



MINEHEAD TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes from the Meeting of Minehead Town Council held on
Tuesday 22nd October 2024 at 7.30 pm in
the Community Centre, Irnham Road, Minehead TA24 5DW

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

Questions were raised regarding the clarity of cash book income receipts and account accessibility. The clerk clarified that while various cash book providers exist, the current system is widely recognised within local government. The presentation format of financial information has been identified as an area for improvement, with work ongoing to find a solution. It was highlighted that Minehead Town Council exceeds legislative requirements for financial transparency in its published accounts.

A question relating to the foam stream weed control system agenda item, with queries about future weed management should the current method be discontinued. The Chair advised that this matter would be addressed comprehensively when discussed later in the agenda.

There was a 15-minute presentation at the beginning of the meeting from Minehead Information Centre.

A presentation was delivered by Sally Turner - Manager at Minehead Information Centre (MIC) and Jim Whittaker - Trustee from Minehead Coast and Development Trust (MCDT). MCDT provides management support to MIC. In February 2024, trustees and management conducted a strategic review of MIC's purpose and market relevance, examining customer base and service delivery. The review identified two distinct customer groups: local residents and visitor communities. While confirming the continued validity of certain services, it acknowledged the need to modernise aspects of their service. Operating from the Beach Hotel (part of Dulverton YMCA group) since 2014, MIC employs five part-time staff members and serves as Minehead's primary community hub.

MIC provides comprehensive visitor services, including local produce sales, accommodation booking, and leaflet distribution. They maintain active partnerships with multiple agencies to promote Minehead, serving as a key contact point for various initiatives including coach tours, Southwest Coast Path passport stamping, and the plastic-free steering group.

Their digital presence includes management of the Minehead Bay website (launched 2018) and social media channels, with 4,000 followers across Facebook and Instagram. Analytics show increasing website traffic despite declining physical footfall, with local residents comprising 25-30% of visitors. This trend suggests the current operational model may need adaptation to reflect changing visitor information-seeking behaviours.

The organisation seeks to reshape its approach to destination marketing, requiring a sustainable funding and revenue model. MIC has extended an invitation to Minehead Town Council to collaborate on town promotion initiatives.

During the discussion, councillors enquired about operational costs, with staff salaries identified as the primary expense. While volunteer models were explored as a cost-saving measure, it was noted that paid coordination would still be required for effective volunteer management. Regarding visitor demographics, the centre experiences seasonal variations, with families predominant in summer months and an older demographic in autumn. Discussion of promotional strategies highlighted the need to enhance social media presence to better engage with some users. The merchandising strategy was explained as a zero-cost partnership utilising print-on-demand services for branded items, though it was acknowledged this revenue stream needs increased promotion to become viable. The focus remains on creating a centralised source for Minehead merchandise without directly competing with local retailers. Brand consistency emerged as a key priority. The accommodation provider scheme, which offers dedicated webpage presence and promotional materials, has shown recent growth with promotion extending beyond Minehead's boundaries. Regarding financial sustainability, the centre indicated urgent need for adaptation within the coming year.

The meeting convened

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

Not present: Councillor Bonar

Apologies: Councillor Beynon and Hall

In Attendance: B Parker (Town Clerk), Somerset Councillors Chilcott, Hadley and 5 members of the public.

2024/160. To receive apologies for absence.

Councillors Beynon and Hall's apologies were received.

2024/161. To receive disclosures of unregistered or other interests and to consider any prior requests for dispensations from councillors on matters to be considered at the meeting.

Councillor Kravis has a standing declaration as a Somerset Councillor.

There were no further declarations or disclosures.

2024/162. To receive reports from Somerset Councillors and the Local Policing Team.

There were no representatives from the Local Policing Team present.

Councillor Chilcott gave the following updates:

- Police will be attending Local Community Network (LCN) meetings for 30 minutes beforehand to address resident concerns. LCN's are open to all to attend.
- Following Somerset Council's decision against a full street parking review, Somerset Councillors are working towards alternative measures including; yellow lines at junctions, Speed limit reviews and Speed Indicator Device installations. (SIDs)
- Expression of Interest submitted for Dorset, Somerset and Wiltshire Councils government devolution - potential to unlock funding without impacting daily operations.

- Warning issued about parking-related scams with fraudulent text messages circulating and unauthorised QR code stickers on parking machines. Only official QR codes appear on main SC car park signage. Public are urged to report suspicious activity.
- Winter coat exchange program has launched across Somerset's libraries, including at Minehead.

Councillor Hadley gave the following updates:

- Recycling centre winter hours are now in place. They are 9am-5pm weekdays, 9am-4pm weekends with variable opening days across all sites. Online queue monitoring cameras are available.
- The secondary school application deadline is approaching for parents/carers.
- Eligible individuals and over-65s are urged to get their flu and Covid vaccinations.
- It is estimated that Somersets TV and film industry generated £2.8 million in regional revenue last year.

Councillor Kravis gave the following updates:

- Noted that several devolution models have been implemented locally in recent past. His view was that it doesn't matter which council owns the assets, as they are public assets. While there should be a desire to avoid taking on liabilities, there is an opportunity for MTC to engage ensuring local assets are in local control.

Questions regarding devolution from Somerset Council to Town and Parish Councils were addressed. It was noted that while Taunton and Bridgwater Town Councils are already progressing with devolution, Minehead Town Council is collaborating with Somerset Council to develop an appropriate model. The significant legal work involved was acknowledged, with current council services under pressure due to staff restructuring.

Discussion continued about speed limits within the town, with a question if there were proposals to extend the 30mph zone across wider road stretches. Somerset Councillors are gathering evidence to support this case and expressed optimism about a review, with Officers committing to examine the matter next year. There were further queries about Seaward Way's 40mph limit, it was noted they had not received the number of resident concerns about this particular road.

2024/163. To receive updates from councillors on Advisory groups and Outside Bodies.

Councillor Lawton reported attending both the High Sheriff's reception in Taunton and the Minehead repair café opening, which was also attended by the local MP.

Councillor Hodson provided an update from the recent MSL meeting, reporting their establishment as a Community Interest Company (CIC) and upcoming board member elections, with plans for a new share offer to secure additional funding.

Councillor Bartlett had recently visited West Somerset Food Cupboard, expressing particular appreciation for the organisation's operations after meeting with the chairman.

2024/164. To approve and sign the Minutes of the [Full Council Meeting held on Tuesday 10th September 2024.](#)

RESOLVED the Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on Tuesday 10th September 2024 were approved and signed by the chair.

2024/165. To receive the Minutes of the [Planning Committee Meeting held on Tuesday 1st October 2024.](#)

The Minutes of the Planning Committee Meeting held on Tuesday 1st October 2024 were **received**.

2024/166. To receive the Minutes from the [Finance and General Purposes Committee Meeting held on Tuesday 8th October 2024.](#)

The Minutes from the Finance and General Purposes Committee Meeting held on Tuesday 8th October 2024 were **received**.

2024/167. Accounts

- i. To note payments made for September.

The payments made for September were **noted**.

- ii. To note budget income & expenditure reports for September.

The budget income & expenditure reports for September were **noted**.

- iii. To note income received for September.

The income received for September was **noted**.

- iv. To note bank reconciliations for September.

The bank reconciliations for September were **noted**.

2024/168. To note the Earmarked Reserves report.

The earmarked reserves report was **noted**.

2024/169. To approve the replacement of four trees in the Avenue, Minehead and delegate the authority to the clerk to spend up to £8,000 if required, using budgets to complete the work as specified. *(Recommendation from the Finance and General Purposes Committee)*

The Clerk outlined that the project involves collaboration between various Somerset Council departments, the Town Council and contractors. Delegating the Clerk the authority to spend with this project would ensure timely project delivery. There was optimism that the level of preparation work undertaken will ensure successful project completion.

RESOLVED the replacement of four trees in the Avenue, Minehead and the delegation of authority to the clerk to spend up to £8,000 if required, using appropriate budgets to complete the work as specified was approved.

2024/170. To approve the termination of the use of Foam Stream at the end of the hire period and return the equipment back to Weedingtech. *(Recommendation from the Finance and General Purposes Committee)*

The Foam Stream trial results were presented, indicating that while some weed control was achieved, the system proved both labour intensive and costly relative to its effectiveness. Members engaged in thorough discussion regarding its future use, with diverse viewpoints expressed.

Several councillors advocated for retaining the machine, arguing that costs would decrease if used as part of a broader weed control strategy rather than as a full-time solution. Supporters emphasised its role within a comprehensive approach to weed management and noted the relatively low purchase costs following the hire period. It was also argued that other towns were reporting better results on its usage and its performance had been challenged by local conditions.

Others expressed concerns about the system's performance, citing repeated treatments required in areas like Blenheim Road, operational challenges for staff including equipment weight, and questioning whether the perceived environmental benefits were offset by heavy fuel usage. These members stressed the importance of exploring alternative solutions to maintain Minehead's appearance while ensuring cost-effectiveness.

The Clerk noted that while Foam Stream represents the best current market alternative with other towns reporting better results, its performance had been challenged by local conditions. Previous trials of manual removal and brush machines were referenced during discussions.

The Clerk observed he felt Foam Stream still represents the best current market alternative to chemical usage however, due to the labour costs associated with operating it, results had been disappointing. The team had also tried to maximise its effectiveness by weeding some areas manually first, although overall results were not drastically improved. Previous trials of manual removal and brush machines were referenced during discussions.

Following extensive debate, considering both operational and financial implications, the council reached a decision by majority on the system's future whilst acknowledging that a long-term weed control strategy would need urgent development.

RESOLVED by majority to terminate the use of Foam Stream at the end of the hire period and to return the equipment back to Weedingtech was approved.

2024/171. To receive an update on the Lychgate at Minehead Cemetery and consider delegating authority to the Clerk for arranging any necessary safety works to the structure.

The planned Lych Gate refurbishment at the cemetery was discussed, for which funding had been previously allocated. Following a recent site meeting between the Clerk and a contractor, potential structural issues were identified that require further investigation. While awaiting a detailed

quotation for the full refurbishment, the Clerk requested delegated authority to implement any necessary safety measures should they be required.

RESOLVED it was approved to authorise the Clerk to arrange any necessary safety works to the structure if required.

2024/172. To decide on the disconnection of unmetered electricity at Cross Farm Park and to consider quotation for Solar alternative.

Councillors had previously received a quotation for the disconnection of unmetered electricity at Cross Farm Park but had deferred the decision pending quotations for the provision and installation of Solar alternatives.

The Deputy Clerk had obtained quotations and had compiled a report that outlined the costs. The report was **received**.

RESOLVED To accept the quotation and initiate the disconnection of the current unmetered electricity at Cross Farm Park. To obtain firm quotations for replacement works and to defer for future discussion the decision on selecting which alternative solar lighting provider to appoint.

2024/173. To approve the funding of two community access bleed kits in Minehead funded using the Mayors allowance. *(Recommendation from the Finance and General Purposes Committee)*

The finance and General Purposes Committee had recommended that two community bleed kits were purchased for the town by Minehead Town Council using the Mayors allowance at a cost of £200 + VAT. These kits would be installed by the local policing team at locations yet to be determined within the town. All ongoing costs such as maintenance and replenishment would be met by the police. The purchase could be made under Section 234 of the Public Health Act 1936.

RESOLVED The funding of two community access bleed kits in Minehead funded using the Mayor's allowance was approved.

2024/174. To receive an update on the recent incident at Summerland Road Toilets where a vehicle collided with the building.

The Clerk reported a recent incident at the Summerland Road toilet block, where a vehicle accidentally collided with the building. This led to a temporary closure for structural assessment and safety repairs. The toilets have since reopened, but the matter is now with insurance for permanent repairs. There were no reported casualties.

2024/175. To receive and note the Minehead Town Council sponsorship report from The Minehead Bay Festival held on Saturday 31st August 2024.

The Minehead Town Council sponsorship report from The Minehead Bay Festival held on Saturday 31st August 2024 was **noted**.

2024/176. To note the external auditors report 2023/24 (*Section 3 of Annual Governance and Accountability Return*)

The external auditors report was **noted**.

Councillors were reminded that Minehead Town Council had been unable to obtain its External Auditors certificate for the 2023/24. This is due to an outstanding objection on the 2022/23 accounts that remains unresolved. It is expected that once this matter is resolved, the external auditor will provide certification for the 2023/24 financial year accounts.

2024/177. To note adopted letter for Minehead Town Council to issue to residents and businesses regarding overhanging vegetation obstructing footpaths and roadways.

The adopted letter was **noted**.

2024/178. To note Minehead in Bloom received the Gold award in South West in Bloom 2024.

Minehead in Bloom received the Gold award in South West in Bloom 2024 was **noted**.

The Clerk reported that Minehead, one of just three Sargent Cup entries in Southwest in Bloom, achieved a Gold award. This recognition highlights not only the town's floral displays and grounds maintenance standards but also the significant community efforts contributing to its appearance. The award reflects the invaluable input from the community and the hard work of amenities staff from both Minehead Town Council and Somerset Council.

The meeting Closed at 21:10

Councillor Craig Palmer

Chair of Minehead Town Council

October 2024.