



MINEHEAD TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of Minehead Town Council held on
Tuesday 22nd August 2023 at 7.30 pm at
the Community Centre, Irnham Road, Minehead TA24 5DW

Present: Councillors C Palmer (Chair), Lawton, Hodson, M Palmer, Hall, Jewell, Beynon, Kravis and Kingston-James

Not Present: Councillor Bonar

In Attendance: H Nathanson (Town Clerk), Somerset Councillor Hadley and five members of the public

There was a 15-minute open forum at the beginning of the Meeting for residents of Minehead to raise with councillors any matters related to the town. The following matters were raised:

Public Spaces Protection Order Consultation – Dog Control

A member of the public had requested a paper copy of the consultation from the library and considered that it was overly long and presented in archaic language that was very off putting, meaning that people who care passionately about the issue of dogs on the beach and want to discuss it were finding it difficult to do so. She thought it was regrettable that the previous byelaw was dropped and wanted to know why it could not be reinstated as it was before. She also asked why the consultation did not include issues around behaviour other than just dogs.

A member of the public said that he was in favour of allowing dogs in Blenheim Gardens and on the beach because most dog owners keep their dogs under control and clear up after them. He expressed concerns that Minehead is not a dog-friendly place, particularly for visitors, and that banning them from the beach increased their presence on pavements and footpaths, with a knock-on effect on dog mess in those areas.

Councillor Hadley explained that the dog control Orders across the whole of the District Council, Somerset West and Taunton, had lapsed during the last Council's tenure and that they therefore needed to be renewed. The range of different areas involved made the consultation extensive and expensive and thus the need to get it all done at the same time. He and Councillor Chilcott had discussed this issue in depth and concluded that the areas from the Harbour to the Jubilee Café should be left for dogs and everything beyond that and up to the Golf Club should be dog free to allow space for families and children to play. Minehead Town Council owns a lot of the land that is covered by this Order and therefore needs to input its views.

1. To receive apologies for absence.

There were no apologies.

2. To receive disclosures of unregistered or other interests from councillors on matters to be considered at the Meeting.

There were no disclosures of unregistered or other interests.

3. To receive reports from Somerset Councillors.

Councillors Lawrence and Chilcott sent their apologies to the meeting.

Councillor Hadley gave the following report:

Somerset Council finances – the Council overspent by £20m last year but this might yet be higher and they are working hard to reduce the overspend.

Somerset Levels – building has slowed because of the problems around phosphates levels, although West Somerset building works have not been affected.

Volunteers are needed to join school appeals panels as independent members to deal with admissions, exclusions and transport problems.

Blenheim Gardens has won Green Flag status in a scheme which recognises and rewards well managed parks and green spaces around the UK.

Councillor Kravis gave the following report:

All four of the ex-District Councils produced an underspend for the last financial year so the deficit is from the previous County Council.

He expressed his frustration about the delays to new homes in the area caused by the phosphate level issue.

4. To approve the [Minutes](#) of the Meeting of Minehead Town Council held on 25th July 2023 and to discuss any matters arising.

It was **resolved** to approve the Minutes.

The following matters arose:

Item 3

A meeting is being arranged in September between Somerset Council and the Town Council to discuss the issue of weeds in roadways.

Item 4

Volunteers were still required to represent MTC on the League of Friends of Minehead Hospital, Minehead & Porlock Bus Group and Minehead Youth Club.

Councillors were asked to consider where they might be able to help.

Item 13

The consultation about a land management plan for Wootton Ridge is open online at <https://www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk/living-and-working/management-of-wootton-ridge> and the organisers will be in Minehead Library on Monday 11th September between 11am and 5pm to speak to residents and answer questions.

Councillor M Palmer was pleased to note that epicormic growth on trees around the town is now being addressed.

5. To receive the [Minutes](#) of the Planning Committee Meeting on 1st August 2023.

The Minutes were received.

6. To receive the [Minutes](#) of the Finance and General Purposes Committee Meeting on 8th August 2023 and to approve the recommendations.

The Minutes were received and it was **resolved** to approve the following recommendations:

Item 4

It was **resolved** to approve the payments over £1500 to the value of £11,714.90 be approved.

Item 7

It was **resolved** to approve the purchase of a new lawnmower deck for £7,488, to include part exchange and fitting, and to install new gates at Summerland Road toilets for £1,387 excluding VAT.

7. To note that the Somerset Council [Public Space Protection Order Consultation](#) on dog control provisions is open for comments until 6th October 2023 and to discuss a response from the Town Council.

Councillors discussed the Consultation and the following points were raised:

Some councillors considered that there were too many irresponsible dog owners who did not clean up after their dogs or manage their behaviour to stop them jumping up at people.

Some councillors felt that Blenheim Gardens and the Rose Garden should remain areas where dogs are not allowed at all and queried why they had been added to the consultation as sites to admit leashed dogs. These two spaces are the only dog-free areas in the town.

Some councillors considered it unfair to punish all dog owners just because a few people cannot follow the rules and wanted to see Minehead as a dog-friendly place to visit and stay. They also felt that local residents were being prevented from enjoying their own beach and spaces if they could not take their dogs with them. This was particularly the case given that the previous byelaw prevented dogs on the beaches from 1st May – 30th September which are not always times of year when the beaches are busy.

There was disagreement between councillors about how to present one view from the Town Council. Councillor Lawton proposed that councillors should instead submit their own individual responses to the consultation. This was seconded by Councillor Beynon and it was resolved to allow councillors to make their own submissions regarding dogs on the beach. There were two votes against and one abstention.

8. To agree a timetable for setting the budget for 2024/25.

The precept demand must be given to Somerset Council by 28th January 2024. Committees and Working Groups agreed to consider their relevant cost centres at September meetings for feed back in time for the October meeting of Full Council.

The Town Clerk will set up a finance training session in November for any councillors who would like to look in more detail at the budgets process.

9. To approve grant applications from the following organisations:

i) Minehead Barbarians Rugby Football Club - £500

Councillors discussed the application. Councillor Kravis thought it was a positive way for the council to show that it is serious about climate change and proposed that the grant be awarded. This was seconded by Councillor Kingston-James and it was resolved to award a grant of £500.

ii) Minehead and Coast Development Trust - £500

Councillors discussed the application and Councillor M Palmer explained that the Minehead Poetry Competition entries could be viewed on Facebook and that, once voting had closed, judging would begin. The chosen poems would then be printed on transparencies and put up in the shelters along the seafront for all to enjoy. She hoped that this would be the start of more art projects and proposed that the grant be awarded. This was seconded by Councillor Kingston-James and it was resolved to award a grant of £500.

Councillor Kravis declared an interest in this item and abstained from the vote.

10. To note that the Quay West toilets are now open and all work has been completed.

This was noted. A question was asked about whether or not these toilets have a water supply that is available to motor homes? Answer: No.

A question was asked about the tap in Blenheim Gardens which is being used by motor home owners who are jumping the fence at night to use it. Councillors were not aware of this and Councillor Hadley agreed to report it to SC.

11. To receive updates from councillors on Advisory Groups and Outside Bodies.

Councillor Kravis attended the last Minehead Police Partnership Meeting. He reported that it was a useful forum for people to feed back about potential issues in the town. Blenheim Gardens was discussed and the need to prevent anti-social behaviour in there at night.

12. To receive an update about policing in Blenheim Gardens.

Councillor Hodson explained that he had spoken to the PCSO team about a particular incident of vandalism in the Gardens and about more general issues of anti-social behaviour (ASB). The PCSO team sent their apologies for not being able to attend the meeting and advised that certain measures could be taken to discourage ASB, including the following recommendations:

Chain the wooden benches together and bolt them to the ground to prevent them being moved and dragged to the bandstand.

Install some wildlife cameras in the trees on known problem areas (the café owners have offered use of their wifi to connect them).

Repair and or replace the fence surrounding the Gardens and install working padlocks.

Trim back hedge growth around the Burma Star memorial to increase visibility.

Councillor Hadley explained that he was setting up a visit between Somerset Council officers and Minehead Town Council to talk about what can and can't be done and that he would be in touch with a date soon. He suggested that replacing the fencing seemed unlikely given the cost.

Councillor Kravis agreed that strategic placing of wildlife cameras with night capability could be a useful deterrent and that not many cameras would be needed to cover the key areas.

Councillor M Palmer proposed that the letter previously presented to the July meeting of Finance and General Purposes be sent to Somerset Council and this was agreed.

A question was asked about why drinking in Blenheim Gardens was not covered in the current PSPO and it was explained that, when the last PSPO was under consultation in 2021, the police had said that they could deal with the drinking issues without one.

13. To note the correspondence from Education Support Services (ESS) and to discuss how Minehead Town Council could be involved.

Councillor Beynon had contacted ESS, a non-profit based in Somerset and with a hub in Langport, which is providing accredited education support to vulnerable young people. She was awaiting further information from them but knows that they would like to establish a hub in Minehead to provide support to 10-25 year olds in the town and surrounding villages. They would like to come to a Town Council meeting to talk about what they hope to do and Councillor Beynon will provide an update at the next Council meeting. She also confirmed that she has asked ESS if they are working with existing agencies at county and local level to ensure that this is a cohesive approach.

14. To receive the **Confidential** Minutes of the Staffing Sub-Committee Working Group Meeting on 15th August 2023.

The Minutes were **received** and councillors resolved to approve the recommendations within.

The meeting ended at 8.47pm.

Craig Palmer
Mayor
Minehead Town Council