



MINEHEAD TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE FINANCE AND STAFFING COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 7 FEBRUARY 2022 AT 7.30 PM AT THE COMMUNITY CENTRE, IRNHAM ROAD, MINEHEAD TA24 5DW

The Meeting was streamed live on the MTC Facebook page

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 C Palmer*
Councillors: Cllr M Burke, Cllr A Kingston-James, Cllr A Lawton (Deputy Chair),
Cllr R Lillis, Cllr J Malin, Cllr M Palmer, Cllr H Rose, Cllr T Venner*
(denotes Somerset West and Taunton District Councillor "SWaT")*

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

Members of the Public and Press: 0 member of the public
0 members of the press

Councillors Absent: Cllr O Harvey

Cllr C Palmer welcomed Councillors and Officers to the Meeting and the public watching on Facebook.

1425 TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE [LGA 1972 s85 \(1\)](#)

Apologies had been received from Cllr T Bloomfield and Cllr P Bolton.

1426 TO RECEIVE COUNCILLORS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND ANY DISPENSATIONS
[In accordance with the provisions of the Localism Act 2011 in respect of members](#)

Member	Item	Interest	Time Period	Speak/Vote
Cllr A Kingston-James	1430	Personal	07 02 2022	Stayed in the room. Did not speak or vote
Cllr C Palmer	All	SWaT Councillor	2022	Stayed in the room, spoke and voted
Cllr H Rose	1430	Pecuniary	07 02 2022	Stayed in the room, spoke but did not vote
Cllr T Venner	All 1429.4	SWaT Councillor Personal	2022 07.02.2022	Stayed in the room, spoke and voted Stayed in the room. Did not speak or vote

DISPENSATIONS [Localism Act 2011](#)

There were no dispensations requested.

- 1427 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE FINANCE & STAFFING COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 10 JANUARY 2022 - *MINUTES TO BE AGREED BY COUNCILLORS WHO WERE IN ATTENDANCE*

Proposed: Cllr C Palmer
Agreed with all in favour.

Seconded: Cllr Burke

- 1428 TO ADJOURN THE MEETING FOR PUBLIC INCLUSION [Standing Order No 3e](#)

No-one had asked to speak.

- 1429 FINANCE

- 1429.1 *To approve urgent payments for February 2022*

Payments 1-11, totalling £30,374.18, of which £19,836.69 was for staff salaries.

Proposed: Cllr C Palmer
Agreed with all in favour.

Seconded: Cllr M Palmer

- 1429.2 *To approve payments under £1,000 for February 2022*

Payments 12-18, totalling £2,509.51.

Cllr Lawton queried item 14 for signs and artwork. The Chair told Councillors that this represented artwork due to be installed in Summerland Place toilets that same day. Local artist Leo Davey had donated some images which a local company had enlarged and were to be installed on walls inside both Ladies and Gents cubicles. These would be well-attached. The Deputy Clerk said the invoice also included directional wall signs for the toilets and added that the current mural on the outside of the building would be moved to Quay West toilets to brighten those up.

Proposed: Cllr Burke
Agreed with all in favour.

Seconded: Cllr Rose

- 1429.3 *To recommend to Full Council payments over £1,000 for February 2022*

Payments 19-21 totalling £6,420.12.

Cllr Lawton asked about item 20 referring to wall panelling and hand driers in Summerland Place toilets. The Deputy Clerk explained that this was work in the utility area of the toilets where, when refurbishing, the company carrying out the work had replaced the utility units at no cost to MTC but the panelling needed to be extended to keep the remaining walls clean and dry. There had been a charge for moving the hand driers to accommodate this work as Council had had to use an electrician.

Cllr Venner queried the payment for cover for an employee who was off sick. He asked whether the position was likely to change. The Deputy Clerk confirmed the person was still on sick leave and suggested this be discussed in the Confidential part of the Meeting.

Proposed: Cllr C Palmer
Agreed with all in favour.

Seconded: Cllr Lawton

1429.4 *To approve payments by Procurement Card for January 2022*

Cllr M Palmer queried the significant number of mopheads which had been purchased over the previous few months. The Clerk replied that with 5 sets of public toilets and individual cubicles within them mops had a lot of use and were disinfected between uses. They did get battered and broke down fairly quickly. The Deputy Clerk told Councillors that Council had a very good cleaner on its books and were trialling the mops he favoured. He got through a lot of mopheads because he used them properly.

Cllr Venner asked, bearing in mind that some charges were very small, whether there was a transaction charge on the Procurement Card. The Deputy Clerk confirmed there was not.

Proposed: Cllr C Palmer
Agreed with 1 abstention and 8 in favour.

Seconded: Cllr Malin

1429.5 *To approve Regular Payments for January 2022*

Payments 1-29, totalling £7,122.08.

Cllr Venner commented on the month-to-month fluctuations of the Water/Sewerage charge for Summerland Place toilets. The Deputy Clerk said this charge would always fluctuate but Council had asked the supplier to provide a reading to ensure the figures were not estimated ones.

Proposed: Cllr A Kingston-James
Agreed with all in favour.

Seconded: Cllr Rose

1429.6 *To receive the Income Report for January 2022*

Income for January totalled £18,270.79. The Chair said the Report was noted.

1430 TO REVIEW ALL MINEHEAD TOWN COUNCIL FEES AND CHARGES

Councillors had seen the list of fees and charges for 2021/2022 with recommended charges for 2022/2023.

Cllr Rose did not like the wording of the Cemetery fees and charges in relation to the definition of "child" and "adult" but the Chair said this would need to go to Full Council for consideration. Cllr Malin suggested this was probably a legal definition and Council should adhere to this.

Cllr Venner thought that raising the cost of tennis court hire from £3 to £4 per hour was too high as it was a price rise of 25%. He said the charge should be kept at £3 for another 12 months.

Proposed: Cllr Venner

Seconded: Cllr C Palmer

Agreed with all in favour to keep the hiring cost for tennis courts to £3.00 per hour.

Cllr M Palmer said there had been no rise in allotment rents for several years. She was in favour of a deposit system for new lettings of £50 for a standard plot and £75 for a large one. It had cost a great deal to clear up the mess left on various plots which was unfair to the precept-payers. The Deputy Clerk told Councillors that plot rents could not be raised for 2022 as ploholders had to have a year's notice of an increase. Increases would only be possible from November 2023.

The Deputy Clerk said that proposed Cemetery fees represented a rise of 5%, rounded up to the nearest £5. He told Councillors that Council was breaking even on Cemetery costs.

Cllr C Palmer said he thought Cemetery fees should be kept as they were for the current year. Cllr Venner said Council should implement an increase because where in the past charges had not been put up it had led to a greater increase when they were. He was happy with a 5% increase. Cllr Malin agreed because MTC's own costs will not remain the same.

Proposed: Cllr C Palmer

Seconded: Cllr M Palmer

Agreed with 1 abstention, 3 against and 5 in favour that Cemetery fees should be kept at the 2021/2022 level.

Cllr Lawton enquired about the charge to Alcombe Rovers Football Club and suggested the rent for the ground should be listed as "per annum". Cllr Venner thought the figure needed to be reviewed as it had been the same for many years. The Chair suggested the Clerk and Deputy could look at this before the next Full Council Meeting.

The Deputy Clerk confirmed that re-charges to Minehead BID for handing baskets and the storage container were agreed on the two-year basis, bringing this up to the end of Minehead BID's term.

Cllr Lawton said she would like to see contributions to the bands increased and also the contribution to traders towards electricity for the Christmas lights. The Deputy Clerk said Council was looking into putting in a small meter to see precisely how much electricity was being used which may alter the amount paid. The bands charge needed consideration because bands could be a duo or a large band and possibly a sliding scale of charges was needed to cover their expenses. Cllr Malin suggested there be a discretionary amount up to £400 built into the budget to use over the whole year and for officers to decide how much above the usual fee any band should receive.

Proposed: Cllr C Palmer

Seconded: Cllr M Palmer

Agreed with all in favour to recommend the review of fees and charges to Full Council.

1431 TO CONSIDER STANDING ORDERS/FINANCIAL REGULATIONS:
TO START THE PROCESS OF REVIEWING AND UPDATING BOTH DOCUMENTS

The Deputy Clerk said that the auditor reminds Council each year that the Standing Orders and Financial Regulations need reviewing annually. They did not necessarily need to be altered but it should be noted that they have been reviewed.

The Chair said he had started reviewing both documents and had a number of ideas for improvements. Cllr Lawton hoped that the language in Standing Orders could be made more understandable. Cllr Malin suggested that the review be carried out at a special seminar session and then recommended to Full Council. There would then be a good set of Regulations to put in front of new Councillors in May.

Cllr Venner asked for the seminar to be prior to the February Full Council Meeting. He thought that it should be enshrined in the MTC Standing Orders that new Councillors must attend training sessions generally, and particularly the Code of Conduct. Being a Town Councillor was a serious obligation.

The Chair asked the Clerk and Deputy Clerk to arrange a Standing Orders/Financial Regulations seminar and Councillors to bring to the seminar their ideas for improving Council's regulations.

1432 TO REVIEW THE SMALL GRANTS POLICY

The Clerk reported that Cllr M Palmer had, a few months previously, worked on alterations to the Small Grants Policy. Since that time MTC had had its Budget and, apart from the Small Grants budget, there was also a budget for larger grants, as well as the existing SLAs in place with local organisations. There was no actual policy in place for larger grants over £500. Extra provision had been made in the Budget for larger grants but at present there was no mechanism to deliver these. The Clerk suggested simplifying the policy for awarding small grants up to £500 but asking for more details from applicants for larger grants.

The Chair suggested having a separate discussion about the Small Grants Policy rather than having it at the forthcoming seminar, but would Councillors please bring their ideas to that Meeting. Cllr Venner's view was that it was for the incoming Council to change the Policy but did say he wished Council had more feedback from the recipients of grants, with reports to explain how public money had been spent and how it had benefited the community.

The Chair hoped that the separate discussion about Grants and SLAs should coincide with May or June 2022 and asked the Clerk and Deputy Clerk to arrange this.

1433 TO RESOLVE TO EXCLUDE MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Proposed: Cllr C Palmer

Seconded: Cllr A Kingston-James

Agreed with all in favour to continue the Meeting *in camera* to discuss staffing arrangements.

The Public Meeting ended at 8.33 pm.