

WATCHET ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

Held at the Methodist School Room, Harbour Road, Watchet

on 19 April 2016 at 7.00pm

Present: Cllr Bowden, Cllr de Renzy-Martin, Cllr Irvén, Cllr Johnson, Cllr Murphy (Chair), Cllr Nuttall, Cllr Silvester, Cllr Waterman Cllr Westcott, Cllr Whetlor

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

Apologies Cllr Richards, Cllr Roberts, County Cllr Davies, District Cllr Woods

1. Chairman's Welcome and Address – Councillor Peter Murphy

Welcome to the 2016 Annual Town Meeting. I would like to start by thanking Sarah Reed, Town Clerk, and her staff for making the arrangements for the meeting tonight. It is good to see so many people present for this meeting which is for the Town Council to inform citizens of the work they have been doing during the year on their behalf. It is also for community groups to publicise what they do. It is also for the presentation of the Best Shop Shield to the business judged as making the best contribution to the retail offer in Watchet during the past year and to the community group who have made a mark in the town over the last twelve months. The Town Council was elected for a four year term in May 2015. Only eleven nominations were received for the twelve seats so a co-option process was initiated and applications were invited to fill the final place. Two people came forward and after one withdrew, Council co-opted Cllr Izzy Silvester to fill the final seat on the Council in June. The Council meets every month except August and has held eleven meetings and an extraordinary meeting last year. During the year, a new member of staff was appointed into the office as the Clerical Officer reduced her hours of work.

During the year, the Council heard presentations from a number of people and groups who explained what they do, some of whom were making requests for the support of the Council.

- Williton Parish Council requested support for their campaign against the failure of West Somerset Council to pass on a parish support grant and Council agreed to back this.
- The Coastal Communities Team requested our support for their Economic Plan which we were pleased to give and you will hear more of that later in the meeting.
- Watchet Dementia Friends asked the Council to join the group which, again, we were pleased to do. Again, you will hear more from them later.
- We had a presentation from Debbie Dennis, Village Agent for Watchet who explained her role.
- In November we received a presentation on the CCTV system and were able to evaluate how it was performing. It seemed to be broadly successful in providing evidence of crime and reassurance on public safety to those concerned.
- Tidal Lagoon Power Company explained their Swansea bay tidal lagoon project and Council informed them of the earthquake of 1906 which had affected the Bristol Channel area.
- Watchet Bowling Club presented details of their plans for an expansion of their facilities and requested Council's support - this will be decided next month.

As the second Mayor of Watchet, I succeeded Cllr Loretta Whetlor in May last year; I was called upon to carry out several civic duties which illustrate the wide range of community life going on in Watchet.

- I started the Coast to Coast Cycle Challenge in May, by which I don't mean I got on my bike, rather, I blew a klaxon and steams of cyclists set off on a long cycle ride to the south coast over the hills and far away...
- I helped a representative of the Carnival family present the trophies after the Watchet Carnival Wheel Barrow Race.
- I was invited to cut the cake to celebrate 25 years of Knights Templar School.
- In July, I opened the celebrations of Waterloo 200 years and Magna Carta 600 years and reflected that one of my ancestors was awarded a Waterloo medal for serving in the Grenadier Guards at the battle. In November, on a rain swept esplanade, I opened the Caturm's event.
- Also in November, I laid a wreath in memory of the fallen of two world wars at the new war memorial.
- I was privileged to accompany Bernice Danby to the Chairman of Somerset County Council's awards for Service to the Community.

- A week ago, I was invited to a meal by the Twinning Society and I was privileged to meet the Mayor of our twin town, St Renan. It was fortunate that his English was better than my school boy French!

On Friday last, I was pleased to be asked to cut the ribbon at the ceremony to declare open the new allotments on Maglands Road in partnership with Magna Housing Association. The chairman of Environment & Planning Committee will describe this project later.

Much time this year in Council has been spent considering reports from the Boat Museum Working Party, consisting of Cllrs Irven, Murphy, Nuttall and Whetlor. This was concerned with the move of the Council office and meeting space to a new building alongside the Boat museum which is taking shape as we speak.

You will see in the minutes of the Annual Town Meeting last year that the project was already under discussion then. Nearly every meeting of Council last year discussed the progress and made decisions to continue the partnership working with Onion Collective and the museum. The minutes were published on the notice board and posted on the website so that all who were interested could follow the progress. Legislation states that in order for a council to be transparent in its business transactions it must publish all minutes of all council meetings, the Town Council has complied with this. The West Somerset Free Press conscientiously through its reporter, Cilla Webb, informed a wider audience. Watchet Town Council has been diligent in seeking advice from Government bodies throughout this process, and has followed lawful procedure. The relocation of the Council Offices was discussed as far back as 2005 as part of the East Quay development, where new council offices formed part of this development, which unfortunately did not proceed. The current office space is inadequate, and the current conditions that the Council Staff work in are not safe, as highlighted in a report from a Health & Safety consultant in 2011, as the office has no fire exit. Under current Employment Law the Town Council must meet its responsibilities as an employer. This is a serious matter, which the Town Council has been trying to address by looking for alternate premises for some time, with no success, until the opportunities to become part of the new Visitors Centre presented themselves. Government agencies advised that the provision of better working conditions for the Council staff were a priority and that consultation on this matter was not required under the law, however consultation on how the project was to be funded, as this involved the use of public money, did need to be put to the consultation process and after the Town Council heard that the project had been approved by the District Council's Planning Committee in September, the Town Council decided to invest £60K into the project and agreed to fund this half from reserves and half by seeking a loan from the Public Works Loan Board. Two days of consultation were held in October 2015 to allow residents to comment on the how this project would be funded.

In October it was confirmed that the council's investment was to be split up as follows: £52.5K for a freehold interest in the offices, £2.5K contribution towards the shared space / visitor centre, and the balance of £5K towards legal fees and moving costs making a total of £60K as previously agreed. An independent valuer would be appointed to value the new building as part of our due diligence to ensure that the Council's investment was covered by the value of the building.

In November, the Heads of Terms of the agreement between the Council and Onion Collective were signed and the results of the consultation were reported. There was overwhelming support (over 90%) for the questions posed concerning taking out loan finance. Council, recognising the concern emerging about the future of the current Council building, agreed to consult the public about this. A builder was appointed and the transfer of the building from West Somerset Council to the Onion Collective was awaited. This was delayed until January thus delaying the start of the build. Permission to borrow from the PWLB was applied for.

A consultation document was widely distributed in the town in March this year and an online version was available. Considerable efforts were made to publicise this and leaflets were distributed through the Trader publication and by council staff and Councillors. People had a 4 week period to return their views. Two days of consultation were held and the results were reported to Council this month.

This month it was confirmed that the Council's investment of £52.5K into the office freehold would be covered by the value of the new building. The results of the consultation were reported. There was only a 5% return and as a guide to what the Council should do, views were very closely split between sell and retain. The working group was empowered to continue to get valuations on the building and to cost repairs needed whilst engaging with community groups and individuals who expressed an interest in running the building as a community space or a business space. Council still has an open mind as to the future of the building and may consult the community again when there are more definite options on the table.

Council has received permission to borrow up to £30K but as of today, no money has been paid to the Onion Collective and the loan has not been applied for. Provision has been made to repay the loan through the Council Tax precept.

There seems to be a misconception amongst some members of the public that the Council building was gifted to the people of Watchet, it was not, it was purchased by the Town Council from the Wyndham Estate in 1992, and the sale is well documented.

The Council approved the annual statement of accounts and an annual report. As in previous years, the Annual Report was delivered to households in Watchet. In January, the precept was approved as well as the earmarking of reserves and the chair of F & GP will refer to this in his report.

The Council approved two new policies this year: a Social Media Policy to guide Councillors in their use of the likes of Facebook and Twitter, and a Safeguarding Policy. It also adopted a new Civic Protocol to set out what the Mayor can and can't do. Council decided the future of the hammock left to us by Optomen TV company who made Kevin McCloud's programme set at Doniford Bay.

Council works well using the Committees which have delegated budgets and delegated powers. Also, Councillors sit on working parties to discuss issues in depth, making reports to Council or Committee of their deliberations. At least seven working parties have been in existence during the year and have contributed much to decision making. The most recent working party to be formed will engage with West Somerset Council about the future of the public toilets in the town. We recognise that a tourist town needs public toilets and the working party will consider the best way to keep them open. A successful series of Wednesday markets were held from May to September and thanks must go to the staff for this. The Market Manager, the Town Warden, assisted by the Groundsman and the office staff have all contributed to a market that was really vibrant during August as visitors and locals thronged into Watchet.

It has been another busy year for Watchet Town Council which I have had the privilege to chair this year and next year promises to be as busy if not busier.

2. To adopt the Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 21 April 2015 as a true and correct record and matters of report from the minutes.

Eleanor Crane proposed that *'the minutes of the meeting held on the 21st of April 2015 are adopted as a true and correct record of proceedings.'* Seconded by Sara Summers. Carried. They were then signed off by the Chair of the meeting.

3. Reports from Committee Chairs on the Committees' activities during 2015/16

Environment & Planning – Cllr Dave Westcott

The committee comprises the following Councillors:

Sally de Renzy-Martin, Cosmo Johnson, Peter Murphy, Robin Nuttall, Lorraine Roberts, Izzy Silvester, and myself, and I feel privileged to have chaired such a pro-active committee for the last 12 months.

During the period 2015-16 the committee has debated and made decisions on many matters and issues that affect Watchet and I will now highlight some of them for your information:

- **Planning Applications:** Part of the committee's remit is to review and make observations on planning applications received from the planning authority pertinent to Watchet. The committee has reviewed over the last year over 34 plans ranging from replacement windows in Swain Street to the erection of one residential dwelling in Kingsland.

- **Replacement or repair of the broken bin on the Esplanade:** This Committee has been committed to resolving this matter since it first came to the notice of Town Council Officers in Spring 2015, and was addressed by the Environment and Planning Committee when efforts by West Somerset Council Officers to achieve a repair were unsuccessful. A series of complaints from residents were received into the Town Council Office on how the bin wrapped up in black plastic on the Esplanade was an eyesore to residents and off-putting for visitors visiting the town during the tourism season. Since that date the Town Council has been pushing for the bin to be either repaired or replaced, but no action was taken by West Somerset Council.

- Eventually, after the Town Council took the initiative, we have received confirmation that a new bin, sourced by Watchet Town Council, has been ordered and West Somerset Council will pay the Town Council £150 towards the replacement.

- The Town Council regrets the length of time it has taken for West Somerset Council to resolve this matter but are assured this is now progressing and are keen to keep good working relations with West Somerset Council.

- **Flood Plan** A public meeting took place on the 23 November 2015, where residents whose properties were identified as being in a low risk flooding area were invited to listen to speakers, who gave advice on this subject to allay any concerns, and volunteers as potential wardens were asked to come forward. Watchet Town Council is currently in the process of formulating a 'Flood Plan' through representatives of this Committee, and it is in the early stages of completion.
- **20mph speed limit through Swain Street** Due to several requests from residents, members of this Committee agreed to pursue and support the implementation of a 20mph speed limit in Swain Street. However, this was not a straight forward process and Somerset County Council informed us that this matter could only be progressed through the 'Small Improvement's Scheme' and through the appointed County Councillor for Watchet, Cllr Davies. Cllr Davies informed us that only two schemes could be looked at in one year, so Watchet's request will be addressed in the new financial year. Watch this space!
- **Dog Fouling:** The 'Dogwatch' Scheme set up in 2014, is still monitored, and any areas that are reported as 'bad dog fouling' areas are checked. However the Town Council's resources are very limited, as enforcement of dog fouling on the Watchet streets and pathways is the responsibility of West Somerset Council who also have limited resources for enforcement. This Committee did recently deliver a leaflet to all properties in the worst affected areas, asking residents to assist the Town Council by confidentially reporting persistent offenders in an attempt to make them aware of their responsibilities as a dog owner, this is ongoing.
- **West Street Car Park** is owned by Watchet Town Council and is managed by the Clerk through the Admin Assistant. There are 74 spaces for rental and a further 4 spaces available for short stay visitors. The Car park is currently full to capacity, and there is a waiting list. The committee monitors the usages and charges and is responsible for the upkeep of the car park. They also own and oversee the allotments in the same area.
- **Flytipping:** This Committee brings such matters as recycling problems, fly tipping and unwanted rubbish to the attention of the relevant authorities.

Finance & General Purposes Committee (including the Cemetery) - Cllr John Irven

I would like to express thanks to all the members of the FG&P committee (Cllr Bowden, Cllr de Renzy-Martin, Cllr Irven (Chair), Cllr Murphy, Cllr Nuttall, Cllr Westcott, Cllr Whetlor) and all the staff for their support during the year, in what has continued to be a challenging economic environment.

The F&GP committee administers the council's grants and donations budget, where we made donations and corporate grants to Watchet Summertime and Watchet Carnival, and recommends the precept for council approval, administers the new cemetery and personnel matters, and is responsible for the care of council owned assets.

We appointed Harriet Gibbard as administrative assistant, who with Sue Lowe our clerical officer, provide part time support to Sarah Reed our full time Town Clerk. Harriet looks after the Watchet Community Centre, West Street Car Park and environmental issues, whilst Sue covers tourism and cemetery issues, and where our cemetery working group has continued to review cemetery operation and costs. Having been approached by a resident to consider the matter, the group recommended that the current policy on headstones for the children's cemetery was immediately relaxed to allow the FGP committee discretion when approving designs more sympathetic to families' aspirations within our overall cemetery policy guidelines, which are now being reviewed more generally to assess the potential for update. Attempts continued sensitively to contact families where headstones are leaning or in poor condition, in order that we can remedy the situation and comply with Environmental Health and Safety requirements. The 10 year history of expenditure at the cemetery on burials, headstones, paths, toilets, walls, car parking and grounds maintenance was reviewed in detail, showing that the income we receive for burial fees is not covering the full cost of operating and maintaining the cemetery. We had not increased fees since 2010, and therefore recommended that an increase be accepted for 2016, with an annual review thereafter to ensure that we balance income against costs in order to be able to continue providing this essential service. In addition to our grounds maintenance at the cemetery and memorial ground, council staff now cover St Decuman's closed Churchyard, Doniford Play area, Henry Davey field, West Street car park, and also some land owned by Somerset County Council within Watchet no longer tended by them.

Although in 2016 the Committee had recommended a standstill budget to Full Council, the precept had to be increased by 4.1% to cover a shortfall from West Somerset District Council (WSDC) who had refused to pass on a particular central government grant. This shortfall has continued into 2016, and similarly, now that SCC have withdrawn operating funding for the youth service, we have had to budget for WTC covering these service provision costs, together with the upkeep of the community building on the memorial ground. The cost of servicing the move to the new council buildings has also been planned, and we have had to budget for costs for staff to be enrolled in new statutory pension

arrangements which have previously not been funded. Despite making some operating savings together with improving the offset proportion of our income, we had to recommend increasing the precept by approx.8% in 2016/17.

The committee has provided financial guidance to the working group responsible for the move to the boat museum project. By investing £52.K capital plus legal fees and moving costs to a project total of £60k, funded £30k from WTC reserves, and £30k from a loan from the Public Loans Board, we will obtain a fully disabled compliant facility with fit for purpose working conditions, and with operating costs allowing substantial savings to be made over those for the existing council building. By taking out a loan, we maintain WTC reserves at above 50% of the annual precept level in order that we can demonstrate that we meet the guidance of the 'Governance and Accountability Guide' for local councils, and allow the council to maintain a sound financial position operating within budget. For this I am grateful for, and value the advice of, our Finance Officer, Sarah Reed.

Tourism & Leisure Committee - Cllr Cosmo Johnson

The Tourism & Leisure Committee is a very positive, pro-active and hard-working committee which has within its remit responsibility for the following:

I will start by thanking my fellow committee members and all the council staff for their support during the past year.

- Promotion of tourism in Watchet via working in partnership with the tourist office to deliver the Service Level Agreement which draws down funding from WSC.
- Maintaining play areas
- Provision of flowers and hanging baskets in municipal areas
- Managing bookings on the Esplanade for events and charitable organisations
- Managing and updating the Council Website

This year has seen a wide and varied range of events take place on the Esplanade: Charity stalls, West Somerset Morris Men, West Somerset Brass Band concerts, Watchet Live/Carnival events, Watchet Summertime including the Council Fun Day, a day commemorating Magna Carta and Waterloo, Queen Catums Day and many other organisations have taken advantage of this public space. Not least a gathering to celebrate the life of Jean Howe a much loved stalwart of Watchet who gave so much time and energy to promote the town.

Memorial Ground and Play Areas:

This year saw the outdoor Table Tennis table installed as a free activity for all to use. The community garden and veg patch is up and running in conjunction with Watchet Roots. The outdoor gym has seen its first full year of use and been enjoyed by people of all ages. This committee is currently looking at updating and improving the children's play equipment via funding from WSC and its own budget. We also approved funding for repairs and improvements to the changing rooms at Henry Davey Playing Field. We approved funds to refurbish the tennis courts, one has been done and the other is in the pipeline this year. This year also saw the Active April events taking place (the last one is this Saturday in the children's play area).

Flowers:

Once again the floral displays around the town and the entrances brightened up the season for tourists and residents alike thanks to the hard work and inspiration of the Council Groundsman.

Promotion of Watchet:

The Committee approved the installation of new re-designed signs, the main one being at Minehead Railway Station. Visitors to the town via the WSR is a vital part of the Tourism Strategy, this year 45,000 tickets to Watchet were sold which in conjunction with "Rover" tickets potentially means that over 100,000 people came to Watchet using the railway. The launch of special family tickets for guests of Butlins to come to Watchet will surely increase this number thus re-iterating how important the WSR is to the town.

The Committee again approved and contributed to production of 'What's On in Watchet' leaflets which were launched at the Minehead leaflet exchange where we again had a stand. This leaflet was produced in partnership with Watchet Coastal Community Team. The T&L Committee appoints a representative onto the CCT committee who reports back on a monthly basis.

We have been active regarding both the Visit Somerset website and the WTC website.

Other matters of note: The Committee once again granted funds to sponsor free concerts by Watchet Town Band and West Somerset Brass Band.

The Committee drafted an updated agreement regarding the hire and usage of Council owned gazebos, which have been used more than ever this year.

The Committee has engaged in correspondence with WSC regarding the general upkeep (or lack of it) of the Esplanade, being a main focal point for any visitors coming to Watchet. We have been advised that our concerns have been looked into and hopefully will be actioned soon.

The Committee again supported the annual clear out of the Tidal Pool on West Beach. The committee approved funding for Watchet Fun Day which provided a day of diverse and exciting activities on the Esplanade as one of the highlights of Watchet Summertime in August.

Youth & Community Centre Management Committee – Cllr Sally de Renzy-Martin

When the Management Committee who was responsible for overseeing the running of the Youth & Community Centre disbanded in November 2013, Watchet Town Council as owners of the building took over this role, and formed its own committee to manage the building.

The Committee comprises of:

Cllrs Bowden, Irven, Johnson, Murphy, Nuttall, Westcott, Whetlor, and myself as Chair

The Committee has been very active in the following:

1. The refurbishment programme which included the installation of new windows and doors, an insulated ceiling in the main hall, and a redecoration throughout has now been completed and it is hoped that the new revamped centre will attract a wider usage. The Committee now plan to look at re-branding of the building and would seek the assistance of the Watchet young adults for their ideas, together with their input into an amazing 'mural' which has been commissioned by a local artist, the unveiling day is fast approaching, so watch this space.
2. The Committee outsources the Youth Provision to Minehead Eye, to provide two youth club sessions per week, supervised by a Youth Leader, and the attendance figures are very encouraging with over 40 youths attending per session.
3. The Admin Assistant manages the bookings of the centre, and a new booking system has been put in place with the assistance of the former management Committee members, and it is proving successful. Any management issues that need addressing are presented to the Committee at the appropriate meeting
4. The Committee has also initiated an electrical installation inspection of the building, and has installed a telephone and Wi-Fi system for the users.

4. A questions and answer session with the Principal Authority Members for the West Somerset area and the Police Authority

PC Andy Ware on behalf of the Police Authority reported the following:

There has been a radical change within the last 12 months with regard to reporting crime; it can't be specific to Watchet as all figures are now collated into a wider area of Watchet and Williton. Crime however, was on a downward spiral at 3%, but last year it went the other way and went up to 6% recorded crime. With regard to the local neighbourhood police teams, there have been changes, there were 3 Beat Managers and 4 PCSO's, and these have been reduced to 1 Beat Manager and 2 PCSO's, so the resources are limited.

Questions from the floor:

Eleanor Crane asked: has the installation of CCTV on the memorial ground deterred bad behaviour?

PC Ware replied: yes definitely, it is a proven method to detect crime.

Rodney Strutt asked: with the alcohol ban on the Memorial Ground, does it cause a nuisance?

PC Ware replied: No

The Town Clerk interjected that there is a misconception that there is an alcohol ban on the memorial ground, there is not, there is a Public Designated Order placed on the memorial ground, which gives powers to the Police to confiscate alcohol from minors, and also from adults behaving in an anti-social manner whilst under the influence of alcohol.

Rodney Strutt asked District Cllr Murphy: When you are a District and Town Councillor is there not a clash about what you can talk about?

Cllr Murphy responded: At every district council meeting an interest can be declared, so this does not cause conflict. Any matter regarding Watchet discussed at District level, Cllr Murphy and Westcott have the option to withdraw from the meeting.

Cllr Westcott interjected, this is not the case all of the time, and there is an opportunity to help Watchet.

Cllr Murphy thanked PC Ware for his input.

5. Reports from community organisations on their activities in the last year and any future events to note:

(i) Coastal Community Team (CCT)

Naomi Griffith explained that the CCT was the formation of a new group. Coastal towns had the opportunity to apply for funding to support regeneration in their town, and Watchet was awarded £10,000. There were two pre-existing groups, the Action Group and the Tourism Group, they have merged together to focus on tourism and retail matters. An economic plan has been formulated and this plan brings organisations around the town together to co-ordinate projects to apply for funding pots, with a set aim, to achieve action and direct delivery for Watchet. The CCT has been involved in:

- economy with infrastructure support
- Develop a vibrant and compelling brand
- Create jobs and enterprise
- Support retail development and opportunities
- Enhance cultural opportunities for visitors and locals
- Work collaboratively to get the best outcomes

It is testament to Watchet how everyone works collectively and collaboratively for the town; it is a very positive way forward for the CCT.

The bulk of the plan outlines a section of projects and team members are mutually supportive to each other's plan, which is proving to be a successful model. Rebranding exercise to include

- 'What's on in Watchet 2016' leaflet
- New street fairs
- Projects and signage improvement
- New Map

Short term projects:

- Boat Museum refurbishment and new visitor centre
- Strategic development for tourism in Watchet

Short term actions:

- Splash Point Project
- Install Wi-Fi in 'down town' Watchet
- Build a website

Molly Quint as the Chair of the CCT sub-group responsible for the street fairs reported that the sub group was formed in December, with the aim of increasing tourism to Watchet by encouraging visitors to stay and shop. The shop owners were consulted with regard to the locations of the gazebos throughout the town, and the group has a model of what may work, but it is work in progress and may need tweaking. It is hoped that each fair will have a different theme and will be held on the first Sunday of the month from May to October. The first fair has a 'May Day' theme, and there has been a great response from stallholders wanting to sign up and get involved. If this experiment succeeds, then it can be built upon and improved year upon year.

Questions from the Floor - none

Cllr Murphy thanked Naomi Griffith for her presentation.

(ii) Dementia Action Alliance:

- Margaret Tatham congratulated Watchet Town Council for being the 14th official member of the alliance. One year ago she started the alliance as Watchet has such a great community and she knew it would be supported; she then wanted to go a step further, so she joined the action alliance. Margaret Tatham continued to say that two thirds of dementia sufferers live in their own homes, and the alliance helps sufferers to join in with everyday tasks and activities, help has been offered from the Bowling Club, and the 'Buddy' system, this allows dementia sufferers to continue playing. There has been great support from shop owners, especially the 'Corner

Café' who have placed toilet directional signs on their windows, this all helps. Watchet Town Council has offered great admin support from the Council Office and has displayed posters around the town in noticeboards. There has been financial assistance from many organisations and groups around Watchet, and the Sanctuary has been wonderful helping provide a free of charge venue for the 'Forget me Not' café, and there is educational and specialist advice given to carers from 'Compass Care' which is an invaluable service.

- Dementia Awareness week runs from the 15th to the 22 May 2016, and we are coming up to our one year anniversary. Everyone please take a leaflet and spread the word.

The Mayor thanked Margaret Tatham for her presentation.

(ii) Watchet Summertime:

Rachel Irven informed those in attendance of the Summertime week of activities, taking place this year from the 14th August and ending with a fireworks display on Saturday 20 August 2016. The event takes place in and around the esplanade and there are fun activities for all ages, locals and visitors. Thanks goes to Watchet Town Council for the grant they gave towards the purchase of large chess and Lego set, and to the Marina who co-ordinate the fireworks display. There are a wonderful band of volunteers who allow this event to take place, and working with community groups and authorities, we have a great programme; reference was then made to the website for the list of events.

The mayor thanked Rachel Irven for her presentation.

6. Presentation of the "Best Shop" shield for 2015-16

The 'Best Shop' Shield for 2015-16 was awarded to the 'Watchet Post Office and was presented to the proprietor, Mr Rashedul Haque.

7. Presentation of the "Millington" shield to a local organisation in recognition of its services to the community in 2015-16

The 'Millington' Shield for 2015-16 was awarded to 'The Harbour Community Bookshop' and was presented to Mr Jeff Bird.

8. Open Forum – to receive questions from the registered electors of Watchet

Gordon Perkins asked: with reference to the response of the consultation survey re: Council Chambers printed in the West Somerset Free Press, he conducted a survey of his own, and a number of areas did not receive a questionnaire to his knowledge.

Cllr Murphy replied: The questionnaire was distributed via the Trader newspaper, the WS Free Press office had supplied on request a list of all the streets in Watchet they deliver to, the Town Council assumed that deliveries would be made to all the streets on the list and were only made aware afterwards that this was not the case. The streets not on the list had been covered by Councillors and Council staff making deliveries. There was also an online survey on the Council website, a press release in the WS Free Press, two consultation events held in the Council Chamber attended by Councillors, and notices displayed on noticeboards around the town. When the Town Council were notified by helpful residents that certain streets had been omitted from the delivery, they endeavoured to cover the missed areas, this consultation event was highly publicised and covered a 4 week period, the Town Council however, will take up with the Trader why deliveries were not made to the streets specified on their delivery list.

Rodney Strutt asked: Why was there not a public meeting?

Cllr Murphy replied: There were consultation events, where residents were given the opportunity to talk to Councillors

Sue Upstone commented: The Annual Town meeting is publicised and local residents are invited to attend, whilst Watchet has better attendance figures than other Councils around the area, it is not a good representation of the population, but it is what it is – Watchet relies on word of mouth, there was every opportunity to get a questionnaire if people were interested.

Chris Burnell replied: Everyone should have received a questionnaire, if it was publicised that a leaflet was available.

Sarah Reed, Town Clerk interjected: The consultation questionnaire and consultation events were well publicised in the same manner as the Town Council has publicised consultation events in the past, there was an opportunity for residents to respond.

Graham Thomas commented: I didn't receive a questionnaire in the post, but when I realised I had to go and find a copy.

Graham Kennedy commented: I received the Trader and put it in the bin, this is the risk you take when distributing leaflets through this process.

Nick Cotton asked: Can the Town Council give assurances that there will be further consultation before a decision is made on the future of the Council building?

Cllr Murphy responded: I cannot speak on behalf of my fellow Councillors, but if any decisions to consult are taken they will be at a future Council meeting.

Nick Cotton reiterated: Can Councillors give their assurances at this meeting?

Cllr Murphy responded: Councillors have not ruled anything out at this time and remain open minded; no decisions have been made on the future of the building.

Graham Thomas asked: Who will do the work, if renovations need to be done on the building?

Cllr Murphy replied: We are still awaiting quotations for the work, no decisions have been made.

Sara Summers asked: Who deals with Car Parks and Disabled blue badges, as I acquired a shoppers permit and I got a ticket? The signage is not very clear and there is a lot of confusing information given out by West Somerset Council Officers. Can Cllr Westcott take this up as the portfolio holder for West Somerset Council?

Graham Thomas responded: There is signage on the actual parking machine about disabled parking now being charged for, but most disabled users don't go to the machine, so they will not be aware that they now have to pay, it is not made very clear.

Eleanor Crane asked: What is the future of the former Paper Mill site?

Cllr Westcott responded: It will probably be put up for sale, but as yet don't know if the site will be sold as a whole, or sold off in small units.

Nick Tapp commented: he is very frustrated with the bin problem on the Esplanade, any news on when the bin will be either fixed or replaced?

Cllr Murphy replied: The Town Council are also frustrated with this matter, which has been ongoing since January 2014 with no action from West Somerset Council. I found out by accident that there had been a quotation sought to fix the bin for £150, but this had not been progressed, despite several chases, the Town Council through its Environment & Planning Committee intervened and a bin has now been purchased and will be installed very soon.

Rodney Strutt asked: What is happening with tourism in Watchet and the Tourist Office and Visitor Centre funding?

Cllr Murphy replied: The Town Council used to sign a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with West Somerset Council as an intermediary, to ensure that a grant was awarded to the Tourist Office. This was done to assist the Tourist Office as they were not constituted. The Town Council has since assisted the Committee to become a constituted body and they can now bid for a tourism grant independently from West Somerset Council. It is understood, that once the SLA expires in September 2016, West Somerset Council will put out a bid for tourism provision, and invite tenders.

9. Chairman's closing address

Cllr Murphy thanked everyone for attending the meeting, and for coming out, he also thanked the Community groups for their presentations he concluded by commenting that the Town Council don't have all the answers but try their very best on behalf of the people of Watchet.

The meeting closed at 8.54pm

Signed:

Date: