



## MINEHEAD TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of Minehead Town Council held on  
Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> November 2023 at 7.30 pm at  
the Community Centre, Irnham Road, Minehead TA24 5DW

### Presentation from Minehead Coastwatch

There was a 15-minute presentation at the beginning of the meeting from the Station Manager of the newly established Minehead Coastwatch Station, who covered the following points:

Minehead and Burnham-on-Sea are the latest branches and the only two in Somerset. The stations are manned entirely by volunteers and funded in part by the Somerset Community Grant Fund and by local collecting. Every station is self-funding and they do not receive government funding. Minehead was particularly successful in recruiting volunteers, who have now been trained and are located in a temporary trailer on the seafront which is licensed until 2024. The Coastwatch role is both safety at sea and education and the teams have already had a lot of success with this at the temporary station.

A planning application had been submitted to build a permanent station next to the Warren Road toilet block which would sit above the ground and be the same height as the toilet block to allow views over the sea wall. Councillors were thanked for supporting the application. The Station had requested a temporary link up with the Warren toilets electricity connection and proposed that, when the permanent station was built, they would install a meter and refund MTC for their usage. Councillor C Palmer thanked them for their briefing and it was agreed to bring forward the discussion about the electricity connection.

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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.

A member of the public requested a councillor surgery so that residents could speak with councillors in a more informal setting. Councillors agreed that there were positives and negatives to consider and it was agreed to place this on a subsequent agenda for further discussion.

A member of the public expressed disappointment that the eat Festival would be not be funded by MTC for a return visit.

### *The meeting convened*

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

Apologies: Councillor Kingston-James

Not Present: Councillor Bonar

In Attendance: Helen Nathanson (Town Clerk), Ben Parker (Operations Manager), County Councillor Chilcott and 1 member of the public

1. To receive apologies for absence.

It was resolved to accept the apologies.

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

Councillor Kravis declared his membership of Somerset Council.

## Item brought forward

A recommendation from Item 6 was brought forward so that the members of Coastwatch could be present for the decision. Councillors resolved to allow an electric connection from the Warren Road toilets to the Coastwatch station on the basis that the bill would be sent to MTC and Coastwatch would be invoiced. A Memorandum of Understanding would also be created between MTC, Coastwatch and Somerset Council as owners of the building. The arrangement would be reviewed in February 2024 once more was known about the new build.

3. To receive reports from Somerset Councillors.

Apologies were received from Somerset Councillors Hadley and Lawrence.

Councillor Chilcott raised the following matters:

The Somerset County financial position was very stark and, if the Council was unable to set a budget, a S114 would have to be issued. At this point government commissioners would step in to oversee the process, which would include sales assets and a stop to all new spending with the exception of care packages, statutory services and pre-existing spending commitments.

Somerset Council has signed a new highways contract with Kier for core maintenance across the network.

The fire at Priorswood Recycling Centre in Taunton had been catastrophic and demolition of the facility had begun. A survey of household recycling across the county found that nearly half of the contents of the average household bin could have been recycled and had not been. Residents were therefore encouraged to use the recycling facility.

Councillor Kravis raised the following matters:

He reiterated the gravity of Somerset Council's financial situation. He expressed the view that council tax rates were historically too low, which might have exacerbated the problem, but that inflation had exposed the cost of social care. He explained that, in the event of a S114, day to day spending would be placed on a long term loan which would be at above average rates and which would therefore build up debt for the coming years. He also outlined the fact that statutory services was a grey area and that protection of services was not guaranteed.

Councillor Kravis was asked to look into why trees had been flailed and damaged along Dunster Street.

4. To approve the [Minutes of the Full Council Meeting](#) held on 24<sup>th</sup> October 2023 and to discuss any matters arising.

It was resolved to approve the minutes of the meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> October 2023. The following matters arose:

### Item 4 Christmas lights switch-on

Councillor Jewell said that there had been a lot of positive feedback about the event which brought businesses and community together and which had exceeded expectations, especially in terms of attendance. He thanked Ben Parker, the Operations Manager, for all his help and effort in making it a success. Cllr C Palmer reiterated this and said he had been pleasantly surprised by attendance numbers and that a road closure would be appropriate next year as there were so many people. The Rotary Club had provided the stewarding which made the event safe in spite of the numbers as had the presence of the PCSOs.

It was agreed that it was good for MTC to play an active role in the event and that the Ops Advisory Group January would start discussions about Christmas 2024.

5. To receive the [Minutes of the Planning Committee Meeting](#) on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2023 and to discuss any matters arising.

The Minutes of the Planning Committee Meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2023 were received.

6. To receive the [Minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee Meeting](#) on 14<sup>th</sup> November 2023 and to discuss any matters arising, which include:

The Minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee Meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> November 2023 were received. The following matters arose:

#### **Item 6**

##### **Annual bedding displays**

It was resolved to approve the recommendation that the BID's hanging baskets would not be offered for use in the town for 2023/24 but MTC would plan and discuss with businesses how any additional floral baskets would be provided in future years. MTC would plant up the additional 4 floral cake stands still in town left by BID.

The BID hanging baskets had been given to MTC but because of short notice, budget and operational constraints it was not possible to provide them in 2024.

##### **2023 Summer band concerts**

It was resolved to approve the recommendation that a live music programme for summer 2024 would take place but with a reduced number of performances and once the cost of staffing the events was properly considered and accepted. This will continue to be on the agenda for the Operations Advisory Group.

##### **Request for MTC to fund an Eat festival in Minehead in 2024**

It was resolved to approve the recommendation that MTC would not provide funding to the Eat festivals because it was not in line with the Council's grants policy. It was also about how the town businesses feel about external events like this in the town and it was felt that more needed to be investigated.

##### **Refurbishment of benches at Quay Street**

It was resolved to approve the recommendation that the benches at Quay Street would be refurbished at a total cost of £1600.

#### **Item 10**

##### **Grant Applications for approval**

It was resolved to approve the recommendations that:

- the grant application from Minehead Museum would not be awarded because the Museum had already received funding from MTC in the financial year.
- it was not the right approach to set up an SLA with Citizens Advice West Somerset (CAWS) but that further funding to CAWS would be supported in principle, subject to the constraints of the budget.

#### **7. Accounts**

The emergency payment made for works to the electric vehicles in order to pass their MOT was noted.

The Operations Manager explained that it was a busy time of year and that the MOT failures needed to be addressed urgently.

The draft budget for 2024/25 was received.

8. The Somerset Council devolution of services was discussed. It was noted that MTC had responded formally to Somerset Council and it was agreed that a press release would be a useful way to update residents and let them know that MTC was considering how to react to the potential shortfall in services.

9. Councillor Hodson explained that a business case had been written on the feasibility of installing a swimming pool with gym and café in Minehead. He confirmed that MTC would not be asking Somerset Council for any money and that private sources would need to be considered though it was agreed that MTC would not be taking on the responsibility for seeking funding in the future.

Councillor Kravis thanked Councillor Hodson for the work he had done in creating the business plan.

10. Councillor M Palmer outlined existing plans to rename the Rose Garden on Alcombe Marsh Common as the Queen's Memorial Garden and to plant it with insect friendly plants. Local children had already planted a native hedge along one side of the Garden and she would like to plant the rest in winter 2023/24 at a cost of c.£3k. She proposed using money from the Coronation 2023 and Tree Replacement/Rose Garden Cost Codes and taking the shortfall from the Queen Anne or Swimming Pool budgets.

The Operations Manager explained that, when this plan had been previously discussed months ago, it involved the creation of new planting beds and moving existing plants, all of which required more information to understand what staff time would be involved.

Councillors agreed that they would be willing in principle to fund the planting but requested a planting plan to show how many plants would be required and where they would go. This was referred to the meeting of the Council on 12<sup>th</sup> December.

11. An update was received from Councillor C Palmer about the Flood Drop-in event held in Minehead on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2023, for which there was a disappointing turnout. The Operations Manager informed councillors that a representative from Minehead Fire station had been in touch with him having attended the meeting and would like MTC to be a part of any future discussions relating to future flood responses in the town.

12. The [Minutes of the Local Community Network \(LCN\)](#) meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> October 2023 were noted.

13. The Operations Manager and Councillor C Palmer had attended a meeting to hear feedback about the consultation on Wootton Ridge. There had been a good response from users: dog walkers, cyclists and runners were the three main groups to respond and their feedback showed some conflict between them. The meeting allowed the various landowners to get together and discuss this first stage and to hear about the next part of the process, which would be to produce a management plan for the Ridge which all landowners could sign up to and be a part of.

Councillor Hodson asked about the potential for Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) on the Common and it was explained that this had been discussed, with very different reactions from landowners. It was not yet clear how it could be applied and what the suitability of the land might be, given the specific characteristics of heathland but it would be discussed again as a potential funding stream and it was likely that an Expression of Interest would be submitted, of which MTC could form a part.

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

Councillor C Palmer had attended the Christmas lights switch-on as the Mayor.

Councillors C Palmer and Lawton had attended the Remembrance Parade services and wreath laying events earlier in the month.

15. To note the date of the next meeting which will be on 12<sup>th</sup> December 2023 at 7.30pm in the Community Centre.

This was noted.

16. To note the dates of the January meetings:

The date of the Planning Committee Meeting, which had been arranged for 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2024, would be rearranged for the following week to allow time to publish the agenda.

Finance and General Purposes Meeting - 9<sup>th</sup> January 2024 at 7.30pm

Full Council - 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2024 at 7.30pm

The date for Finance and General Purposes and for Full Council in January were noted.

17. The **Confidential** Minutes of the Staffing Sub-Committee Meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> November 2023 were received.

18. To note that there are still casual vacancies on the Town Council.

This was noted. The meeting ended at 10pm.

Councillor C Palmer  
Mayor