



MINEHEAD TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of Minehead Town Council held on
Tuesday 27th February 2024 at 7.30 pm in
the Community Centre, Irnham Road, Minehead TA24 5DW

There was a 10-minute presentation at the beginning of the meeting from The North Hill Action Group regarding land at Beacon Road, who covered the following points:

Mark Paulter, representing Minehead Conservation Society and North Hill Action Group, addressed the Council. He reminded them of development applications in 2019 and later for land behind St. Michael's Church. Residents and the Society opposed the plans due to impacts on the areas historic character and habitat. Both applications were refused. The group had approached the Town Council for assistance in urging the then District Council to compulsory purchase to protect it from development. A series of letters were exchanged, but with the transition to a Unitary Authority, a response stalled. Given Somerset Council's financial constraints, the Town Council decided last September against any further support regarding a compulsory purchase. Mr. Paulter expressed surprise at this decision and urged the Council to reopen conversation with Somerset Council on potential land acquisition with the required funds to be raised through public subscription.

This was followed by a 10-minute presentation from The Minehead Eye Youth service who covered the following points:

Two senior youth workers provided Councillors with a briefing on the key benefits of Minehead youth club. The subsidy MTC provides enables adequate staffing. The club serves 40-50 local youths weekly for just £1 a session, with earnings reinvested and 50p hot food available monthly. Programming runs year-round including holiday schemes. The SLA boosts the club's ability to obtain match funding. Strong partnerships provide workshops on important issues from police and support groups. Events are diverse. They provided summarised costs, noting the venue provided is in-kind by Minehead Eye. Councillor C Palmer thanked them for their presentation and it was agreed to bring forward the discussion about a renewed service level agreement.

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:

A member of the public said they were pleased to see that the surgeries were returning and they hoped that people would come and support them.

A member of the public expressed concern about the maintenance and management of street trees. They observed that up to 20 missing trees just on The Avenue and Parade. They emphasised the need for better stewardship of Minehead's street trees given the pollution from traffic, the character they bring to the town and the shade they provide. The Chair replied that although it didn't currently sit within MTC's remit, that added into the next year's budget, is a tree replacement fund for the trees in the Avenue and other locations in the town. Councillor Chilcott said there are complexities with Street Tree replanting and a structured replacement programme was required.

A member of the public said the town needed an outdoor swimming pool and requested an update. It was confirmed that a community group were interested in taking it forward but no further updates from them have been forthcoming as yet.

The meeting convened.

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

In Attendance: B Parker (Town Clerk), J Chapman (Deputy Clerk & RFO), Somerset Councillors Chilcott, Hadley and 32 Members of the public.

2024/19. To receive apologies for absence.

No apologies were received.

2024/20. 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.

2024/21. To receive reports from Somerset Councillors.

Councillor Chilcott raised the following matters:

- Minehead Eye is very important to the community and the voice of young people is essential. Minehead Eye is a brilliant advocate for this.
- Residents were reminded that there were 4 Somerset Councillors covering the Minehead area.
- SC had sent letters to City, Towns and Parish Councils notifying of Highways Service devolution communication.
- SC has now set its budget. Reserves have been used in order to balance the budget. The challenge for SC is to meet the constraints of the budget and a large scale staff restructure is due to take place with a lot of unknowns on the capacity of the Council beyond that.

Councillor Hadley raised the following matters:

- Zipp scooters have gone for refurbishment due to the time of year but were due back March/April.
- The Post Office are looking for people/businesses to express an interest in running a Post Office in the Town.
- With an election due, its important everyone ensures they are registered to vote.

Councillor Kravis raised the following matters:

- The budget setting at SC raised interesting points relating to the funding allocation for Local Government. A request to raise council tax above 5% was turned down by Government. It was cumulation of years of money struggles at SC and it is a long-term project to get budgets back on track.

Councillor M Palmer asked for clarity around the highways devolution. Councillor Chilcott said that It may mean less proactive maintenance but at this stage, no further information was available.

2024/22. Item brought forward; To approve the renewal of a 3-year Service Level Agreement between MTC and Minehead Eye for the provision of The Minehead Youth Club Service.

Item 13 on the Agenda was brought forward so that the members of Minehead Eye Youth Services could be present for the decision.

It was **resolved** to approve to renew the 3 year SLA between Minehead Town Council and Minehead Eye for the provision of The Minehead Youth Club Service.

2024/23. To receive updates from councillors on Advisory Groups and Outside Bodies.

No updates were received.

2024/24. To approve and sign the [Minutes of the Full Council Meeting on 23rd January 2024](#) and to discuss any matters arising.

It was **resolved** to approve the Minutes of the Full Council Meeting on 23rd January 2024.

The following matters arose:

Item 7 – Precept Request

The Clerk informed Councillors that the agreed precept request of £931,642 had been submitted to Somerset Council on Thursday 25th January 2024.

Item 8 – Blenheim Gardens and Quay annual bedding displays

The Clerk informed Councillors that because of budget cuts at SC, it had been confirmed that MTC needed to finance 2024's Summer floral displays. To cover the cost an order worth £1,453.80 had been made.

Item 9 – Blenheim Gardens Green Flag and Britain in Bloom entries

MTC had met the deadline to submit Blenheim's Green Flag entry. This cost was £442.80. The entry for Minehead in Bloom wasn't required until April.

Item 10 – Casual Vacancies at MTC

The Clerk advised Councillors that this was still ongoing and ways to address this would be covered later in the agenda.

Item 12 – Blenheim Gardens Summer Concerts

Councillors received an update on the bookings for the bands. Out of 20 available slots, 19 have been filled. A poster containing dates and acts would be published in due course.

2024/25. To receive the [Minutes of the Planning Committee Meeting on 6th February 2024](#) and to discuss any matters arising.

The minutes of the Planning Committee Meeting on 6th February were **received**.

A question around the wording used when documenting decision making was made.

Committee members replied that policies were applied, and certain terminology needed to be used.

The question was noted.

2024/26. Accounts

- i) To Approve the following payments over £1,500 for February:
 - Payment of **£1664.40** to Brian Hobbs & Sons for Security Gate behind changing Places Toilet in Summerland Road Car Park. Quotation agreed at August Full Council Meeting
 - Payment of **£2339.18** to Autoglass for repair to glass door of AE66 LZV (Note: this will be reclaimed via insurance)

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

- ii) To note payments made for January

A question was asked about two payments to for electricity at King George Pavilion. The deputy Clerk confirmed that one meter supplied lighting and another showers/hot water.

A question was asked about the Hedge trimming. The Clerk explained that due to the amount of perimeter hedge rows at MTC, tractor mounted hedge trimming was more time and financially efficient.

The Payments for January were noted.

- iii) To note budget income & expenditure reports for January

The Budget & Expenditure reports for January were noted.

- iv) To note Income received for January

The Income received for January were noted.

- v) To note bank reconciliations for January

The Bank reconciliations for January were noted.

It was observed that some Councillors struggle to understand the accounts information presented. Officers explained that uplifting information onto other systems was both time consuming and increased the risk of human error when inputting information. Councillors were reminded that Officers are prepared to spend time with them if required, to allow for a better understanding of the way the accounts are presented.

2024/27. To discuss if Minehead Town Council want to engage in further conversations with Somerset Council relating to the future devolution of assets and services.

The Clerk informed Councillors that SC had notified him that they intended to drastically reduce their Grounds Maintenance programme across Somerset from April 2025. Therefore, in order to ensure grounds maintenance services in Minehead were retained, Councillors were asked if they would like to enter negotiations with a view to devolving Grounds Maintenance assets and services in Minehead from April 2025. The Clerk advised that as this would be a major undertaking, plenty of time was required to hold the necessary conversations and understand the details and provide an achievable devolution framework to Council.

It was **resolved** to enter negotiations with Somerset Council regarding potential devolution of grounds maintenance assets and services, effective April 1st 2025.

2024/28. To discuss Street Weed control in Minehead and to agree future management techniques.

Councillors reviewed a report on using foam stream as an alternative to glyphosate for weed control. A demonstration had shown satisfactory results, though with considerable foam residue that although harmless, was visible for up to 30 minutes after treatment. Councillors felt residents would need preparation for the mess from widespread use. Concerns were raised about impacts on street cleanliness and the detritus enabling weeds. It was concluded that without glyphosate, a combination of foam stream and other methods would be needed to maintain streets effectively. The demonstration indicated foam stream could replace glyphosate but general street cleanliness issues necessitate a multi-pronged approach.

It was **resolved** to approve a 6-month foam stream hire trial, subject to satisfactory hire purchase information.

Standing Orders were suspended to receive a verbal report from The Police.

Hayden Smith introduced himself as the new neighbourhood police officer for The Minehead Area. He has already met with businesses in Minehead to help reduce business crime in the town and hoped to form a positive relationship with MTC and Councillors.

Councillor Beynon left the meeting at 21:05.

The meeting recommenced.

2024/29. To discuss how Minehead Town Council will support the Christmas Light Switch on event in 2024.

Given the popularity of last year's Christmas light switch-on and late shopping event, the Council discussed supporting a similar event for 2024. A road closure was deemed necessary for safety based on last year's experience. Initial road closure cost estimates were presented and discussed. The Clerk suggested expanding the existing Community Centre Advisory Group into a Communities and Events Advisory Group that would broaden the range of topics to include the Christmas event. This Group would be tasked with discussing 2024 event plans and making recommendations back to the Council.

It was **resolved** to expand the existing Community Centre Advisory Group into a Communities and Events Advisory Group.

2024/30. To receive a request from West Somerset Citizen Advice and to agree a letter of support.

The request from West Somerset Citizen Advice was **received**.

It was **resolved** for the Clerk to send a letter of support from MTC.

2024/31. To agree dates and times of Councillor Surgery sessions to be held in March at the Community Centre. The proposed dates and times are:

- Friday 8th March; 10:00 – 12:00
- Thursday 14th March; 12:30 – 14:00
- Wednesday 20th March; 16:30 – 18:30

It was asked if any progress had been made about hosting the meetings online. The Clerk said that at this stage no progress had been made as focus had been on organising these events. Councillors discussed that the events would be promoted as Community Engagement events, providing opportunities for residents to meet their Councillors, discuss concerns, and for interested individuals to further explore becoming a council member.

It was **resolved** to approve the dates and Councillors were asked to send their suggested attendance date to the Clerk by no later than Friday 1st March.

2024/32. To approve recommended quotation for Tree Survey of MTC owned Trees.

A new Tree Survey for trees on MTC owned Land is now due. Councillors were provided with 3 quotations and a written report outlining the required scope and a recommendation to accept Quote A.

It was **resolved** to approve the recommendation in the report.

2024/33. To approve one year service contract totalling £588.00 for equipment in Changing Places Toilet.

Councillors were advised that due to the functions performed by some equipment in the Changing Places Toilet, a 6 monthly servicing and certification is required to satisfy the requirements of LOLER (Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations) In order to maintain compliance, checks are now due. Opting for an annual servicing contract would guarantee compliance and efficiently take care of maintenance in one arrangement.

It was **resolved** to approve a one year service contract totalling £588.00.

2024/34. To discuss if the Town Council wants to nominate a Councillor to apply for a representative seat on the new Somerset Council Harbour Advisory Board Committee.

Councillor Hadley said applicants would be judged on their merit and it included the scope of Minehead, Watchet and Bridgwater. The advisory board would advise the executive. Councillors asked how large a budget is available for maintaining Harbours councillor Hadley was unsure of exact amount. March 18th is the date for the next meeting. Coopted members of the board would have a vote.

Councillor Kravis declared an interest in this item so abstained from voting.

It was **resolved** to approve for MTC to have Councillor representative on the board.

The Chair asked for any interested Councillors to notify The Clerk by Friday 1st March.

2024/35. To note Somerset Bus Partnerships petition that calls for the under-threat bus routes and service intervals (Which includes 28 Minehead – Taunton) to be retained.

Not long after the agenda had been published, Somerset Council and buses of Somerset had announced that all the under threat bus routes would be retained for another 12 months. The 28 service will be revised, including some direct journeys between Taunton and Minehead, with an express service to Butlins numbered X28, which will operate Mondays to Fridays. Following feedback from stakeholders, the evening services will be retimed to align with trains serving Taunton station. Councillor Kravis said he would like to see a commercial bus service between Minehead and Bridgwater.

The update was **noted**.

2024/36. To receive an update for the Second stage Wootton Ridge (which includes MTC owned Alcombe Common) consultation.

Councillors noted that a well attended drop in event was held at Minehead library on February 19th. The Consultation allowing people to provide feedback on the proposed Management Plan for the ridge is due to end on March 8th. MTC's website has all the information including on how to provide feedback under the Public Information tab. The next steps will involve collating information and submitting a draft report in April for stakeholder finalisation/sign off.

The update was **received**.

2024/37. To Note a letter sent to Minehead Football Club relating to rental increase from 1st April 2024.

The Deputy Clerk confirmed a letter for rental increase was sent on 17th January. As yet no response has been received so a payment schedule will be sent in March.

The letter was **noted**.

2024/38. To Note the dates of Annual Town Meeting and Annual Town Council Meeting.

It was observed that the Minehead and Watcher LCN meeting is on 30th April so it would clash with the Annual Town Meeting.

It was **resolved** to change the date for the Annual Town Meeting.

Dates are as follows (Times TBC):

- Annual Town Meeting **Tuesday 7th May 2024.**
- Annual Town Council Meeting **Tuesday 14th May 2024.**

2024/39. To resolve to exclude members of the press and public under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings Act) 1960 in order to receive an update about the following matters:

- To approve the Town Council response to the objections on the 2022/23 accounts.

A Confidential attachment was received in advance containing the draft response.

It was **resolved** to approve the Town Council response to the objections on the 2022/23 accounts. The Clerk was asked to submit the response.

- To receive Minutes of the Staffing Sub-Committee Meeting on 6th February 2024 and to discuss any matters arising.

The minutes were **received**.

The Following matters arose:

Please see Confidential Notes to Minutes.

The meeting closed at 22:00

Councillor C Palmer
Mayor