

# Minehead Town Council

## Two year report 2020-22



### **Paul Bolton, Mayor 2020-22**

Due to COVID, I have incorporated two years into one report. During the past two years the Coronavirus pandemic has overshadowed almost every aspect of local life. Nevertheless, we have seen much to celebrate.

Minehead Town Council would usually begin a new municipal year in May. However, the last two years was much more challenging years than normal years. Most of our meetings were cancelled, and some months no business was transacted as face-to-face meetings were not appropriate. The Town Council office was closed, and the staff were working from home. The Town Council was able to hold meetings 'remotely' and, as far as possible, recommence its functions. During 2021/22 Covid restrictions have eased and we now we have been holding face to face meetings at our new Community Centre based at the Recreation Ground. These meetings are always open to the public and are streamed through our Facebook page and website.

It was not necessary nor appropriate to hold the Annual Town Meetings in 2021. I was elected Mayor to replace Cllr Sandra Slade who resigned in April 2020, and then re-elected in May 2021, and continued as Mayor until the Annual Meeting of Minehead Town Council in May 2022.

We have seen the amazing efforts of the local community in responding to the pandemic. From our local front-line service providers and voluntary support networks assisting vulnerable people, to our magnificent businesses and hospitality providers who have done so much to ensure a safe environment for visitors. So much resilience has been shown at such a difficult time with everyone pulling together.

We pride ourselves on being a very local Council with the community at the heart of what we do. We are continually striving to improve the services we offer. The Council also has an ambition to do more. In the future, we hope this will include taking back more services from Somerset County Council and Somerset West and Taunton Council when the new unitary Council is formed in 2023, as we feel we can provide better value and quality. Despite the pandemic, we believe that we have made great strides. We want to let our community know what we have achieved, share our plans for the coming year and explain how we invest valuable income to meet priorities. But there is always more to do, and we hope that this report will encourage more people to get involved, learn about the Council's role, and perhaps even consider becoming a Councillor in the future.

## Introduction

In this report we are pleased and proud to reflect on the last 2 years with many successes, continued resilience against the pandemic, plus a resolute focus on delivering good quality services. This annual report essentially looks back on the previous two years, what we have achieved but also offers a glimpse of what we might aspire to in future years.

You will see in the following pages our work to improve our public buildings, including our public toilets, Cemetery, and community assets.

Since rescuing our public toilets from closure, we have continued with our public toilets improvement plan by awarding a contract to 'Ware Construction' to fully refurbish the Summerland toilets. The work was completed in July 2022 and has had a very positive response from residents, businesses, and visitors.

In 2020 we completed and opened the new Community Centre at the Recreation Ground and made improvements to the two tennis courts and multi-use play area (MUGA) and provided a new adult outdoor gym.

Other improvements include new recycle bins, new benches, picnic tables, notice boards, planters, signage, fully electric vehicles for watering and ground maintenance work, replacing most tools from petrol to electric, an upgrade of the paths and roads at our Cemetery, plus much more.





## Highlights of the town

### 1. Celebrating local community groups and partnerships

More than ever, we have recognised the importance of local communities and volunteer groups working together.

The Council has strived during lockdowns to continue to operate essential services such as the Cemetery, allotments and keeping open public toilets. We have worked with others to share information and identify vulnerable people, who needed help. Access to public services can support health and well-being at such times.

We have also improved the way we engage with the community, through better relationships with our business community and the voluntary sector and with a range of other bodies which serve the town.

To support community groups and sports associations, the Council also continued its small grants scheme and its emergency Covid fund, invested in local community groups and good causes, active in the Town.

The Town Council continues to work in partnership with many local groups including Minehead B.I.D.



## 2. Maintaining and creating community buildings

It has been a frustrating time for any public body running buildings and open spaces. The aim is always for the community to use and enjoy these spaces and this has not been possible.



### Minehead Recreation Ground and Community Centre

In 2019 the Town Council started the construction of a new community centre and changing rooms to replace the old Football Club Clubhouse, grandstand, and function room. Unfortunately, the old building had served its purpose but had

fallen into disrepair and had become a health hazard to the public.



The old building was erected in the 1960s and leased by Minehead Football Club from Minehead Town Council. As part of this large project the Town Council has also invested in replacing the floodlights for the football pitch and demolished the old changing rooms, tea hut, grandstand, club house and function room. The area of land vacated has now been levelled and returned to a grassed area, and this area could be redeveloped into new recreational

facilities.



The new Community Centre and floodlights are now owned and managed by Minehead Town Council and Minehead Association Football Club will be renting the facilities for training and matches.

The new Community Hall at the Recreation Ground was not able to open until May 2021 and is now fully booked but with a wide range of users - exercise classes, yoga, various dance groups, Slimming World, Age UK, Somerset N.H.S. and Minehead Stroke Club. Minehead Town Council hold all their Council Meetings at the hall on Monday and Tuesday evenings.

Anyone interested in booking the hall, holding a function or any information on any of the outdoor facilities should contact [info@mineheadtowncouncil.co.uk](mailto:info@mineheadtowncouncil.co.uk) or telephone 01643 707213.



As part of the Recreation Ground upgrade project a new 10-piece adult gym has been built with financial help from S106 grant funding from Somerset West and Taunton Council. The 10-piece Outdoor Gym opened on 29 March 2021. The gym has all the equipment for a full body workout. Information on using the gym is on each piece of equipment, or the user application can be downloaded from individual machines. The gym is also free to use apart from when it is booked for instructor-led sessions. There are currently 2 instructor-led sessions. To book a place online go to [www.activespaces.co.uk](http://www.activespaces.co.uk).

We have also resurfaced and re-fenced the two tennis courts and the M.U.G.A. (Multi Use Games Area) which has 4 basketball rings and 2 football goals. The M.U.G.A. is free to use apart from when there are bookings for football and basketball sessions and exercise classes. State-of-the-art LED lighting has been installed which will mean it can be booked for practice during winter evenings.

The Tennis Courts have been completely refurbished with new coloured porous surfacing, fencing and nets. The courts can be booked hourly for a small fee in advance through the Minehead Town Council website – go to Facilities for Hire which links to the booking page.

To encourage people to get active again after lockdown a 200-metre running track has been marked out on the grass below the football pitch. The track is free to use for running, jogging, or walking. If you would like to start to get fit again then a "Couch to 5k" session over 9 weeks started on Tuesday 30 March. If you would like to run with a social group, then Exmoor Running Together group is also organising sessions at the Recreation Ground. If you would like to book a place on the Couch to 5k or join one of these led running sessions, go to the Exmoor Running Together Facebook page.









### 3. A Greener and Cleaner Minehead and Alcombe

#### Plastic free Minehead and Alcombe

In March 2021 Minehead and Alcombe became a member of the plastic free steering group.

- Minehead Town Council to support the journey to Plastic Free Community status, encouraging the use of plastic-free alternatives, and plastic-free initiatives across the town.
- Minehead Town Council must lead by example by moving toward removal of single-use plastic items from all their premises.
- Minehead Town Council to encourage plastic-free initiatives by individuals, community groups and local businesses, to promote the Surfers Against Sewage (SAS) campaign, and to support plastic-free events.
- A Representative of Minehead Town Council to continue to be a Member of the Plastic Free Community Steering Group - "Plastic Free Minehead"

In 2020 the Town Council purchased its first fully electric vehicle, and it has introducing two more fully electric vehicles in 2021/22 and has another one on order for delivery in June 2022. These vehicles are quiet, clean, and very economical and are used to water the floral displays in partnership with Minehead BID. They are also used by our inhouse team for cleaning of the five public toilets and other grounds maintenance work.

The Town Council supports the local 'Wombles' group that regularly picks up litter and clears footpaths.







## 4. Managing public spaces

The Town Council has only limited powers to manage and protect public spaces. However, it continues to carry out work to maintain open spaces, such as the King George V playing field in Alcombe, the Recreation Ground in Irnham Road, the Rose Garden and open space next to the Premier Inn, and many other small pieces of land.

One of these is approximately 52 hectares at Hopcott Common where the Town Council maintains the land, with support from Natural England, to encourage wildlife in general and the rare Heath Fritillary Butterfly – one of Britain's most endangered species.



Heath Fritillary Butterfly



## Allotments

The Town Council provides allotments at Harepark Terrace (26 plots), Marshfield Road (48 plots), Orchard Road (4 plots), Periton Lane (9 plots), Periton Way (21 plots) and Poundfield Road (21 plots). In 2021/22 the Harepark Terrace site had a major upgrade with new fencing, and removal of excessive rubbish.

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### Marshfield Road Allotments



## Play Areas

Minehead Town Council owns or maintains play areas at Cross Farm Park, Culvercliffe, Irnham Road Recreation Ground, King George V Playing Field and Periton Playing Field. New, additional play equipment in three of the play areas is planned in 2022/2023.



Periton Playing Field



Periton Play Area



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## Public Conveniences

At a time when more and more councils are closing public toilets, the Council are proud to manage five sets of public toilets. In 2021/2022 we completely refurbished the Summerland Place toilets next to the Co-op in the centre of the town, and we are planning to refurbish another set in 2022/23

All toilets are now cleaned by the Amenities in-house team.

As part of the refurbishment the clock on the front of the building was restored and is now working perfectly.





**Changing Places project** – In 2021/22 we applied for funding for a changing places toilet. (See press release below)

## **News Release**

**1 April 2022**

### **Changing Places to make a difference**

*SWT has been awarded Government funding to deliver two new Changing Places toilets. The Council has been allocated £96,360 from Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities towards the facilities in Taunton and Minehead.*



*The larger, accessible toilets are for people who cannot use standard accessible toilets, and include specialist equipment such as hoists, curtains, adult-sized changing benches, and space for carers.*

*One is planned in Tower Street, Taunton, and another in the Summerland Car Park, Minehead, which will be delivered by Minehead Town Council who worked in partnership with SWT to prepare the bid.*

*The Government has allocated £23.5m worth of funding across 191 councils, which will see 513 new Changing Places toilets installed in public places and tourist attractions across England.*

*There are currently just over 1,300 registered [Changing Places](#) toilets in England, but the phase one funding will bring that figure to more than 1,800.*

*Chris Hall, Director of Place and Climate Change at SWT, said: “SWT is committed to promoting equality and improving the quality of life for everyone, regardless of their background or personal circumstances. Securing this funding means we can make a real difference to the residents and visitors who need to use our facilities and cannot use standard accessible toilets.”*

*A spokesperson for Minehead Town Council said: “We are very pleased to have a share of this funding which means local authorities can provide specialised toilet facilities enabling everyone to get out and about and enjoy visits to places like Minehead.”*

## **Public Realm**

In partnership with Minehead BID and the Friends of West Somerset Railway we have replaced the floral displays at the railway station in 2020. New picnic tables and benches have been installed at various amenity areas. Through grant funding new planters and floral displays have also been purchased.



Mains water and electricity has been installed in Wellington Square to enable our workforce to fill up their water tanks and provide power for public events, including lighting the Christmas tree.

Negotiations are under way with Somerset West and Taunton Council to transfer the ownership of Wellington Square to Minehead Town Council in 2022.

## 5. Better community engagement

We know communities can sometimes get frustrated with Councils and public bodies. We don't always get it right when asking for your views or making unpopular decisions, but the Town Council made a commitment to become more visible and accountable, using new ways to engage with the community. Over the last 2 years, a new Facebook page was launched

and now has over 500 followers. All Town Council meetings are streamed live through the Facebook page and on the Town Council's Website.

Our ambition is to be a reliable place where people can visit for help and information. Not everything is about social media. The Council continues to place adverts, notices and information through the West Somerset Free Press. We have responded to calls for improved noticeboard facilities at Alcombe Village Hall, Blenheim Gardens, the Recreation Ground, the Cemetery and all allotment sites.



## 6. Events

Throughout the year the Town Council provides events including:

- Christmas Lights/Trees - in 2021 M.T.C, entered a three-year contract to hire New Christmas lights, and Christmas 2021 was very successful with Wellington Square being the centre for celebrations.
- Band concerts in the beautiful Blenheim Gardens (June to September)
- Supports the annual funfair visit at land at Alcombe.
- Supports Minehead BID and other organisations with events in Minehead
- Supports sporting events at the Recreation Ground and King George playing field.



Wellington Square at Christmas 2021

## 7. Meet Your Councillors and Staff

Minehead Town Council is made up of 16 Councillors.

Their contact details are available on the Town Council website [www.mineheadtowncouncil.gov.uk](http://www.mineheadtowncouncil.gov.uk) or by contacting the Town Council offices. Councillors in Minehead and Alcombe continued to meet online throughout the pandemic. This meant learning new skills but also had benefits as more members of the public dropped into meetings and got to know a bit more about the work of the Council. Details of meetings, including dates, agendas and minutes can be found on the Town Council's website.

All Town Council meetings are held in the new Community Centre in Alexandra car park and all meetings are streamed via 'Zoom' to the public.





Amenities Team Manager (Matt Jones) planting new trees

***Are you interested in being a councillor? Although a voluntary role, it can be very rewarding. Contact us for some more information***

## The Town Council's Committees

### The Town Council has 3 Committees and several advisory groups

- **Finance and Staffing Committee:** focuses on the overall running of the Town Council, budgets, legal, policy and property matters and also staffing matters.
- **Amenities and Environment Committee** has responsibility for community activities and civic events and projects. It is responsible for the Council's recreation areas and open spaces and takes the lead on environmental issues.
- **Planning Committee** doesn't have the power to grant planning permission but is a legal consultee and provides comments on all planning, tree works, highways and licensing applications. It is involved in street naming and replies to policy consultations from the planning authority, Somerset West and Taunton Council, and other decision-making bodies.

# MINEHEAD TOWN COUNCIL VISION AND PRIORITIES

## VISION

- To work with the community and partners to make Minehead a successful, vibrant, attractive town where people want to live, work and visit.

## PRIORITIES

### **Local Economy and Tourism**

- To support and contribute toward the economic growth and prosperity of the town. With the aim of improving transport links and providing new attractions, and facilities for residents and visitors and be proactive in protecting our heritage sites.

### **Environment & Sustainability**

- Work toward making Minehead a **Green Town**. Promote sustainable living, protection of our environment and enhancing quality of life for our residents and visitors.

### **Recreational Facilities**

- Improve community outdoor recreational facilities for all ages and abilities.

### **Community**

- To encourage and support events, activities and projects which best foster a sense of community spirit and resilience in Minehead and Alcombe and to promote inclusiveness and wellbeing.

### **Community Assets**

- Aim to keep Minehead and Alcombe Assets in Public Ownership by negotiating with the newly formed unitary authority to devolve assets and services to Minehead Town Council.

### **Partnership Working**

- Work and co-operate with existing town organisations including Minehead B.I.D. and our other local authority partners such as SWAT & SCC for the greater interest of the town and residents.

*December 2021*

## Council Tax and Finance

The Town Council is a precept-raising Council. This means that a proportion of your Council Tax bill collected by Somerset West and Taunton is paid to the Town Council. The proportion is small, relative to the rest of your bill.

Average Town Council share (band D) = £177.81. This represents 8% of the total Council tax bill.

## Other Income

In addition to Council Tax, the Council is funded by other income. This includes rents and room hire, allotment rents, cemetery fees. The more income the Council can generate from other activities, the lower the precept will be.

## Financial Background

Prior to 2018 the Town Council operated a policy of relatively limited levels of service delivery and investment in assets. Therefore, it set a lower precept and applied only modest annual increases in taxation.

When the budget was set for 2019/20, it was clear that significant changes had to be made to the Council's financial approach, if it were to be able to address the many challenges that it faced. Reserves were restructured with resources set aside for known obligations and aspirations, a significant rise in the precept was agreed and a decision was made to seek borrowing approval to fund future capital expenditure, including the Council's contribution towards the cost of the proposed Community Building. Crucially, following the Town Council election in May 2019, the decision to seek borrowing approval for future capital spending was overturned and it was decided that spending would be funded from existing resources or future rises in taxation.

The table below shows the movement in the level of the Town Council's precept since 1 April 2018 together with the movement in reserves.

YEAR	PRECEPT	RESERVES
2018/19	£358,208	£1,046,000
2019/20	£507,350	£981,000
2020/21	£695,000	£595,422
2021/22	£713,500	£639,976

The breakdown of the reserves as they currently stand is set out below. This does not take account of transfers that will take place in the current year:



EARMARKED RESERVES 2021/2022	AMOUNT
General Reserve	£239,950
New Office Reserve (Capital Receipt)	£198,700
Community Building Maintenance	£5,000
Skate ramp	£2,000
Hopcott Common	£14,400
Christmas Lighting	£10,000
Cemetery Improvements	£10,000
Cemetery Extension	£50,000
Public Conveniences	£5,000
Play Areas / Play Equipment	£94,925
Vehicles / Equipment	£10,000

# MINEHEAD TOWN COUNCIL BUDGETS 2021/22



