



MINEHEAD TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Meeting
of Minehead Town Council which were held on Tuesday 9th January 2024 at 7.30 pm at
the Town Council Offices, 3 Summerland Road, Minehead, TA24 5BP

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

Apologies: Councillors Hall and Beynon

In attendance: Ben Parker (Town Clerk), Jo Chapman (Deputy Town Clerk & RFO) and Somerset
Councillor Chilcott

2024/1. To receive apologies for absence

The apologies from Councillors Hall and Beynon were received.

2024/2. 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.

2024/3. Accounts

- i) To note the Receipts and Payments.
- ii) To note the Bank Reconciliations.
- iii) To note the Income and Expenditure Report.
- iv) To note the Earmarked Reserves.

The Reports were **noted**.

2024/4. Budget

To agree the final Town Council Budget for 2024/25.

It was agreed to move item 4 forward and to be discussed as item 3 on the agenda. The draft budget for 2024/25 was received. The Clerk explained that the budget had been drafted using known figures and projects for next year as well as data from previous years expenditure meaning most of the figures that had been included were fixed. There were, however, discretionary figures that had been included and these would be identified throughout the process. Councillors were reminded that to allow the budget to be as strategic and transparent as possible, some names of cost centres had been changed and others would close and therefore read a zero balance. Councillors went through each cost centre where officers explained each budget line. Amendments were made as required, and the following lines were discussed in more depth:

101 – Governance and administration

4022 – Phone and Broadband: Councillors discussed the costs associated with phones and broadband in the offices. Officers agreed that they intend to review MTC’s existing contract to try and identify the needs and find future savings in time for the expiry of the current contract.

4050 - Legal and Professional Fees: £10,000 was allocated for any legal and professional fees throughout the next financial year. The increase in this budget line was to reflect any legal costs associated with asset and service devolution from Somerset Council.

102 – Town Council Offices

4401 – Building Maintenance: It was explained that due to the conditions of the lease of the offices, MTC are required to undertake Maintenance/repair work. As commercial premises, there is the need to ensure compliance matters are met. Because the offices are rented, a consideration for remedial repairs was made to ensure the premises is left in acceptable condition if MTC were to need to vacate. As a result, £10,000 was allocated.

4429 – New office provision EMR: Minehead Town Council currently leases the offices in which they are based. It had been previously agreed to actively explore options for the office arrangements through a task and finish group. It was agreed that £20,000 would be added to the existing earmarked reserve of £219,200.64 for new office provision.

104 – Depot Team

4008 – Staff Training/Conferences: Councillors were informed that during the next financial year staff training was required to ensure health and safety compliance that with costing already carried out, would total £5,000.

201 – Cemetery and Churchyard

4101 – Grounds Maintenance – The Clerk explained that there are matters at the cemetery that require additional maintenance such as repairs and maintenance to the Lychgate, refurbishment of the main entrance gates and repairs to the footpaths. The next financial year would also require compliance matters such as memorial testing to be undertaken. Therefore £10,000 was allocated.

4406 – Equipment - £4,000 had been allocated for equipment at the cemetery. The reasons being that new shoring for grave digging would need to be purchased as well as new equipment for the presenting or ‘dressing’ of the graves during a service. This budget also includes the replacement of old machinery and maintenance/repairs to existing machinery.

205 – Depots and Compound

4401 – Building maintenance: £3,000 had been allocated to ensure commercial premises compliance is met.

207 – Vehicles, Plant and Equipment

4331 – Vehicle maintenance: £2,800 had been allocated for vehicle maintenance because, although the budget had been overspent this financial year, this was relating to two isolated incidents where vans had needed urgent one-off repairs.

4432 – Vehicle Replacement (EMR): £13,500 has been added to the existing Ear Marked Reserve as it was explained that due to at least one vehicle beginning to show signs of age, a new vehicle would be required before too long and it would be sensible to ensure an amount of budget is allocated for this.

214 – Community Centre

4413 – Electricity – 4419 Gas: Councillors observed the costs of the utilities at the community centre. It was discussed that the price of utilities had increased considerably, and officers were exploring ways to minimise the costs. Councillors were reminded that the community centre is currently used 7 days a week for most of the year.

215 – Open Spaces and Recreation

4100 – Playground Maintenance: £5,000 had been budgeted with the increase being for the replacement of a rope bridge on a multi play unit at Irnham Road Recreation Ground that was due.

4358 - Weed removal: £30,000 had been set aside for street weed removal for the year 24/25. The clerk explained that as MTC had made the decision to not use Glyphosate to control the street weeds, they would need to find an alternative solution to street weed control. Alternative methods had been identified but these involved purchasing bespoke machinery and materials.

219 – Community Services and Support

4362 - Christmas Decorations: £20,000 had been allocated to accommodate the Festive lighting contract, their installation and removal, the town Christmas tree and the electric to power them.

4363 – Town entertainments: £15,000 had been allocated for town entertainments. This would involve the summer band concerts in Blenheim, the Christmas light switch on event and to provide assistance/support for other town events.

4900 - Devolution Costs: £75,000 has been budgeted in response to the financial emergency declared at Somerset Council and the high probability of the higher tier authority drastically reducing the services they provide. This means there is a high probability that Minehead Town Council will need to provide or subsidise any of these services. Although discussions had been held with Somerset Council regarding services they may no longer be providing, it had been difficult to identify exact areas as no final decision had been made at SC. It was agreed that £75,000 was a proportionate amount based on information already obtained.

222 – Town Centre Maintenance

4369 - Britain In Bloom: It was agreed that £1000 would be budgeted to ensure that Minehead entered Britain in Bloom and Blenheim Gardens would be entered in the Keep Britain Tidy Green Flag awards for 2024/25.

250 – Public Toilets

4435 – Public Toilet Improvements (EMR): As part of MTC’s commitment to providing a high standard of public Convenience in the town, £50,000 was added to the Ear Marked Reserve for the refurbishment of Blenheim Gardens Toilets

The 2024/25 precept requirement will therefore be £925,642 in order to cover the budget. This would mean a band D property precept would be set at £213.14 per year. This would be an increase of £35.40 per Band D property for 2024/25 financial year.

It was **resolved** to recommend the 2024/25 budget for approval by full council.

The meeting closed at 22:15.

Cllr B Hodson
Finance and General Purpose Committee Chair