



# MINEHEAD TOWN COUNCIL

## MINUTES OF THE AMENITIES AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING

held on Tuesday 12 November 2019

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

*This Meeting was digitally recorded*

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

**Officers in Attendance:** Mr B Howe – Acting Town Clerk  
Mr A Giles – Acting Responsible Finance Officer ("RFO")

**Members of the Public and Press:** 3 members of the Public  
0 members of the Press

298 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TO APPROVE THE REASONS GIVEN [LGA 1972 s 85 \(1\)](#)

Apologies were received from Cllr Bloomfield, Cllr Heard and Cllr Walder and approved by Councillors.

299 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 Bolton	All	SWaT Councillor	2019	Stayed in the room, spoke and voted
Cllr Harvey	303	West Somerset Railway	2019	Stayed in the room but did not vote
Cllr Kingston-James	306	West Somerset Advice Bureau	2019	Stayed in the room but did not vote
Cllr Mandley	303	West Somerset Railway	2019	Stayed in the room but did not vote
Cllr C Palmer	All	SWaT Councillor	2019	Stayed in the room, spoke and voted

(a) **Dispensations**

None.

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

Mr Mark Ward and Mr Daniel Fitzgerald of the “Plastic-Free Minehead” campaign group had requested an opportunity to address the Meeting.

301 TO DISCUSS MINEHEAD TOWN COUNCIL’S (“MTC”) SUPPORT FOR THE “PLASTIC-FREE” CAMPAIGN BY MARK WARD AND DANIEL FITZGERALD

The Committee received a presentation from Mark Ward (Secretary of Plastic-Free Minehead and Secretary of Somerset Wildlife Trust) and Daniel Fitzgerald (Plastic-Free Minehead Community Lead).

Daniel and Mark’s presentation highlighted the difficulties caused by plastics in the environment. They circulated literature explaining the background behind the Plastic-Free Minehead Campaign and advised Councillors of the benefits of adopting a plastic-free strategy for Minehead Town Council.

Councillors were very supportive of the initiative and debated the issue at some length, asking questions of Mark and Daniel.

Following the presentation Mark and Daniel left the Meeting.

***It was proposed by Cllr Kingston-James and seconded by Cllr C Palmer that the Committee recommend to Full Council that MTC supports the Plastic Free Minehead Campaign.***

302 TO RECEIVE A REPORT ON THE OPTION FOR NEW DEPOT ARRANGEMENTS

Members discussed a Report prepared by the Acting Clerk and RFO regarding proposed new Depot facilities. The Report had been circulated prior to the Meeting. The Acting Clerk explained that the Council's current Depot facilities are now inadequate and do not provide the space needed for the Council's workforce. More space is also needed for storage. Officers explained that an additional Depot had become available which would meet the Council’s needs.

The Acting Clerk advised that the Report had been presented to the Finance and Staffing Committee on 11 November 2019. The Finance and Staffing Committee would be recommending acceptance of the proposals, subject to the provision of a notice clause requiring both parties to give six months’ notice prior to termination of the arrangement.

The Acting RFO explained that if the Council were to acquire the Depot it would be part of a strategy to enable the litter collection service to be carried out by the Council’s own workforce. This strategy would involve an increase in the size of the Council’s vehicle fleet and larger containers being sited at the Depot to deal with the collection of litter. It was estimated that the cost of the new Depot and vehicles would be approximately £18,000, with a corresponding saving of approximately £12,000 on the Litter Collection Contract. The Acting Clerk advised that this approach would enable the Council to recycle more of the materials collected through the litter collection service. The proposed project meets two of the Council’s priorities.

Cllr M Palmer questioned how the service would work in practice regarding the collection of recyclables. The Acting RFO explained that larger bins would need to be provided at the Depot, the recyclables would be separated, and arrangements would be made with appropriate contractors to collect the recyclable material.

Cllr Harvey pointed out that the Council had recently acquired a new woodchipper and that this would need to be stored at the Depot, putting further pressure on the existing available space.

***Cllr C Palmer proposed that the following recommendations were made to Full Council, which were seconded by Cllr P Bolton:***

***Recommendation 1: The Council leases the premises for one year in the first instance with a six-month break clause.***

***Recommendation 2: The Council seeks to enter into an agreement with the owner, which would allow the lease to be extended.***

***Recommendation 3: The Council seeks to enter into an agreement with the owner which would give the council the option to buy the premises in the future.***

#### 303 TO DISCUSS THE WEST SOMERSET RAIL LINK

The Chairman advised that this item should be withdrawn from the Agenda. He explained that, after discussions with the Acting Clerk, it had been determined that this matter fell outside of the responsibilities of this Committee. He advised that the provisions of Standing Order 9 (a) precluded this Committee from addressing the matter, and proceeded to read said Order to the Meeting. It states:

*“A motion shall relate to the responsibilities of the meeting, for which it is tabled, and in any event, shall relate to the performance of the Council's statutory functions, powers and obligations, or an issue, which specifically affects the Council's area or its residents.”*

The Acting Clerk advised that this matter should be referred to Full Council for a decision. Members of the Committee discussed the circumstances which had led to this item being placed on the Agenda. The Committee also discussed the Council's past approach to this issue. Some Councillors expressed their individual opinions regarding this matter.

***Following advice from the Acting Clerk, the Chairman's decision to withdraw the matter from the Agenda was upheld, and the matter would be referred to Full Council when it meets on Tuesday 26 November 2019.***

#### 304 TO RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL DATES FOR BAND CONCERTS IN BLENHEIM GARDENS AND HOW THEY WILL BE RUN

The Acting Clerk advised that in 2019/20 the budget for Band Concerts was £5,200, and that each act was paid £175 (maximum) per concert. Concerts run throughout the Summer months. The Acting Clerk explained the difficulties experienced throughout the Summer of

2019 regarding the setting-up of the concerts on the day of the event. He suggested that alternative arrangements should be investigated for the 2020 Summer season.

The Committee agreed that the Band Concerts should continue through the 2020 Summer season, and that an informal approach should be made to other organisations to see if they would be prepared to assist in delivering the concerts.

***It was proposed by Cllr Mandley and seconded by Cllr Bolton that a sum equivalent to £10 per concert should be included in the Draft Revenue Estimates for 2020/21. This budget could then be used to help deliver the concerts during the 2020 Summer season. In addition, the Committee agreed that, as a general rule, Sunday concerts would be of a more traditional nature - such as brass bands and concert bands. The Saturday concerts should reflect other tastes in music, including rock and pop.***

### 305 TO CONSIDER MEMBERSHIP OF THE EXMOOR SOCIETY

The Chairman read out a letter received from the Exmoor Society, inviting the Council to become a member of the organisation. The cost of membership would be £20 per year.

Members expressed their support for the Exmoor Society and the strong links that Minehead has with Exmoor.

The Acting Clerk explained that some of the land owned by the Town Council fell within the boundaries of the Exmoor National Park.

***Cllr M Palmer proposed that the Committee recommends to Full Council that it joins the Exmoor Society. This was seconded by Cllr Bolton and unanimously agreed.***

### 306 TO CONSIDER SLA WITH WEST SOMERSET ADVICE BUREAU

The Chairman advised the Committee that a draft Service Level Agreement had been received from West Somerset Advice Bureau, and this document had been circulated prior to the Meeting.

The Acting Clerk reported that the Advice Bureau had made an application for funding earlier in the year. At that time the Council was unable to support the organisation as the funding application did not meet the conditions of the Council's Small Grants Scheme. Following receipt of that application the Acting Clerk had been instructed to contact the Advice Bureau and request that they put forward a more detailed proposal in the form of a Service Level Agreement.

Members expressed their support for the very important work undertaken by the West Somerset Advice Bureau. However, concern was expressed by a few Councillors about some details within the document: particular reservations were expressed regarding the use of funds collected from Minehead Council Tax Payers in order to fund a District-wide service.

The Acting RFO advised the Committee that they should consider reviewing the Council's policy towards requests for funding received from other organisations; the new policy should reflect the Council's agreed priorities. The Acting RFO explained that financial support for

this organisation would not meet the criteria set out in the Council's Grants Policy and it would not address any of the Council's current priorities.

The following proposals were put forward by Cllr Mandley and seconded by Cllr M Palmer:

- The Council acknowledges and supports the very important work undertaken by the West Somerset Advice Bureau. However no funds are available within the current 2019/2020 budget to enable a grant to be made to the organisation at this time.
- The Council reviews the situation as part of the 2020/21 budget process and considers including a sum in the draft budget for the coming year. Any future financial support would be dependent upon the development of a suitable SLA with the Advice Bureau.
- It was further agreed that the Acting Clerk be instructed to write to the West Somerset Advice Bureau, explaining that no funds were available within the Council's budget for the current financial year - however the situation would be reviewed in 2020/21 subject to the implementation of a suitable SLA.

### 307 TO DISCUSS OPTIONS FOR THE REPLACEMENT OF VEHICLES/LEASE/ELECTRIC

The Acting Clerk advised the Committee that the Council currently owns three vehicles: a tipper truck (this is the vehicle fitted with a tank during the Summer for watering hanging baskets), a transit van (this is an enclosed van used for general tasks) and a small van which is generally used by the Supervisor. All of these vehicles are in a poor state of repair and ideally should be replaced. The Acting Clerk explained that the current thinking is to retain the transit van for a further twelve months but that the tipper truck urgently needs replacing. The van used by the Supervisor should be replaced and a second tipper truck would be required if the Council decides to bring the litter collection service back in-house.

Members expressed their desire to ensure that any new/replacement vehicles should be as environmentally friendly as possible and that electric vehicles should be considered as part of the replacement process.

The Acting RFO explained the importance of meeting current and future service needs when replacing the vehicles. Cllr Bolton suggested that mileage sheets should be kept for a period of four weeks to enable an assessment to be made of the mileage undertaken by the vehicles. The Acting RFO explained that the seasonal nature of the work undertaken by the labour force meant that vehicle mileage would fluctuate significantly throughout the year, dependent upon the duties being undertaken.

Cllr Mandley circulated details of research he had undertaken regarding the replacement of vehicles, this included electric vehicles which may be suitable for some services. It was agreed that due to power limitations some of the vehicles such as the tipper truck could not be replaced with an electric equivalent at this time.

The Acting RFO reiterated the need to replace the tipper truck as it was approaching the end of its useful life. He also pointed out that a second tipper truck, probably fitted with a cage, would be needed if the Council were to undertake litter collection using its own workforce.

***Cllr Mandley put forward the following proposals, which were seconded by Cllr S Slade and unanimously agreed:***

- ***The Council investigates replacing the existing Tipper Truck with a suitable equivalent vehicle - this vehicle to be leased.***
- ***The Acting Clerk investigates the option of providing a second tipper truck, again on a lease arrangement.***
- ***The Council retains the two vans for the short-term, until future service needs are determined. Options for replacing these vehicles in the future with electrically powered alternatives to be investigated.***

The Chairman thanked Cllr Mandley for the work carried out in reviewing vehicle options and informing the Committee of his findings.

### 308 TO DISCUSS THE EXTENSION OF THE TOILET CLEANING CONTRACT

The Acting Clerk advised the Committee that the public conveniences are currently cleaned by MG Cleaning Services. The Council had entered into a three-year agreement with MG Cleaning Services and the contract must be reviewed annually: the contract is now due for review.

Cllr Bolton explained that previously there had been some difficulties in contacting the contractor if problems occurred over a weekend. Cllr Mandley also expressed concern that the toilets are not properly serviced during busy times.

Apart from the issues raised by Cllrs Bolton and Mandley, the Committee stated that they were generally satisfied with the level of service provided by the contractor.

The Committee discussed the opening hours for the facilities and the option of closing some during the Winter months. The Acting Clerk advised that another service provider, Idverde, had offered to provide additional support to the cleaning contractor and to assist in ensuring that MG Cleaning Services has the appropriate qualifications and training in order to carry out its duties.

Cllr C Palmer raised the issue of charging at the Warren Road toilets. The Acting Clerk explained that there were maintenance issues with the payment mechanism fitted at these toilets and the Council was finding it extremely difficult to repair broken entry mechanisms. The Acting Clerk reported that the income received from Warren Road toilets was approximately £1,500 per annum. He further advised that there were costs associated with collecting and banking this money.

The Acting Clerk explained that if Quay West public conveniences were closed for a period during the Winter it would enable the Council to monitor water usage at the facility and determine if any further action is needed.

***Cllr Mandley proposed the following, which were seconded by Cllr P Bolton:***

- ***It is recommended to Full Council that the public conveniences at Quay West be closed for a period of three months commencing 1 December 2019.***
- ***It is recommended to Full Council that the public conveniences at Warren Road should be free to enter for a period of three months commencing 1 December 2019, but these public conveniences would be locked at night.***

***These proposals were agreed by the Committee with one abstention.***

Cllr M Palmer raised the issue of the disabled public convenience in Blenheim Gardens and questioned it being locked during the Winter. She expressed her concern that the facility was not available for use. The Acting Clerk explained that the decision to close the facility was due to inappropriate use and vandalism.

The Acting Clerk advised the Committee of a proposal to fit a perspex image to the wall of the Summerland Road public convenience in order to improve the appearance of the building. He circulated a copy of the proposed image. The Acting Clerk advised that if the Council wishes to go ahead with the proposal, external funding was available from grants.

***Cllr Mandley proposed that the image circulated should be fitted to the Summerland Road toilet building, with the MTC logo. This was seconded by Cllr Bolton.***

#### 309 TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON THE ALLOTMENTS

The Acting Clerk advised that Cllr M Palmer was in the process of reviewing the tenancy agreement for allotment holders. Cllr M Palmer stated that she would be recommending some changes to the existing agreement in an effort to ensure the allotments were maintained and managed in accordance with the Council's 'green' priorities. An example of the proposed changes would include a restriction on the type of chemicals permitted for use on the allotments.

#### 310 TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON PREPARATION FOR CHRISTMAS FESTIVITIES 2019

The Acting Clerk reported that the Council would be purchasing four Christmas trees: to be sited in Wellington Square, at the Old Hospital, at the Beach Hotel and at the Alcombe roundabout. The Acting Clerk also advised that the lighting arrangements would be similar to previous years, although some new equipment and decorations had been acquired for 2019.

#### 311 TO DISCUSS LITTER COLLECTION AND WEED COLLECTION SERVICES

The Acting RFO advised that the litter collection and weed treatment services would be reviewed as part of the 2020/21 budget-setting process. Details of the review of the litter collection service and the impact that any change might have on the Council's depot and vehicle fleet are set out earlier in these Minutes.

The Acting RFO also advised that a decision would need to be made very soon regarding the contract for the weed spraying service. His main concern is that in recent months Councillors had expressed the view that chemicals containing glyphosate should not be used for weed



control. The Acting RFO stressed the importance of reaching a decision in the very near future in order that the appropriate funds can be included in the budget and plans put in place to deliver any revised service.

CLlr Bolton suggested that the Council should look at the option of bringing the weed treatment service back in-house, along with the litter collection service. The Committee also discussed the option of using wire brushes to remove the weeds.

Concerns were also expressed over the lack of clarity regarding which streets are actually treated. The Acting RFO explained that some of the lack of clarity was as a result of the service being transferred to MTC from SCC and SWaT.

CLlr Harvey suggested that acetic acid could be used as an alternative to glyphosate.

CLlr C Palmer stated that if the service was carried out by the Council's own workforce it would be a more flexible and effective service.

The Acting RFO advised that bringing both the litter collection and weed treatment contracts back in-house would have a significant impact on the available manpower.

***The Committee agreed that in principle it was against the use of chemicals being used for weed control. It also agreed to investigate the issues involved in bringing both the litter collection and weed treatment services back in-house.***

312 TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON THE HALF-PIPE SKATEBOARD RAMP

The Acting Clerk reported that the half-pipe skateboard ramp could be stored on Council owned land if it could be transported from where it is currently stored.

CLlr Mandley agreed to investigate the options for transporting the equipment so that it can be stored at the Council's Marshfield Compound.

***It was agreed that the equipment would be collected and stored by the Council until such time as an appropriate site is found for it to be installed and used.***

***The Acting RFO asked for confirmation regarding ownership of the equipment. It was agreed that once it had been delivered to the Council it should be insured by MTC and entered on the Asset Register.***

313 TO RESOLVE TO EXCLUDE MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was resolved to exclude the press and public from the remainder of the Meeting.

314 CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS

The Meeting closed at 9.42 pm.