

**Watchet Town Council located at  
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## ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2017-18

### **Chairman's Summary of another positive year for Watchet Town Council.**

- Watchet Town Council was elected by the local people to represent local interests and to provide local services. We remain a democratic organisation, close to the people and are constantly alert to local needs either by personal approach or via the internet.
- Councillors who serve on Watchet Town Council do so in the interests of the town and not according to their political affiliations, they do not receive any sort of remuneration and also represent the Town Council on various outside bodies.
- The dedication of Councillors is seen in a vibrant, forward thinking and proactive Town Council.
- Watchet Town Council comprises 12 Councillors. We have four separate Committees and two Sub-Committees; Environment & Planning Committee, Finance & General Purposes Committee, Tourism & Leisure Committee, the Watchet Community Centre Management Committee, Market Sub-Committee and Personnel Sub-Committee.
- Close working partnerships with various agencies and other local authorities.

### ***Within the last 12 months Watchet Town Council has been involved in the following:***

**Changes in the Council staffing:** – Harriet Gibbard was promoted to Admin Officer in July 2017 after a successful 3 month trial, and Joanne Grellier was appointed as the 'Admin Support Officer' in July 2017 to further assist Sarah Reed, Town Clerk. Paul Flynn is the 'Operations Assistant' who was appointed in January 2016 and assists Niall Watson, the Groundsman. All members of staff continue to provide an efficient service for the public, despite a very challenging workload.

**Council fights for Watchet Library:** - The Town Council through the appointed Library Working Group is currently working very hard to ensure that the Library continues as a key resource to the town. The working group submitted a response to the Library Consultation ran by Somerset County Council on the proposed redesign of libraries throughout the County. The Town Council has submitted a request to West Somerset Council for the building to be passed over to their ownership via an asset transfer, but as yet both matters are ongoing.

**Harbour Road Toilets:** - The Town Council were informed in March 2016 that West Somerset Council had reviewed their non-statutory duties and had made the decision to close all toilets in the West Somerset area on the 31 March 2017. The Town Council has now been operating the toilets for over 12 months, and 2017-18 saw the operational costs come in within budget. The toilets have been redecorated and new signage installed, and the Council will ensure they remain in good working order as they are a vital facility for residents and visitors within a tourist town.

**Annual Town Meeting:** – The Annual Town meeting was held on 17 April 2018 and saw a record attendance of over 60 residents. This meeting gave residents and council tax payers an opportunity to hear about the Council's activities and have their say. Reports were heard from the Chair of Council, Committee Chairs together with information presented by the Watchet Boat Museum, the Coastal Communities Team, and the Watchet & Williton Churches Together (Quantock Foodbank).

**Millington Shield and Best Shop Presentations** – Also at the Town Meeting, the Millington Shield was awarded to 'Watchet Dementia Action Alliance' in recognition of its services to the community, and the Best Shop shield was awarded to the 'New Horizons Gift Shop' for their excellent customer service to visitors and locals and its beautiful wide range of gifts offered on sale.

**Events organised in the town supported by the Town Council for 2018** - Watchet Carnival, Wheelbarrow Race, Watchet Summertime, Classic Car Rally, Street Fairs, Catur's Christmas Fair, band concerts throughout the summer season, the Dorset and Somerset Air Ambulance charity cycle ride (Watchet to West Bay – Dorset), and the Council Fun Day. Look out for the "Welcome to Watchet 2018" leaflet for more information on forthcoming events.

**Watchet Local Market** – The Watchet Market will again be running on a Wednesday from May to September from 9.30am to 3.30pm, with the market 'launch' day being held on 2 May 2018. Information on stalls is included in the Town Council produced market leaflet. If anyone is interested in running a stall they should contact the Town Council Office for a registration pack.

***Each committee is responsible for various areas of the town and the following details illustrate activities undertaken over the past 12 months.***

### **ENVIRONMENT & PLANNING COMMITTEE**

#### **Responsibilities**

- All planning applications relating to Watchet are reviewed by this committee, acting as statutory consultees for West Somerset Council (the Planning Authority).
- West Street Car Park, which is owned by Watchet Town Council, is managed by the Office staff with 70 spaces for rental and a further 3 spaces available for short stay visitors and 5 allotment plots, there are also 6 allotment plots at the Maglands site as part of a partnership agreement with Magna WS, this generates a small income for the Council
- Street lighting - The Council maintain 49 street lights within Watchet and throughout the Liddymore Estate.
- Liaising with other authorities and agencies such as West Somerset Council and Somerset County Council Highways to address concerns over signage, parking and road markings,

#### **Update**

**Planning Applications:** The Committee has reviewed 31 planning applications during the period from April 2017– May 2018 submitting observations to the Planning Authority.

**20mph Speed limit through Swain Street:** It was reported last year that the Committee supported the application to the 'Small Improvements Scheme' for the implementation of a 20mph speed limit through Swain Street, and the application was heavily endorsed by local residents and traders of the town. Unfortunately, the process is very lengthy, and Officers at County Hall have recently informed the Committee that the application was unsuccessful due to the SIS being oversubscribed for 2017-18, and there were other schemes within the county that took priority.

**Flood Plan:** A Working Group was appointed last year and tasked with drafting the 'Watchet Flood Plan'. The Working Group worked in liaison with the Admin Officer, with assistance from the 'Groundworks' charity and are pleased to announce that the Town Council approved the plan at the meeting in April.

**Parking in Swain Street outside former Council building:** A meeting was scheduled with the Somerset County Council Traffic Manager, and it has been confirmed that the Traffic Order will be amended to include double yellow lines in this area and will be implemented soon.

**Bad condition of the road from the Railway Bridge to the top of Swain Street:** The work has now been undertaken and has much improved.

**New Lighting Column at Almyr Terrace:** Concerns were raised by residents over a persistent faulty light. The Committee instructed an assessment and a new light was installed in August 2017.

**Overcrowding on No.28 Bus:** Concerns of overcrowding on Butlins changeover days. A Meeting was held with First Bus. They agreed to run two buses to the same destination, one directly to Butlins and the other to resume the normal 28 Bus service to eradicate this problem.

**Wild Flower Project:** The Conservation Society requested to plant wild flowers on the Banks of West Street Car Park, through a volunteer scheme. This was agreed on a trial 12 month basis.

**Use of Glyphosate:** A Working Group was appointed, and on their recommendation, the Committee agreed to remove West Street Car Park from the weed sprayers contract on a trial basis, but agreed to comply with the advice from Government agencies regarding the use of Glyphosate and continue to commission approved contractors complying with relevant safety requirements to undertake weed spraying in the town using this material, whilst investigating suitable alternatives.

## **FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE**

### **Responsibilities**

- This committee oversees the draft budget but the setting of the precept is the responsibility of Full Council.
- Grants to organisations relating to the town, and donations to local community and charity groups.
- The Cemetery including the closed churchyard at St Decumans is maintained through this Committee. All administration for the Cemetery is undertaken by the Town Council.
- Staffing issues – development and appraisal of staff within the Town Council is administered through the F&GP Committee. The Personnel Committee is a sub-committee from this Committee and is responsible for shortlisting and interviewing for staff vacancies.

### **Update**

**Precept and budgeting:** The precept for the forthcoming financial year will be increased by 5.4% increasing the budget by £8,935 from last year, totalling £173,684, this however does not impact on the Band D charge to households as this remains the same. This covers additional costs such as the Library Asset transfer, new software, inflation, pensions and CCTV operational costs.

**Cemetery/ Closed Churchyard:** New tarmac and kerb stones were laid to make the Church path safe at a cost of £3.5k with a contribution from the Parochial Church Council. New software was also purchased for data recording.

**Grants and Donations in 2017-18:** The Committee has given grants and donations to the following organisations during the year, the Watchet Carnival Parade, Watchet Summertime, WS Advice Bureau, Watchet Guiding and CLOWNS.

## **TOURISM & LEISURE COMMITTEE**

### **Responsibilities**

- Provision of the Memorial Ground, Henry Davey Playing Field and Liddymore Estate Play Areas
- Provision of flowers in municipal areas throughout the town and other areas
- Managing bookings on the Esplanade for charitable organisations
- Managing the updates to the Watchet Town Council website- ***Watch this space for the new website, to be launched around September 2018!***

### **Update**

**Play Areas:** The play areas have, as always, been kept in very sound working order and maintained to a high standard by the Groundsman and Operations Assistant. New Equipment and hard work has reduced the use of outside contractors drastically and made a considerable saving to the Council.

**Events on the Esplanade:** The Committee approved a multitude of varied events on the Esplanade this year, such as Catum's Night, Watchet Summertime (including the Council sponsored Fun Day), Charity stalls, Phoenix Centre events, Wednesday Market, the Twinning Society's annual French breakfast, Watchet Wheelbarrow race, monthly Street Fairs, and many other organisations also made good use of the space. The Committee also annually sponsor the West Somerset Brass Band for 3 summer concerts throughout the summer season.

**What's on in Watchet in 2018:** Future events are listed in the 'Welcome to Watchet' leaflet, which again the Tourism & Leisure Committee approved funding towards the printing and the attendance at annual Leaflet Exchange.

**Esplanade update:** After long negotiations between the Committee and WSC the obsolete old pop-up power points have been replaced by a more user friendly electricity system, available for all groups to use, with the full cost covered by the Town Council. WSC have replaced the old sodium lamps with new lamp columns, made of corrosion proof resin and like the new LED lamps, are fully recyclable. The Committee supported the Coastal Communities Teams installation of new finger posts and maps located in the town, to encourage visitors to explore more of what Watchet has to offer. The hanging baskets have been replaced with new self – watering baskets as the trial proved them to be a considerable time and water saving replacement.

## **WATCHET COMMUNITY CENTRE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

### **Responsibilities**

- Approval of expenditure on the building and provision of equipment.
- Reviewing the operation of the building and management of bookings
- Liaison with the appropriate outside organisations in relation to Youth Service provision and other uses or potential uses

### **Update**

**Community Centre users:** The Committee outsources the Youth Provision to Minehead Eye through a Service Level Agreement to provide two youth club sessions per week, supervised by Youth Leaders, and the attendance figures are very encouraging with over 30 youths attending per session.

Other users vary from Line Dancing groups, Table Tennis groups, Exercise classes, Puppy Training classes, to the Community Choir, who hosted the Christmas Panto. The weekends are often booked for Children's birthday parties. Usage of the centre has doubled within the last 18 months.

**Improvements to the Building:** improvements in 2017/18 saw the installation of new flooring and the exterior of the building re-painted. Internally, the main hall has been re-painted and the lighting updated. May 2018 saw the installation of new kitchen units, kindly donated by Magnet Kitchens. Also, in the near future the central heating controller will be replaced to give the user more heating control. Thanks to a kind donation from the 'Watchet Mother's Club', stair gates were purchased to keep the young children from unsafe areas. The Committee purchased soft play equipment also for our youngest users and is for hire. The work on this building is a testament to partnership working by many local community groups, and thanks go to everyone involved.

## FINANCIAL STATEMENT

2017 – 2018

<b>Expenditure</b>	<b>£'000s</b>	<b>Funded by</b>	<b>£'000s</b>
General running costs (staff, + admin)	95	West Street Car Park	4.5
Harbour Road Toilets	10	Cemetery fees	8
		WCC income	3.5
<b>Committees:</b>		West Somerset Council Precept	164
Tourism & Leisure	11		
Finance & General Purposes	7.5		
Environment & Planning	13.5		
Watchet Community Centre	15		
To reserves	28		
	<b>180</b>		<b>180</b>

*Our accounts are audited by the District Auditor and all recommendations made are adopted as a matter of procedure.*

## Conclusion

This has been the first full year of the clerical staff of the Council working in the new offices and of the Council meeting in the Visitor Centre. This has been successful particularly when many members of the public have wished to attend meetings; they can be accommodated much better than in the old chamber. The operating costs of the new arrangements are much reduced and the Council was able to repay the loan taken out to facilitate the move breaking even on the venture. As Chair of Council and Mayor of Watchet in my third year, I have been supported by my Vice Chair and the other ten councillors and I would like to extend my thanks to them and the staff for their service during the past year.

*Clr Peter Murphy* (Chair of Council and Mayor of Watchet 2017- 18)

## Please see below Councillors Details for 2018/19

### Chair/ Mayor

John Irven 01984 631083

Amanda Benham 01984 632740  
 Hazel Bowden 01984 631988  
 Peter Murphy 01984 639261  
 Cosmo Johnson 01984 632672  
 Robin Nuttall 07951 228079

### **Sarah Reed**

Harriet Gibbard  
 Joanne Grellier

### **Town Clerk**

Admin Officer  
 Admin Support Officer

### Vice Chair/ Deputy Mayor

Sally de Renzy-Martin 01984 631495

### Councillors

John Richards 01984 634565  
 Izzy Silvester 01984 633550  
 Ray Waterman 01984 631234  
 Loretta Whetlor 01984 631567  
 Dave Westcott 01643 704210

Niall Watson  
 Paul Flynn

Groundsman  
 Operations Assistant