



MINEHEAD TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes from the Extraordinary Meeting of Minehead Town Council held on
Tuesday 1st July 2025 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 agenda. The following matters were raised:

- It was stated that the ex-councillor who received the payment had carried out casework for the council as an HR-qualified consultant, working alongside legal professionals with the council's approval. The payment decision had been made democratically by councillors. The speaker questioned why officers recommended the payment if it was not permitted and noted the stress caused to the individual by negative media coverage. They supported the auditor's view that council processes need improvement to prevent similar situations.
- Another speaker described the report's findings as too softly worded and believed the payment was illegal. They questioned the ethics of the payments, whether receipts had been provided and who should be held accountable, the claimant, officers, the Mayor at the time, or councillors. They expressed a wish for the money to be repaid.
- Concerns were raised about a GDPR breach during a Freedom of Information request at the time of the payment, alleging that personal details had been wrongly disclosed. The speaker asked whether the ICO had been notified and what changes had been made to policy to prevent future breaches. They also questioned the procurement process for hotel expenses, suggested stronger controls to avoid advance payments and raised concerns about unbudgeted payments and whether better advice could have led to an out-of-court settlement with the ex-employee.
- A further point was made that, as the employment tribunal ended in a "drop hands" agreement, it should be noted the council did not win the case, contrary to some claims.
- There was also an expression of concern about the impact of the matter on the wellbeing of the ex-councillor involved, who was simply carrying out tasks they had been asked to do.

The Chair confirmed that the council had resolved not to pursue an out-of-court settlement regarding the employment tribunal and that the report for discussion related solely to Minehead Town Council's 2022/23 accounts following a public objection that led to its publication. It was noted that the council has no control over how the media has reported on the matter or public commentary.

Note: *A request was made for some of the above statements to be included in full in the minutes. While the council will share any statements received with members, it should be noted that there is no legal requirement for parish or town council minutes to record public comments in full or verbatim. The minutes serve as a formal record of the council's decisions.*

The meeting convened

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

In Attendance: B Parker (Town Clerk), J Chapman (Deputy Clerk & RFO) Somerset Councillors Chilcott, Hadley, one member of the press and 9 members of the public.

2025/116. To receive apologies for absence.

There were no apologies for absence.

2025/117. 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.

Councillors C Palmer, Lawton, M Palmer, Kravis and Bonar noted for the record that they were councillors at the time the payment was made but confirmed this had no bearing on the public interest report under discussion. Stayed in room, spoke and voted.

2025/118. To receive a Public Interest Report in relation to Minehead Town Council's Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2022/23 and to consider the recommendations.

A Public Interest Report had been issued by the external auditor regarding Minehead Town Council's Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) for 2022/23. The report related to payments totalling £25,616 made to a member of the Council and the management of an employment tribunal case during that year. The Public Interest Report was **received**.

RESOLVED that councillors accept the findings of the Public Interest Report and commit to implementing the recommended measures to strengthen governance and accountability within the Council.

2025/119. To receive, consider and approve the action plan produced by the clerk relating to the report's recommendations.

An Action Plan in response to the Public Interest Report was **received**.

The report, detailed the auditor's recommendations and identified associated tasks to strengthen governance and accountability. Some actions have already been implemented, with others scheduled for completion. Councillors acknowledged the importance of fully implementing the Action Plan and agreed that Full Council should review progress quarterly until all actions are completed or embedded into ongoing practice.

Thanks were expressed to the Clerk for preparing the action plan and for producing a clear, forward-looking plan to support the development of a professional council.

RESOLVED that the Action Plan relating to the report's recommendations be approved and that Full Council will undertake quarterly reviews to monitor progress.

2025/120. To receive the estimated costs and fees associated with the preparation of the public interest report by the local auditor, and to agree to delegate authority to the clerk to arrange payment of the invoice from general reserves, up to an agreed maximum amount.

The Chair reported that two invoices had been received from PKF Littlejohn LLP. The first, for **£35,542.20 (inc. VAT)**, covers the 2022–23 audit work, comprising the standard limited assurance review fee (**£1,680.00 exc. VAT**) and additional costs for the challenge work and preparation of the public interest report. The second invoice, for **£2,016.00 (inc. VAT)**, is for the standard limited assurance review for 2023–24. It was noted that the 2023–24 audit could not be concluded until the 2022–23 matters were resolved.

As both invoices are due on receipt, the Clerk sought authority to make payment without delay. It was noted that the limited assurance review was budgeted for, but the additional costs arose due to the challenge work and report.

It was commented that it was disappointing the matter had been pursued despite the auditor advising that the cost of the audit report to the council would be significant.

RESOLVED To delegate authority to the Clerk to pay the invoices from PKF Littlejohn LLP for £35,542.20 (inc. VAT) relating to the 2022–23 limited assurance review and associated public interest report and £2,016.00 (inc. VAT) for the 2023–24 limited assurance review.

The meeting Closed at 20:00.

Councillor Craig Palmer

Chair of Minehead Town Council

July 2025.