. If they have the average 500 friends, that is a reach of 125,000 accounts. This shows the power of social media and its broad reach, with so many people commenting and sharing what a fantastic giveaway it is, which has generated great publicity for Watchet.

Our posts have had some exceptionally high views, a video recently showing the high tide in the harbour was viewed over 22,000 times, our business owners wishing our followers a 'happy Christmas' was viewed over 35,000 times and a video showing our recent Sunday Street fair was shared over 30 times and viewed by thousands.

We have been supported by 'Visit Somerset' 'The West Somerset Railway' and 'Visit Exmoor' and many other local businesses, with them repeatedly sharing our posts and videos, the West Somerset Railway have done very well from our advertising as it gets a very big reaction online.

On a personal note, I use my own account to share the 'lovewatchet' posts, which is something I would normally charge for as I have over 150,000 followers.

We have been very lucky to have Jesse Roth a professional film maker join the team, he uses a drone to create the most stunning films, he is working at a heavily reduced fee as he is so keen to support the project.

I think it is worth mentioning the costs of social media advertising as opposed to 'paper' advertising.

50,000 paper leaflets will cost around £6,200, these are often read once then put out for recycling and are certainly not shared with others. The rough costing of 50,000 views on

social media via our 'lovewatchet' project is around £78. It is worth remembering that the viewing on social media is infinite and continues exponentially!

Of course there is always a place for paper advertising, but I think my point is that if you have limited funds to spend and you have to choose between the two, then it makes obvious sense to choose social media.

Unfortunately, the funding we have had for the project will come to an end in June, we would love to see the project continue and will be hoping that there may be some funding available to make that happen.

I would like to finish by letting you know that we recently asked Watchet business owners to fill in a feedback form. These are available for you all to see but let me share some of the comments from them.

'Re-posting to our Facebook page has increased the followers of OUR page'

'The lovewatchet social media reaches potential visitors'

Comment from a visitor. 'I saw a post about the steam train and had to visit'

Social media is a wonderful tool and the fact that lovewatchet brings it all to one place is fab!

Comment from a visitor. 'We love the posts on Instagram about the town, it has never looked so good'. And finally, from one of the feedback forms 'It has really put Watchet 'on the Map''

As we come to the end of our funding, I would ask that extending the funding of this worthwhile project be seriously considered.

Cllr Terrett continued:

Urban Planning – Also using approx. £10k of the achieved funding from Somerset Council the group also decided that it would be beneficial for town to update the 2003 Urban Planning Document. A document that offers possible schemes and project options based on feedback from the residential, community and industry. The permanent road closure means that the town must adapt to its new environment, and it was decided that we would source this urban update as a matter of urgency and after voting on 4 possible contractor options we set upon the urban planning specialist in Feria. Cllr Murphy will now kindly run through the project update and statuses.

Cllr Murphy as **Council representative to WTF** reported that Urban Design Specialists, Feria, have been appointed to create a new urban plan for Watchet to aid the town in adapting to its new environment. They spent 2 days in Watchet recently and spoke to over 20 organisations. Feria were amazing that Watchet has over 120 voluntary organisations. Based on the feedback given they will be working on proposals for a further public consultation in June/July 2024.

Cllr Terrett continued:

Finally, with the remaining funding we have available (around £8k) it was decided that this should be put towards helping new events in the Town. Local events are key to local businesses survival and if we could unearth the next self-sustainable Wheelbarrow Race or Watchet Festival then that would do wonders for all. So, Fiona Payne & Cllr Murphy developed a criteria and application form alongside Nicky McClean (Senior Economic Development Officer at Somerset Council) and urged community members to come forward with their ideas with a view to helping them get off the ground. This has come with quite a few success stories such as the Words in Watchet Festival (to be told by XXXX) and exciting future projects such as The Gardening Show (to be told by Cllr Irven).

All in all, a very positive and productive year with a lot of reflection to be had and I look forward excitedly to the year ahead.

(ii) **Words in Watchet**

Representatives gave the following report:

The Words in Watchet comprises of a small team of 5 volunteers. Following funding from Watchet Task Force their first year was a huge success, inspiring residents and bringing in over 500 visitors to the town. 18 events in 8 venues were organised, along with free events for children.

Plans already underway to ensure the event can continue annually. Increased venues and events are planned.

(iii) **Watchet Garden Show**

A representative of Watchet Garden Show gave the following update:

The group started as a Gardening club 18 months ago to encourage more people to take up gardening and help with wellbeing and mental health. There are currently over 25 members.

On Sunday 21st July 2024 there will be a Gardening Show at the Memorial Ground, with garden/wildlife related stalls. There will be vegetable/flower/food produce competitions and arts & crafts for all to enjoy. Please support the event.

The event would not have been possible without the funding from WTF and over 40 businesses contributing toward raffle prizes.

Hoping for this to be a new annual event for Watchet, if successful this year. Volunteers required, if interested meetings are held on the 3rd Friday of each month at the RBL.

Chair thanked the representatives for their reports.

7. **Presentation of the “Best Shop” Shield for 2023-24** was awarded to Cotton Street Collective, presented to Sue Parr and Calley Owen.
8. **Presentation of the “Millington” Shield to a local organisation in recognition of its services to the community in 2023-24** – This was awarded to the Quantock & Watchet Dementia Alliance and presented to Margaret Tatham and Keith Wiseman.

Before the next item the Chair wished to address the sad and sudden passing of fellow Councillor Cllr Summers and passed on condolences to her family.

9. **Open Forum** – registered electors of Watchet were given the opportunity to raise their concerns and ask questions of their elected representatives, including:
 - Parking issues within the town – Cllr Whetlor informed elector that WTC has been working in collaboration with Somerset Council to try and increase parking bays in Watchet car parks – this is ongoing
 - Cliff damage concerns – not just Cleeve Hill Helwell and Doniford are likely to be affected soon. The Elector was informed that ongoing collaboration with Geckoella, WTC & Somerset Council continues to monitor this situation. And WTC is putting pressure on SC to act.
 - Harbour & East Quay are public Assets so should have a voice – Cllr Irven informed electorate that the areas are Somerset Council owned. WTC is working with other authorities to ensure that residents have a voice on many subjects, not only the Marina, but on controversial housing developments, such as Cleeve Hill & Parsonage Farm.
 - Ownership of railway footbridge, graffiti issues need addressing – elector was informed that the railway footbridge is owned by Somerset Council. Visitor Centre Manager has a tin of correct paint and regularly tends to graffiti issues.
 - Road safety concerns at new Harbour Rd/Swain Street junction – Elector informed that Somerset Highways approved the new layout design after full H&S risk checks, although Watchet Town Council has asked if anything more can do to ensure motorists and pedestrians are kept safe, their reply was it takes over 6 months for motorists and residents to adapt to the change of a new layout of this magnitude. Somerset Highways will monitor. It was suggested that a mirror on Harbour Road may help, and 20mph limit explored. Suggestions will be passed on to Somerset Highways.
 - Praise given to WTC to see things getting done in Watchet – Well done
 - Memorial Ground Pavilion update – work is continuing with support of WTC for a huge funding bid to restore the Watchet Pavilion which is falling in to a state of disrepair. The Committee wish to engage with the public. AGM Friday 19th April at the Pavilion at 7.30pm, come along to have your say.
10. **Chairman’s closing address**- Cllr Campbell thanked everyone for attending the meeting, to 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 9.05pm

Signed:

Date:

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