



MINEHEAD TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE AMENITIES AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING

held on Tuesday 8 September 2020 at 7.30 pm

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

The Meeting was digitally recorded

Present: Chair: Cllr T Bloomfield
Councillors: Cllr P Bolton* (Mayor), Cllr A Kingston-James (Deputy Mayor),
Cllr C Palmer*, Cllr M Palmer, Cllr D Prosser (Deputy Chair),
Cllr H Rose, Cllr T Venner*

(* denotes Somerset West and Taunton District "SWaT" Councillor)

Absent: Cllr O Harvey

Officers in Attendance: Mr B Howe – Acting Clerk
Mr A Giles - Responsible Finance Officer

Members of the Public and Press: 2 members of the Public
0 members of the Press

733 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE **LGA 1972 s 85 (1)**

Apologies were received from Cllr B Mandley and approved by Councillors.

734 TO RECEIVE COUNCILLORS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND ANY DISPENSATIONS **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 Bolton	All	SWaT Councillor	2020	Remained present, spoke and voted
	5	Personal	2020	Remained present, spoke and voted
Cllr Bloomfield	5	Pecuniary	2020	Left the room, did not participate in discussion and did not vote
Cllr C Palmer	All	SWaT Councillor	2020	Remained present, spoke and voted
Cllr Venner	All	SWaT Councillor	2020	Remained present, spoke and voted

DISPENSATIONS

None.

735 TO ADJOURN THE MEETING FOR PUBLIC INCLUSION [Standing Order No 3e](#)

There had been no requests to speak at the Meeting.

736 TO RECEIVE THE CHAIR'S VERBAL REPORT

Cllr Bloomfield had no specific developments to report but made the following observations and points:

- She stated her admiration for the progress made so far in achieving the imminent completion of the new Community Building.
- Work continues on the revamping of the Irnham Road Recreation Ground Multi-Use Games Area ("MUGA") and Tennis Courts, plus the new Adult Gym.
- Quotations are being sought to commission the installation of the Half-Pipe Skate Ramp.

737 TO REVIEW CHRISTMAS LIGHTING ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE CURRENT YEAR AND TO DISCUSS CHRISTMAS 2020 FESTIVITIES

Cllr Bloomfield, having at the Meeting's start declared a pecuniary interest, then passed the Chairmanship of this item to the Acting Clerk and left the room.

The Acting Clerk stated that a general discussion was required to establish how Minehead Town Council ("MTC") could publicly celebrate Christmas 2020.

Earlier in the year, following discussion with Minehead BID, it had been suggested that a three or four-day celebration could be planned, but the Covid-19 Pandemic would now make this a doubtful prospect.

The Acting Clerk confirmed that the Christmas Lights will be positioned as usual in Friday Street, Park Street, Wellington Square and The Avenue - with switch-on sometime during the weekend of Friday 27/Saturday 28 November. It was suggested by the Acting Clerk that this should be actioned in a low-profile way without a public event to coincide.

Cllr Bolton confirmed that he had recently attended a SWaT Safety Advisory Meeting to discuss planning the possible return of the Funfair. It was concluded at that Meeting that it would be safe to go ahead with a more low-key event than last year - but it was realised that the uncertainty of the continuing Pandemic might make this impossible. If it is deemed safe, the Funfair will be held over two nights.

The Acting Clerk continued by saying there had been a suggestion to hold some further events around the following weekend of Friday 4, Saturday 6 and Sunday 7 December - plus the next weekend Minehead BID are planning to hold another "Eat Festival". He confirmed that the original plan was for continued events each weekend leading to Christmas, albeit on a low-key basis.

Andrew Hopkins of Minehead BID then joined the Meeting.

Mr Hopkins confirmed the plan to hold the events as previously mentioned. He continued that the imminent "40s Weekend" had been formulated in a Covid-compliant manner and was therefore confident that the planned Christmas celebrations could be held similarly. He added that discussions with SWaT had produced assurance that there would be free parking for the public during those planned Christmas events. He emphasised that Minehead BID wish to work closely with MTC in the formulation and actioning of these events and welcome any thoughts and suggestions from MTC on how this can be achieved.

Graham Sizer of Minehead BID then joined the Meeting.

Mr Sizer reiterated the sentiments of Mr Hopkins and confirmed that Minehead BID are currently concentrating their efforts on the planning for the weekend around Saturday 12 December. He emphasised that entertainment on the weekend beginning Friday 4 December would be welcomed.

Cllr Kingston-James stated that MTC and Minehead BID need to be aware that with escalating Covid cases and local lockdowns in the north of England the Secretary of State for Health had that day indicated that Government legislation on the number of people permitted to socially group together may be reduced to six. Cllr Bolton added that it was stipulated at the recent SWaT Safety Meeting that it is currently within the law to have a grouping of more than 30 people **if** in the context of a managed, organised event. He confirmed that marshalls would have to be used, and they must be provided with PPE of hand sanitiser and face masks.

Councillors raised concern about holding further large public events this year, as they felt the risk regarding potential infection of Covid-19 could be too great. Social distancing could be almost impossible to enforce, and the recent Eat Festival was cited as a prime example of this when it was clearly observed that the public were not adhering to social distancing guidelines.

It was proposed that it be recommended to Full Council that, with sadness, Christmas events should be cancelled this year in the light of safety concerns and the season should just be marked by the switching-on of the Christmas lights.

Proposed by: Cllr Prosser

Seconded by: Cllr M Palmer

Unanimously agreed.

738 TO RECEIVE VEHICLE FLEET REQUIREMENTS

The RFO referred Councillors to the detailed Report despatched to them, and in summary confirmed that two vehicles, the VW Tipper and the Peugeot Partner 600, were now in urgent need of replacement as they were becoming unviable.

The preference would be to replace these two vehicles with another Electric Vehicle, as recently purchased and which has proved very successful. The Acting Clerk confirmed that the current Electric Vehicle is proving a very cost-effective acquisition - generating zero running costs. If authorised for purchase, it would be beneficial to source a similar model to

the current one in the fleet, but a more specialised version with an in-built water tank for watering the town's floral displays.

It was explained to Councillors that the intention is, if approved, to purchase sometime in April/May within MTC's New Budget year.

It was proposed that a recommendation be made to Full Council that they authorise the Acting Clerk and RFO to investigate the feasibility of acquiring another Electric Vehicle.

Proposed by: Cllr Bloomfield **Seconded by:** Cllr C Palmer
Unanimously agreed.

739 TO REVIEW THE DRAFT BUDGET TIMETABLE 2021/22 AND MAKE APPROPRIATE RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL

The RFO referred Councillors to the Draft Timetable for the 2021/22 Budget paper recently despatched and confirmed that the process needs to commence September 2020 - this paper is to specifically provide a structure to the Budget-setting process. Approval of the Budget would ideally happen in December but must be approved by January. The Report details steps which must be taken and which of those are urgent.

There is significant work to do to prepare Service Plans.

MTC should adopt a 5-year plan to provide a framework within which to set the Budget - which is important if a Unitary Authority is established during that period.

Councillors must consider the implication on Council Tax and MTC's precept, which will entail considerable work in the short-term next year and longer-term for approximately five years.

The Acting Clerk suggested a Budget-Setting Meeting should be held, and it was agreed that this would be held at the new Community Centre on Monday 21 September at 6.30 pm.

740 TO REVIEW THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES AND MAKE APPROPRIATE RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL

Councillors had received a paper detailing this information prior to the Meeting.

The Acting Clerk confirmed that Priorities such as "The Community Hall/Sports Changing Rooms" and the "Larger Depot" will have been achieved by April 2021.

The stated Priorities are potentially more important with the possibility of a Unitary Authority: it is crucial that these Priorities for Minehead can be delivered and are not perceived as insignificant within the Unitary Authority negotiations. The RFO added that this is crucial to safeguard the Town's assets and to ensure that Minehead's residents achieve the best possible outcome in the process.

Cllr Bloomfield suggested that when Councillors are invited to the Budget-Setting Seminar on 21 September, they be invited to consider in detail the Priorities.

The Acting Clerk encouraged Councillors to join that Meeting, as there will be a SWaT Full Council Meeting on Thursday 10 September to conclude their position.

741 TO RECEIVE A VERBAL UPDATE REGARDING NEW PLANTERS AT THE RAILWAY STATION

The Acting Clerk confirmed that in conjunction with Minehead BID they had reviewed previous records, and County Councillor Mandy Chilcott had been contacted.

As discussed in detail at the August Amenities and Environment Committee Meeting, it was reiterated that there are approximately 20 planters which are disintegrating and need replacing, of these around 13 are deemed urgent. To replace the 13 will cost approximately £2,500.

The RFO reiterated that these planters were originally the property of SCC until MTC assumed responsibility some years ago after agreement with SCC - however they remain the property of SCC.

Cllr Venner confirmed that SCC has no further intention to maintain these planters and in addition intend to remove the sails and holding metal frames due to health and safety concerns - therefore there is a risk that the site could look bare and uninviting if MTC do not step into the breach.

Cllr Bloomfield suggested contacting the "Friends of Minehead Railway Station" in an endeavour to source contribution towards the cost of replacing the planters, which received a positive response from Councillors.

The RFO confirmed that MTC must clarify with the landowner that it is purchasing these planters for the aesthetics of the town - and ensure permission is granted. It will be necessary to check the MTC insurance policy to ensure it is protected in the event of any challenge - bearing in mind that they were originally installed by SCC as a traffic-calming measure to control parking in the area as well as for decorative purposes.

Andrew Hopkins confirmed that he was happy to put forward a proposal to Minehead BID that BID should work in conjunction with MTC in this matter.

It was proposed that it be recommended to Full Council to go ahead with the purchase of the necessary 13 replacement planters, to display the MTC Logo and possibly Minehead BID too, and that it be communicated to SCC that MTC are replacing their property from its own funds and therefore will be owners of the equipment - in conjunction with the licence MTC has with SCC. Also, that any local contributions offered towards this process will be gratefully received.

Proposed: Cllr Venner **Seconded:** Cllr Bloomfield
Unanimously agreed.

742 TO RECEIVE A VERBAL UPDATE ON HIGHWAY SIGNAGE ISSUES

Cllr Kingston-James referred Councillors to the paperwork previously despatched.

Regarding the junction of Porlock Road and the A39 - MTC has been asked by a member of the public to liaise with SCC Highways to request the repositioning of the speed signs from the current location of the brow of the hill on the Alcombe side to a position further up the hill on the Porlock side, possibly near the Hindon Farm junction, and to indicate a maximum

speed limit of 40 mph. It is felt that this would make using the junction far safer when faced with speeding traffic.

Cllr Kingston-James continued by informing Councillors that he had been approached by the gentleman for MTC's assistance because Highways had stipulated that they do not consider suggestions from the public. This possible action would also necessitate the involvement of Minehead Without Parish Council, to form a joint approach to the matter.

Cllr Kingston-James would like Councillors to agree a proposal to Full Council that they consider taking this matter further.

Also mention had been made by the gentlemen of the need to replace two "Minehead" directional traffic signs, which are in an appalling condition, and Cllr Kingston-James suggested that the issue with these should be included in the communication to SCC Highways.

Cllr Bolton stipulated that liaison would also be necessary with the Police as this involves the imposing of the National Speed Limit.

Cllr Venner echoed his agreement that the signs are in an appalling condition and MTC should consider writing to SCC Councillors Mandy Chilcott and Frances Nicholson (Minehead Without County Councillor) with the suggestion that the Small Improvement Schemes initiative could be used to fund new signage.

He further mentioned the unsightly condition of the vegetation around the Caravan Park area.

It was proposed that recommendation be made to Full Council that it agrees to the contacting of SCC Highways with regard to the suggested changes in signage as previously stipulated.

Proposed by: Cllr Kingston-James **Seconded by:** Cllr Bolton
Unanimously agreed.

743 TO RECEIVE A VERBAL UPDATE FROM THE ACTING CLERK REGARDING THE COMMUNITY CENTRE, ADULT GYM, TENNIS COURTS, "MUGA" AND IRNHAM RECREATION GROUND

The Acting Clerk presented an overview of developments:

- He confirmed that recently the final 'snagging' list of items to rectify was received - the major item being the poorly laid sprung flooring which was in an inferior condition. This is being rectified without charge and with a change in colour from light grey (which marked too easily) to dark blue, as agreed by the MTC Advisory Group. This inevitably caused a delay but is due to be fitted by the end of the week. This in turn, once deemed acceptable by the Project Manager, should enable the planned handover of the completed Community Building on Monday 14 September.
- Other items on the 'snagging' list are being or have been completed, but those outstanding have been agreed can be addressed beyond the six weeks following handover.

- Work also continues on improving the outside space - fencing, hedging etc. The Advisory Group's ideas are in progress and should be completed within the following couple of weeks.
- The builder has been on site laying the new paths leading to the MUGA and Adult Gym.
- Bookings are buoyant and much interest has been generated: currently on target to meet predicted income.
- Demolition was halted recently due to the discovery of further asbestos which was not included in the original survey. A further survey was subsequently commissioned and MTC is currently awaiting details of the cost involved to safely remove the asbestos.
- The six new LED floodlighting pylons were recently installed and are now in operation - they are proving extremely cost effective. The old pylons will be dismantled in due course.
- The tennis courts and MUGA have been re-laid and new fencing has been erected.
- The Adult Gym is almost complete but awaiting a final piece of equipment.
- The facilities will be open to the public from Monday 14 September.
- CCTV, with sophisticated 'zoom-in' technology, has been installed in various areas - including the roof of the building which will cover the tennis courts, MUGA area, proposed location of the Half-Pipe Skateboard Ramp, together with the public conveniences. This is particularly relevant to observe any anti-social behaviour or indeed vandalism, which the public conveniences there have just been subject to. The Police have stipulated their approval for this.

Cllr Bloomfield confirmed that new 1.2m picket fencing will be erected to surround the Community Building and the Acting Clerk added that there will be a path and patio area around the Building to facilitate disabled access.

743.1 To consider future management arrangements for the area, for example "Friends of Irnham Recreation Ground"

Cllr Bloomfield suggested this as a concept in the same way as other initiatives in Minehead, for example the Friends of Minehead Railway. In addition to Councillors, others invited to join this group could include "Young Somerset", the Police, local residents, users of the facilities.

The Acting Clerk added that this subject was raised approximately a year previously when it was suggested that a separate identity charity could be created, involving members of the public.

Cllr Bolton confirmed that he has attended Steering Group Meetings of the Friends of Cuckoo Meadow - a very successful initiative for that area, so the concept is good.

It was proposed that it be referred to Full Council that a "Friends of Irnham Recreation Ground" group be established.

Proposed by: Cllr Bloomfield
Unanimously agreed.

Seconded by: Cllr Prosser

744 TO RESOLVE TO EXCLUDE MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Cllr Bloomfield concluded the Public Meeting by firstly thanking Andrew Hopkins and Graham Sizer from Minehead BID for attending, and also the public viewing via the Facebook streaming service. The public section of the Meeting was then concluded.

The Meeting ended at 9.25 pm.