



MINEHEAD TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE FINANCE AND STAFFING COMMITTEE MEETING

HELD ON MONDAY 8 FEBRUARY 2021 AT 7.30 PM

Remote Virtual Meeting via Zoom, streamed live on MTC Facebook page

The Meeting was digitally recorded

Members are reminded that Council has a general duty to consider the following matters in the exercise of any of its functions: Equal Opportunities (race, gender, sexual orientation, marital status and any disability), Crime & Disorder, Health & Safety, Human Rights and Biodiversity

Present: Chair: Cllr C Palmer*
Councillors: Cllr T Bloomfield, Cllr P Bolton, Cllr A Kingston-James,
Cllr A Lawton, Cllr J Malin, Cllr M Palmer, Cllr T Venner*
(* denotes Somerset West and Taunton District "SWaT" Councillor)

Officers in Attendance: Ms S Rawle – Clerk
Mr B Howe – Deputy Clerk
Mrs J Notley – Notetaker

Members of the Public and Press: 1 member of the public
0 members of the press

Councillors Absent: Cllr B Mandley

Cllr C Palmer welcomed Councillors, Officers and members of the public watching on Facebook.

981 TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE [LGA 1972 s 85 \(1\)](#)

Apologies had been received from Cllr N Hercock.

982 TO RECEIVE COUNCILLORS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

[In accordance with the provisions of the Localism Act 2011 in respect of members](#)

To receive and record any Declarations of Interest in respect of any matters included on the Agenda for consideration at this Meeting.

Member	Item	Interest	Time Period	Speak/Vote
Cllr P Bolton	All	SWaT Councillor	2021	Stayed in the room, spoke and voted
Cllr A Kingston-James	984.2 988	Personal	2021	Stayed in the room, did not speak or vote
Cllr C Palmer	All	SWaT Councillor	2021	Stayed in the room, spoke and voted
Cllr T Venner	All	SWaT Councillor	2021	Stayed in the room, spoke and voted

DISPENSATIONS Localism Act 2011

There were no dispensations.

983 TO ADJOURN THE MEETING FOR PUBLIC INCLUSION

No-one had asked to speak.

984 TO AUTHORISE PAYMENTS

Cllr C Palmer as Chair said he wished to propose deferring items 984.1, 984.2, 984.3, 984.4, 984.5 and 984.6 to Full Council on 22 February because he had not seen the associated papers. He said he had not received an email notifying him these were available and had therefore not had time to consider them.

7.33 pm: Cllr A Lawton joined the Meeting, having had difficulty in getting into it.

Cllrs Malin and Venner confirmed they had seen the papers. Cllr Venner asked whether there were any urgent payments as an extra fortnight was a long time to wait for some businesses. Cllr Palmer confirmed urgent payments could be met under MTC's Financial Regulations. The Deputy Clerk requested that the salaries payment be approved as this had to be paid on 18 February.

984.5 *To approve the wages for February 2021*

Wages payments totalling £19,087.66. There were no comments or questions.

Proposed: Cllr T Venner

Seconded: Cllr Bloomfield

Approved with all in favour (8).

Cllr Palmer told Cllr Lawton she would be unable to vote on his proposal as she had not been present for the whole debate. Cllr Lawton demurred saying that technical problems should not bar her from the second vote and she had voted on the first proposal and would have appreciated enlightenment as to what was going on.

Proposed: Cllr C Palmer

Seconded: Cllr M Palmer

Approved with 6 in favour and 2 abstentions that items 984.1, 984.2, 984.3, 984.4 and 984.6 be referred to the Full Council meeting on 22 February 2021.

985 TO RECEIVE A VERBAL REPORT REGARDING BANK RECONCILIATIONS FOR THE PERIOD ENDED JANUARY 2021

Cllr C Palmer said data had not been available to carry out the bank reconciliations for January. Council would have to ensure these were done for the next month. Cllr Venner said he understood bank reconciliations should be done every month. Cllr Palmer said the legal requirement was that they should be carried out quarterly.

986 TO RECEIVE A VERBAL REPORT REGARDING THE "ACTIONS LOG"

The Clerk said the Actions Log had been published in the Members' Area and her aim was to make sure Councillors would be able to view it before each meeting. It was as up-to-date as was possible. Some tasks had been assigned to the last Finance Assistant and these would be re-assigned to the appropriate officer.

Cllr Venner said an Action against his name was concerning grant monies awarded to Minehead BID during the COVID crisis. He had sent an email in October asking if there was any money forthcoming to Minehead Town Council. He had told the previous Finance Assistant and had mentioned it at a meeting. Cllr Bolton had understood that BID would refund grant monies to MTC if they were able to secure funding from anywhere else. Cllr Venner said he and Cllr Lawton were due to attend a Minehead BID meeting the following day and he would raise the matter then. MTC had spent £5,000 on signage at the harbour, on the seafront and at Alcombe.

Cllr Malin said Action 114 could now be changed to green as future care of the old Town Hall Clock had been settled, as reported in the West Somerset Free Press. Maintenance and running of the clock had now passed from MTC's hands. He thought MTC should record their thanks for the Conservation Society and the Conservation Officer at SWaT.

987 TO RECEIVE A REPORT AND DISCUSS THE USE OF A PRE-PAID PAYMENT CARD FOR COUNCIL TRANSACTIONS

Councillors had received a Report from the Deputy Clerk about the possible use of a prepayment card. This would obviate the necessity of having a Fuel Card, which cost money to use and would be required less and less as Council moved to electric vehicles. Some suppliers required card payment which officers had dealt with by using their own private debit cards. A debit card would be used to cover payments normally made from petty cash, computer software licences, including the Zoom licence and suppliers who would accept no other payment. The debit card would initially be in the Deputy Clerk's name, would be pre-paid to a sum of £1,000 and have a maximum single payment amount of £500. Financial Regulations allowed for this and many Councils were now using this method of payment.

Cllr Venner said this was a good idea and he really didn't like the use of personal debit cards.

Proposed: Cllr Venner

Seconded: Cllr Malin

Approved with all in favour to have pre-paid bank debit card in the Deputy Clerk's name, prepaid to a sum of £1,000 with a maximum single payment amount of £500.

988 TO REVIEW AND DISCUSS REVISED CEMETERY REGULATIONS AND FEES

Councillors had been able to study the present and suggested revisions of the Cemetery Regulations and Fees. The Deputy Clerk said the last changes had been two years previously. It was hoped to change in the future to an on-line system for the Cemetery and these suggested Regulations came out of this system and were better.

Cllr Venner thanked the Clerk and Deputy for their revisions. He asked if the Cemetery Advisory Group had been involved but the Deputy Clerk said it had not met at all because of the COVID situation. He felt that since time was moving on Council needed to attend to

the revisions. Cllr Venner asked if the Cemetery Sub-Committee had discussed the subject at all but Cllr Bloomfield said there had been no communication from the lead Councillor. Cllr Palmer asked her if she would be willing to take over from the lead Councillor and Cllr Bloomfield agreed. Cllr Bolton said the group desperately needed to meet as there were other things which needed looking at regarding the Cemetery. Cllr Bloomfield said the lack of interest from some Councillors was very disappointing. Cllr Palmer said if there was going to be a meeting of the Cemetery Sub-Committee then it should be making decisions about the Cemetery and any discussion should be for the Amenities and Environment Committee the following evening rather than at the present meeting. The Deputy Clerk pointed out there was a financial element in the subject: it included Regulations and fees. These did not have to be raised – it was up to the Committees to advise Full Council.

Cllr Venner said he was happy to propose raising the fees but Cllr Bloomfield suggested that a rise of 2.5% would be preferable to the proposed rise of 5%. Cllr Venner agreed, suggesting a rise of 3% instead of 5%, as long as MTC covered its costs. Although there was a programme to repair the paths in the Cemetery 5% might be too high a rise. Cllr Lawton said she would prefer to see a costs analysis before agreeing fees.

Proposed: Cllr Venner

Seconded: Cllr Malin

Agreed with 2 against, 2 abstentions and 4 in favour that a rise of 3% in Cemetery fees be recommended to Full Council.

Cllr Malin thanked the Deputy Clerk for arranging to have the Cemetery road hedge trimmed even though this was not MTC's job.

989 TO CONSIDER THE REVIEW OF MTC MOBILE PHONES AND MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS

Cllrs had seen the Report by the Deputy Clerk on the 6 mobile phones belonging to MTC. He suggested sending 5 back and keeping one for use in the van for toilets emergency use. The cost to MTC of the phones was £720 per year. The Amenities Staff preferred to use their own phones and the Deputy Clerk suggested making an allowance of £10 per month to staff members for the use of their private mobile phones. He had identified 3 posts where MTC needed to be in contact by mobile phone – The Foreman, Deputy Foreman and Cemetery Operative. The suggestion would save Council a small amount of money.

Cllr Bloomfield suggested keeping the Clerk's mobile and purchasing a cheap, Pay As You Go mobile for toilets emergency use, and returning the rest.

Cllr C Palmer thought it would be a good idea to start with a PAYG, SIM-free mobile for the Clerk and monitor how much use it had before moving, if necessary, to a contract phone. He proposed ending all current contracts for mobile phones, finding two simple, PAYG, SIM-free mobiles for the Clerk and the van, monitoring how much money each used, before deciding on any new contracts.

Proposed: Cllr C Palmer

Seconded: Cllr Malin

Agreed with all in favour that all current mobile phones contracts be ended; two simple, PAYG, SIM-free mobiles be purchased for the Clerk and the van, monitoring how much money each used, before deciding on any new contracts.

The Deputy Clerk asked Councillors to consider the monthly allowance for Amenities Team members using their own phones. Zoom meetings were being held regularly with them by mobile phone and also contact by email. The private mobile phones were being used for the benefit of MTC.

Proposed: Cllr Malin

Seconded: Cllr Bolton

Agreed with all in favour that an allowance be paid to the 3 members of the Amenities Team for the use of their private mobile phones at the same rate as presently paid for contract mobiles.

990 TO RESOLVE TO EXCLUDE MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Proposed: Cllr C Palmer

Seconded: Cllr Kingston-James

Approved with all in favour

The Public Meeting ended at 8.16 pm.