



MINEHEAD TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE AMENITIES AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING

HELD ON TUESDAY 13 JULY 2021 AT 7.30 PM

AT THE COMMUNITY BUILDING, IRNHAM ROAD, MINEHEAD TA24 5DW

The Meeting was digitally recorded

Members are reminded that Council has a general duty to consider the following matters in the exercise of any of its functions: Equal Opportunities (race, gender, sexual orientation, marital status and any disability), Crime & Disorder, Health & Safety, Human Rights and Biodiversity

Present: Chair: Cllr T Bloomfield
Councillors: Cllr A Berry, Cllr P Bolton* (Mayor), Cllr E Jones, Cllr A Kingston-James (Deputy Mayor), Cllr M Kingston-James, Cllr C Palmer*, Cllr M Palmer, Cllr T Venner*
(* denotes Somerset West and Taunton District "SWaT" Councillor)

Officers in Attendance: Ms S Rawle - Clerk
Mr B Howe – Deputy Clerk
Mrs M Swallow - Notetaker

Members of the Public and Press: 0 members of the Public
0 members of the Press

Cllr Bloomfield welcomed all to the Meeting, including public viewing via the Facebook streaming service.

1177 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE [LGA 1972 s 85 \(1\)](#)

Apologies had been received from Cllr O Harvey, Cllr N Hercock and Cllr H Rose.

1178 TO RECEIVE COUNCILLORS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND ANY DISPENSATIONS [In accordance with the provisions of the Localism Act 2011 in respect of members](#)

To receive and record any Declarations of Interest in respect of any matters included on the Agenda for consideration at this Meeting.

Member	Minute	Interest	Time Period	Speak/Vote
Cllr Bloomfield	1189	Pecuniary	2021	Left the room, did not speak nor vote
Cllr Bolton	All	SWaT Councillor	2021	Remained present, spoke and voted
	1189	Pecuniary	2021	Left the room, did not speak nor vote
Cllr Jones	1189	Pecuniary	2021	Left the room, did not speak nor vote
Cllr A Kingston-James	1189	Pecuniary	2021	Left the room, did not speak nor vote
Cllr C Palmer	All	SWaT Councillor	2021	Remained present, spoke and voted
Cllr Venner	All	SWaT Councillor	2021	Remained present, spoke and voted

DISPENSATIONS

None.

1179 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 9 MARCH 2021

Cllr Bloomfield read aloud the names of Councillors present who had attended the last Meeting as members of the previous Council year's Amenities and Environment Committee - and those Councillors were asked to vote accordingly. The Minutes were approved as a true and accurate record of the Meeting.

Proposed by: Cllr Bloomfield **Seconded by:** Cllr Bolton
Unanimously agreed by the appropriate Councillors.

1180 TO ADJOURN THE MEETING FOR PUBLIC INCLUSION [Standing Order No 3e](#)

As there had been no requests to speak at the Meeting, adjournment was not necessary.

1181 TO RECEIVE THE CHAIR'S VERBAL REPORT

Although Cllr Bloomfield had no specific items to report, she used the opportunity to urge Councillors and the public to ensure they report any incidents of vandalism to the Police using the 101 service or online: although if vandalism in progress was witnessed to dial 999. This appeal followed the recent escalation in vandalism around the town.

1182 TO DISCUSS THE CHANGE IN OPENING HOURS TO MINEHEAD MINOR INJURIES UNIT ("MIU")

Cllr Bloomfield stated her strong opinion that the NHS' decision to instigate a night-time closure of Minehead MIU was totally unacceptable, and it was her wish to request a letter to this effect be sent collectively from all Councillors.

Cllr Bolton added his support and described the decision as ridiculous with the tourist season well underway and further large guest numbers expected on the Butlins site. Cllr Venner echoed this viewpoint and added the potential of lives being put at risk by having to make the 25-mile journey to Taunton's Musgrove Park Hospital instead. He felt the situation was totally unacceptable.

It was proposed that recommendation be made to Full Council to instigate the composition and despatch of a letter from Minehead Town Council ("MTC") confirming its vociferous objection to the night-time closure of Minehead MIU.

Proposed by: Cllr Bloomfield
Passed and unanimously agreed.

Seconded by: Cllr Berry

1183 TO CONSIDER THE COUNCIL'S WEED-KILLING ARRANGEMENTS

The Deputy Clerk confirmed that one treatment had already been applied: however, at a recent Zoom meeting with the company providing the chemical, enquiry was made as to alternative weed removal systems. Following that meeting the Deputy Clerk considered that at that time other options were not suitable.

Councillors were in general agreement that chemical method weed-killing was simply not acceptable due to its environmental impact and its contradiction of MTC's 'green policy' agenda - and that the weed-killing process should resume without resorting to this method and by using manpower only.

Cllr M Palmer felt the chemical method was ineffective anyway and believed if the manpower option was brought in-house a saving of £6-10k could be realised by MTC. Cllr Venner agreed but added that in order to prevent the weeds from re-growing thorough manual removal must be ensured by a follow-up programme, as the public would quite rightly complain about untidy and unkempt pavements and public areas - he confirmed that he had already received comments from residents about the poor state of some areas of the town.

Cllr Bolton reminded Councillors that this issue had been included on various MTC agendas in recent years and a final decision was overdue. He added his support for a ban on chemical method removal, citing that nationwide many Councils no longer use this method so MTC should follow suit.

The Clerk and Deputy Clerk asked Councillors to bear in mind the considerable impact on the Amenities Team of this labour-intensive task and the necessary manhours of bringing this in-house, and that they must consider the degree of coverage within the town. If this was to cover all residential streets and alleyways, then a substantial plan of action would be imperative.

The Deputy Clerk confirmed that a final decision about future action was not needed until September - when a new plan must be in place, if so desired.

It was proposed that recommendation be made to Full Council to consider an immediate ban on chemical spraying of weeds and follow-up of alternative removal methods. Also, that a budget purely for the employment of someone to take on this task be investigated.

Proposed by: Cllr Bloomfield **Seconded by:** Cllr Bolton
Passed with 8 votes in favour and one abstention.

Cllr Venner vocalised his reason for abstention being his strong view that a detailed plan must be put in place prior to the banning of chemical usage - particularly as MTC was already under contract with the weed-killing firm so one more application would be required before termination in September. This situation could then be scrutinised during the Autumn with a view to adding the budget for the agreed alternative method to the MTC's forthcoming Council Tax precept.

1184 TO RECEIVE A VERBAL UPDATE ON THE TREE SURVEY

The Deputy Clerk confirmed that the previous tree survey was undertaken by the contractor Sheasbys in November 2018. Since that time those deemed high-risk had been actioned, including removal of some poplar trees on the Cemetery border, but the situation was ongoing and the survey required upgrading. The Clerk added her agreement, indicating it was necessary to commission a new survey to check health and safety issues with regard to risk assessment implications, particularly as many trees were on public amenity land. Councillors were requested to grant approval for an updated survey.

Cllr Bolton stated that the contractor appointed to undertake the tree survey was not permitted to tender for any necessary work - this must be an independent contractor - and that perhaps in-house involvement could be considered. The Deputy Clerk added that although correct, the tree survey contractor was permitted to do minor works and that there was a budget for this. He said it should be borne in mind that the previous contractor could

be asked to do the new survey as follow-up to their works, for the sake of continuity, but in-house staff may be permitted to work alongside.

It was recommended that Full Council consider the appointment of an independent contractor to carry out a tree survey, with any major works to be undertaken by an alternative tree surgery operative - with the strict proviso to avoid nesting season.

Proposed by: Cllr Bloomfield **Seconded by:** Cllr M Palmer
Passed with unanimous agreement.

1185 TO RECEIVE A VERBAL UPDATE ON CEMETERY IMPROVEMENTS

The Deputy Clerk confirmed the following:

- Three new recycling bins had been purchased.
- Watering cans had also been acquired (with the intention of either implementing a token system or alternatively £1 per usage).

- A meeting with the appointed contractor to update the paths' maintenance, on a phased, most urgent first basis, was scheduled for the following week.

The Deputy Clerk added his view that the installation of a rain shelter should be considered within the improvement works - there was a suitable area having a concrete base already in situ which could be utilised for this purpose. Cllr M Kingston-James added his agreement to this suggestion, noting that other cemeteries had such shelters.

The Cemetery Advisory Group would meet to discuss this.

1186 TO RECEIVE A VERBAL UPDATE ON THE BRITAIN IN BLOOM VISIT

The Clerk confirmed that SWaT had been in contact to confirm their 2021 entry into this competition and a judging visit to Minehead would take place later that week. The Clerk had been invited by SWaT to join the two-hour judging tour from the start at the depot in Mart Road to the seafront, Blenheim Gardens, The Parade, Wellington Square with its culmination at the Community Building to include a powerpoint presentation, and she was delighted for the opportunity to showcase the MTC areas and beautiful floral displays. Although this was SWaT's entry, and Minehead had not entered the competition for some years, it would be a good 'benchmark exercise' for feedback and to build on for the future. The Clerk stated that the feedback would be available some time around autumn, and she would report to Councillors then.

The Deputy Clerk voiced his admiration for the floral displays within Wellington Square, the central Parade and Avenue area. Cllr Bloomfield echoed this, and Cllr Bolton added his feeling that Councillors should recognise the hard work of the MTC Amenities Team in producing and maintaining such beautiful displays.

Cllr Venner recalled his trip to Canada during the 1990s whilst Mayor, representing Minehead in the competition, when Minehead was voted into second place in the international field. He emphasised that although Minehead BID had voiced their wish to become involved it should be borne in mind that it would be a big commitment - timewise and financially - plus criteria had changed over the years with the competition now recognising green issues as a priority. To enter at the top level a ballpark figure of £50k - £100k would be required.

The Deputy Clerk said that this could be considered during future budget-setting exercises and Cllr Venner emphasised his opinion that this would have to be a partnership exercise. Cllr Bloomfield believed it would be necessary for County and District Councils to work with MTC.

1187 TO RECEIVE A VERBAL UPDATE ON COMMUNITY BUILDING 'SNAGGING' ISSUES

The Deputy Clerk confirmed that MTC was nearing a year of Community Building ownership. There was a list of 'snagging' issues which included cracks, tripping electricity supply, loose slabs etc and he would be meeting with the architect's representative to report as necessary. These required remedial work by September when MTC was due to pay the over £20k retention. He requested Councillors inform him urgently of any issues they had witnessed.

There remained an outstanding electricity invoice from usage by a previous 'tea hut' on the site - dispute continued as the temporary supply used had been unmetered. There were also some outstanding legal fees to settle.

1188 TO RECEIVE A VERBAL UPDATE ON THE SECTION 106 ("S106") APPLICATION FOR NEW PLAY EQUIPMENT

The Clerk confirmed it was a further update after previously reporting to the Committee.

Following submission of the S106 application to SWaT a favourable response had been received. Quotations from play equipment providers were awaited.

New play equipment was planned for the Irnham Recreation Area, King George Playing Field and Cross Farm Park - with the emphasis on much needed toddler age equipment. MTC also had a budget set aside to contribute to this project, so in total a spend of £50k was envisaged to enhance and meet the necessary needs.

Play equipment providers and installers were experiencing a backlog of work and completion was anticipated for Spring 2022.

The Deputy Clerk confirmed that as per strict stipulations of the granting of S106 money, all equipment installed must be newly purchased - the money was not permitted for use in upgrading existing equipment. In total 10 to 12 new pieces were planned.

1189 TO AGREE THE EXTENSION OF BAND CONCERTS IN BLENHEIM GARDENS FOR SUMMER 2021

At this point, Cllrs Bloomfield, Bolton, Jones and A Kingston-James left the room.

The Deputy Clerk explained to remaining Councillors that SWaT had granted MTC's request to extend the 2021 Band Concert Season to the end of September - due to the Government's delay in lifting Lockdown restrictions until 19 July 2021 meaning that bands booked for the first period of July would not be permitted to perform. He was therefore recommending that Councillors agree to this extended period.

It was proposed that recommendation be made to Full Council to grant permission for the extension of the Band Concert Season to the end of September 2021.

Proposed by: Cllr Venner

Seconded by: Cllr Berry

Passed with unanimous agreement by Councillors remaining in the room.

Cllrs Bloomfield, Bolton, Jones and A Kingston-James then re-joined the Meeting.

1190 TO AGREE THE PURCHASE OF AN ELECTRIC VEHICLE

The Deputy Clerk confirmed that one of the Amenity Team's diesel vehicles was out of action and at the end of its useful life - following the diagnosis of electrical problems which would be very expensive to repair - and another vehicle had been hired to temporarily fill the void.

The Deputy Clerk added that the possibility of acquiring another electric vehicle as a permanent replacement had been researched, with interest in one which would prove £10k cheaper than "Electric Eric" in the current fleet.

It was proposed that it be recommended to Full Council that permission be granted to further investigate this possible acquisition.

Proposed by: Cllr Bloomfield
Passed with unanimous agreement.

Seconded by: Cllr A Kingston-James

1191 TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON THE ALLOTMENT SITES

Cllr M Palmer confirmed that the Allotment Advisory Group, with recognition of Cllr O Harvey for his thorough investigation, had now visited all sites and plots to assess the situation. One in particular required serious remedial work - which was necessary before new agreements were sent to plot holders at the end of October 2021.

Following a Zoom meeting of the Allotment Advisory Group it was agreed that S106 funding for disabled accesses wherever necessary should be investigated as soon as possible. The Clerk agreed to look into the matter.

Cllr M Palmer confirmed that she would produce a written update of matters for Councillors' perusal.

1192 TO RESOLVE TO EXCLUDE MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Cllr Bloomfield concluded the Public Meeting by thanking those viewing via the live streaming process. The Deputy Clerk added that there had been some complaints from viewers regarding the poor sound quality: he apologised and assured that this was an interim problem until the new conferencing system was shortly installed.

It was resolved to exclude members of the press and public.

Proposed by: Cllr Bloomfield
Unanimously agreed.

Seconded by: Cllr A Kingston-James

The Public Meeting ended at 8.15 pm.