



MINEHEAD TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE AMENITIES AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING

held on Tuesday 11 February 2020

at the Council Offices, 3 Summerland Road, Minehead at 7.30 pm

The Meeting was digitally recorded

Present: Chair: Cllr A Kingston-James
Councillors: Cllr P Bolton* (Deputy Mayor), Cllr O Harvey, Cllr C Palmer*,
Cllr M Palmer, Cllr S Slade (Mayor)
(denotes Somerset West and Taunton District "SWaT" Councillor)*

Absent: Cllr J Walder

Officers in Attendance: Mr B Howe – Acting Town Clerk
Mr A Giles – Acting Responsible Finance Officer ("RFO")
Mrs M Swallow – Note-taker

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

448 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE [LGA 1972 s 85 \(1\)](#)

Apologies were received from Cllr T Bloomfield, Cllr S Heard and Cllr B Mandley and approved by Councillors.

449 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	Stayed in the room, spoke and voted
Cllr C Palmer	All	SWaT Councillor	2020	Stayed in the room, spoke and voted

(a) **Dispensations**

None.

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

There were no members of the public present wishing to address the Meeting.

451 TO RECEIVE A VERBAL UPDATE ON HOPCOTT COMMON

The RFO briefed the Meeting, further to information provided to the Committee at their Meeting on Tuesday 14 January.

Minehead Town Council (“MTC”) is responsible for the maintenance of 52 acres of common land within Hopcott Common, partly funded by way of a grant from Natural England. The necessary maintenance work crucial to both eliminate fire risk to the land and also protect the flora and fauna, particularly the protection of the heath butterfly prevalent within, is already underway by the contractor Mr P Storey - with the intention that it be completed by the end of March. This work involves cutting scrubland to a certain level, which is beneficial to the butterfly, and, where necessary, treating remaining stumps with weed killer.

Cllr Harvey raised concern about the use of weed killer on the land, particularly in respect of the bee population, but it was clarified that Mr Storey undertakes this work fully in liaison with the local Conservation Officer.

In order to assist Mr Storey in his request for input from MTC, a Land Management Advisory Working Group comprising Councillors Bolton, Lawton and Rose has been established to support him.

It was agreed that in order to have a proper understanding of this area it be recommended to Full Council that Mr Storey and an Exmoor National Park Representative should be invited to speak to all Councillors.

Proposed by Cllr Slade and Seconded by Cllr Kingston-James with all in favour.

452 TO RECEIVE A VERBAL REPORT REGARDING FLORAL DISPLAYS

The Acting Clerk confirmed that 270 new half and full-sized plastic baskets have been ordered to replace the old baskets, as detailed at the January Committee Meeting. Of this figure, the Business Improvement District (“BID”) are purchasing 100.

The fees charged to local businesses are to be standardised.

453 TO RECEIVE A VERBAL REPORT REGARDING THE PUBLIC TOILETS

The Acting Clerk gave the following information:

- The contract with Initial has been re-negotiated to provide in all MTC managed public conveniences more environmentally friendly hand dryers, water control systems on urinals and upgraded sanitary ware accessories - including nappy bins.
- Idverde to undertake a deep clean of the public conveniences on Wednesday 12 February.

- The coin-operating mechanism on the seafront toilets will be disabled to make them free to use during the day but they will be locked overnight.
- MTC Amenities Staff will take regular meter readings to monitor water and electricity usage.
- The upgrading of the Summerland Public Conveniences will take place during the Autumn: revenue for this has been set aside.

454 TO RECEIVE A VERBAL REPORT REGARDING THE WEED-KILLING CONTRACT

The RFO confirmed receipt of a quote from “Complete Weed Control” - £5,000 to undertake two treatments with Glyphosate (£2,700 per treatment). MTC has a total weed control budget of £13,000. The first treatment will be applied early April this year to tackle the weeds before they become too established.

Councillors expressed some concern about the use of chemicals rather than a manual approach, but the RFO confirmed the proposed contractor’s full compliance with EU policy.

There was also some discussion about the designated treatment area not being sufficient for the town, and perhaps MTC should look at a more thorough approach. The Acting Clerk explained that this project was ‘inherited’ from the previous District Council, which had in turn assumed responsibility from Somerset County Council – and that Somerset County Council being the originator had drawn-up the treatment area. This is something that MTC can possibly revise in future.

The RFO agreed to immediately circulate the received quotation to all Councillors for their possible consideration and agreement at the next Full Council Meeting.

455 TO DISCUSS THE LEASING OF A SPECIALISED WATERING VEHICLE

The Acting Clerk confirmed that following agreement by Full Council a new diesel tipper truck has been ordered.

A specialised watering vehicle is now required to maintain the town’s floral displays, as the current vehicle used is not safely equipped for the task. The RFO’s proposal to the Committee is that a suitable diesel or petrol flat-bed vehicle with the ability to hold a 1000 litre water tank is leased: although the preference would be an electric vehicle to adhere to the Council’s environmental ethos, this is not currently a feasible option. However it is the intention that the third vehicle to be acquired will be electric.

456 LOCAL PLAN: SEMINAR FEEDBACK

Cllr C Palmer explained that the Local Plan stipulates the requirement of 14,000 new homes to be erected within the District over the next 20 years – with Minehead earmarked to provide 850-900 of that figure. Areas mentioned as possible sites are Culvercliffe, North Hill and Hopcott: none are ideal but particularly Hopcott due to the flood risk. Although land adjacent to Minehead Cemetery is also included, the Committee stated that this would be required for the inevitable expansion of the Cemetery.

Councillors expressed collective concern about the contents of the Plan and feel Minehead due to its unique location and geography is not able to meet this requirement due to a lack of available land, and an inadequate infrastructure to support such an increase in population. There was however agreement that a housing need survey for Minehead, including social housing, is required.

Although Councillors will be individually proactive in their response to the Local Plan, it was felt crucial that MTC submits its own robust response.

457 TO CONSIDER A REQUEST FROM DUNSTER PARISH COUNCIL TO MAINTAIN GRASS VERGES

The Acting Clerk explained that he has spoken with both the Dunster Parish Council Clerk and Chair to discuss their request for assistance from MTC in maintaining the grass verges around Dunster Steep, as they currently do not have a suitably risk-assessed person to undertake the work.

MTC's Amenities Team are happy to carry out this work and the appropriate cost will be calculated.

Cllr Kingston-James recommended this be referred to Full Council for their approval. Proposed by Cllr C Palmer and Seconded by Cllr M Palmer with all in agreement.

458 TO RECEIVE A PRESENTATION FROM CLLR HARVEY REGARDING 5G COMMUNICATIONS

Cllr Harvey explained that some studies into 5G are dubious about its safety and express concern about possible health effects, bearing in mind it is a form of radiation. He feels that MTC should seriously consider whether it wishes to support the installation of 5G in Minehead with this uncertainty.

Cllr Slade stated that she is aware of other Somerset Councils placing a moratorium on 5G until they are satisfied that it is proven safe, and perhaps MTC should follow suit?

After discussion it was agreed that it be recommended to Full Council that it considers a moratorium on 5G.

Proposed by Cllr Harvey and Seconded by Cllr Bolton with two abstentions.

The Meeting closed at 8.40 pm.