



MINEHEAD TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE AMENITIES AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING

held on Tuesday 14 July 2020 at 7.30 pm
a Remote, Virtual Meeting via "Zoom"

The Meeting was digitally recorded

Present: Chair: Cllr T Bloomfield
Councillors: Cllr P Bolton* (Mayor), Cllr O Harvey, Cllr B Mandley, Cllr C Palmer*,
Cllr M Palmer, Cllr D Prosser (Deputy Chair), Cllr H Rose,
Cllr T Venner* (*part of the Meeting only due to technical issues*)

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

Officers in Attendance: Mr B Howe – Acting Clerk
Mrs M Swallow - Note-taker

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

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

Apologies were received from Deputy Mayor Cllr A Kingston-James and approved by Councillors.

628 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 Bloomfield	636	Personal	2020	Remained present, spoke, did not vote
Cllr Bolton	All	SWaT Councillor	2020	Remained present, spoke and voted
	636	Personal	2020	Remained present, spoke, did not vote
Cllr Mandley	632	Personal	2020	Remained present and voted
Cllr C Palmer	All	SWaT Councillor	2020	Remained present, spoke and voted
Cllr Rose	632	Personal	2020	Remained present, spoke and voted

Due to technical difficulties Cllr Venner was not present at the start of the Meeting to declare any interest, nor later when voting was required.

DISPENSATIONS

None.

629 TO ADJOURN THE MEETING FOR PUBLIC INCLUSION **Standing Order No 3e**

Cllr Bloomfield welcomed Beverley Richards de Sanchez and Werner Hartholt to the Meeting. They had requested to speak in support of the Half-Pipe Skateboard Ramp, sourced by Minehead Town Council ("MTC") from Carhampton.

Ms Richards de Sanchez and Mr Hartholt delivered an impassioned speech about the need for the Half-Pipe Skateboard Ramp in Minehead. They both have children who enjoy scooting and know of many others who enjoy and benefit from this activity, and they are at present desperately missing the opportunity to do this in a proper facility.

Currently if Minehead children wish to scoot using the appropriate apparatus they must travel to Watchet or further afield, for example Taunton, as the Minehead Eye is closed due to restrictions imposed following the Covid-19 pandemic. It was emphasised that the Minehead Eye also favours the installation of the Ramp in Minehead to support their service, as this will be curtailed by Covid-19 restrictions when they are permitted to re-open.

Ms Richards de Sanchez and Mr Hartholt, who has worked with children for some years, emphasised not only the physical benefit of scooting but very importantly the mental health benefit too: Mr Hartholt highlighted the situation of his autistic son, whose social skills have vastly improved since scooting and socialising with other young people.

They concluded by requesting that MTC expedite siting the acquired Ramp in Minehead as soon as feasible.

It was then proposed that Item 7 on the Agenda "To receive a Verbal Update from the Acting Clerk on the Skateboard Ramp and to discuss a suitable site" be moved forward for immediate discussion.

Proposed by: Cllr Bloomfield **Seconded by:** Cllr Prosser
Unanimously agreed.

630 TO RECEIVE A VERBAL UPDATE FROM THE ACTING CLERK ON THE SKATEBOARD RAMP AND TO DISCUSS A SUITABLE SITE

The Acting Clerk explained that the Ramp currently remains in Carhampton as the attempt to move it by Amenities Staff was aborted due to the lack of a suitable vehicle. The plaque commemorating the child in whose memory it was commissioned is now complete and ready to be attached once it is finally sited on MTC land in Minehead.

He reminded Councillors that an informed decision is necessary on the siting of the Ramp as the original plan of using the Irnham Road Recreation Ground was rejected at a previous Full Council Meeting due to objections by some local residents. He emphasised that there is some strong local support for the installation in Minehead as eleven letters of support to this effect have been received, including one from the Police.

Cllrs Bloomfield, Bolton and Mandley had identified different potential sites within the King George V Playing Field area - Cllr Bloomfield reminded Councillors that she had undertaken this exercise as part of the Playground Review remit.

The need to ensure safety features for both users of the Ramp and those outside the area was emphasised, and the Acting Clerk explained that a small cost will be incurred to transport the Ramp, base and erect suitable fencing around the area.

It was suggested that the Amenities and Environment Committee should meet at the King George V Playing Field as soon as possible to earmark a suitable site, and after some discussion Cllr Bloomfield stated that she would email Committee members the following day to organise the site visit.

The Acting Clerk reminded the Committee that residents of the King George V Playing Field area would need to be consulted for their opinion on the proposal, as had the residents of Irnham Road, Alexandra Road and Queens Road previously. Cllr Bloomfield agreed that she would draft a suitable letter to be agreed and despatched as soon as possible once a site was determined.

Cllr Bloomfield thanked Ms Richards de Sanchez and Mr Hartholt for their contributions and voiced support for the cause, which was echoed by Cllr Prosser.

631 TO RECEIVE THE CHAIRMAN'S/ACTING CLERK'S VERBAL REPORT

631.1 Cllr Bloomfield

Cllr Bloomfield began by thanking everyone for their patience and understanding during her first Meeting as Chair of the Amenities and Environment Committee.

She continued by reminding any public viewing the Meeting via the Facebook streaming service that the deadline for receipt of suggested names in the "Name the new MTC Electric Vehicle" competition was the next evening, with the winning entry to be drawn live on the MTC Facebook page on Friday.

The Hand Sanitisers in the Public Toilets are being addressed, as the current product installed is not suitable. Cllr M Palmer stated that the replacement product being considered is a germicide proven to be effective against Covid. The Acting Clerk added that this matter was discussed by the Finance and Staffing Committee at their Meeting held the previous evening and would be referred to Full Council for discussion and agreement.

631.2 Acting Clerk

The Acting Clerk stated that Councillors needed to decide whether to offer the live music facility in Blenheim Gardens on Saturday and Sunday afternoons from 1 August 2020, subject to Government Covid-19 advice at the time, as bands had already begun contacting MTC asking whether they could play and some have been tentatively booked. Enquiry had also been made for a charity performance by two or three bands in aid of the NHS for a Saturday afternoon performance.

Detailed discussion followed as to the merits of this coupled with any potential health risk due to Covid-19.

Cllr Bolton reminded Councillors that SWaT would need to be consulted as there is currently an issue with the paving area in the vicinity.

It was proposed that the Amenities and Environment Committee's suggestion that band performances be reinstated on a trial basis from 1 August 2020, subject to Government guidelines and social distancing, be referred to Full Council for ratification at their Meeting on Tuesday 28 July. Also, any bands booked are required to sign a waiver stating that if there are issues with the paving area and/or changes in Government Covid-19 guidelines MTC may have to cancel their booking at short notice.

Proposed by: Cllr Bolton
Unanimously agreed.

Seconded by: Cllr Mandley

The Acting Clerk continued by reminding the Meeting that MTC now has three vacant Councillor posts. He has been in contact with SWaT, who confirmed that MTC are now permitted to advertise them as required. Fourteen days must then be allowed to ascertain any interest, and if more than ten people register their names this would warrant an election, which cannot be held until May 2021.

This will be taken to the Full Council Meeting on Tuesday 28 July for consideration and if agreement is reached the vacancies will be advertised in the local press and in MTC's office window for fourteen days. If no interest is received by the time of the Full Council Meeting on Tuesday 25 August, three new Councillors will be co-opted at that Meeting.

632 TO RECEIVE AND DISCUSS AN UPDATE ON THE BONFIRES POLICY

The Acting Clerk reminded Councillors that currently MTC does not have a Bonfires Policy, but bonfires are discouraged on its land. It is also important to bear in mind that to comply with MTC's desired green credentials and to conform to a "Greener Town" bonfires are not ideal. Councillors need to decide whether a Policy is necessary.

Cllr Bolton stated that he was aware of complaints by Minehead residents about bonfires generally within the town during Lockdown, especially those before 6.00 pm.

After discussion it was proposed that the Allotments Advisory Group should meet to arrange a meeting with Allotment holders to discuss this topic.

Proposed by: Cllr M Palmer
Unanimously agreed.

Seconded by: Cllr Bolton

633 TO RECEIVE A VERBAL UPDATE FROM THE ACTING CLERK ON THE EMERGENCY TREE MAINTENANCE WORK AT MINEHEAD CEMETERY

The Acting Clerk confirmed that the emergency work in the Cemetery was complete. This had involved drastic pruning of the boundary poplar trees and even the removal of some deemed diseased by the previously commissioned Tree Report.

Further work is necessary to other trees on MTC land, including some within the Alcombe Parks, as stipulated by a 'traffic light' system of urgency in the Tree Report. These issues will be referred for Full Council for discussion.

634 TO DISCUSS A "GREENER TOWN"

The Acting Clerk stated that this was considered a priority of MTC some three months ago, prior to the Covid-19 crisis.

Steps have already been taken by MTC to adhere to Minehead becoming a greener town:

- An Electric Amenities Vehicle has been acquired.
- It is seeking the acquisition on an Electric Wheelbarrow.
- Electric charging points are to be installed at the new Community Centre.

The Acting Clerk reminded Councillors that if a Bonfire Policy is established that too would fall within the 'Greener Town' ethos.

Cllr Mandley offered to approach Tesla regarding the possibility of a 'super charger' being installed in Minehead. Councillors approved this proposed action.

There followed discussion about suitable future planting in the town's floral containers, as it was agreed that because bedding plants require a peat-based compost to become established, which is an unsustainable source, these are no longer ideal. Shrubs and wildflowers could be considered as alternative options.

It was agreed that Cllr Harvey, Cllr M Palmer and Cllr H Rose will arrange to meet with MTC's Amenities Team to discuss future planting alternatives.

635 TO REVIEW THE REGULATIONS OF THE CEMETERY AND OTHER ISSUES

The Acting Clerk stated that it was necessary for the Cemetery Advisory Group to convene a Meeting to review these.

Cllr Bloomfield and Cllr Prosser will liaise to diarise this Meeting.

636 TO DISCUSS THE PROPOSED FUN FAIR TO BE HELD IN THE ROSE GARDEN

Cllr Bloomfield read a letter she had received from Leigh Danter, the Funfair provider of last year's very successful event and whom it was hoped could return in September 2020 to the Alcombe Marsh Common adjacent to the Rose Garden. She confirmed that she remains in regular contact.

It stated that due to a relaxation of Government Covid-19 restrictions he has begun operating fun fairs once more, albeit with stringent hygiene measures and strict control of numbers permitted on site to ensure the maintenance of hygiene and social distancing. With this in mind, it is hoped his Funfair can return to Minehead as planned.

It was proposed that this should be referred to Full Council to agree 'in principle' support of the Funfair returning to Minehead in September, subject to any amendment in Government Covid-19 rules and restrictions.

Proposed by: Cllr M Palmer **Seconded by:** Cllr C Palmer
Carried with five Councillors in agreement and two abstentions.

Cllr Bloomfield confirmed that Lee Danter is happy to answer any questions and she encouraged Councillors to email her to that effect.

637 TO DISCUSS THE REPLACEMENT OF AMENITIES EQUIPMENT - TO INCLUDE A NEW MOWER/TRAILER ETC

A Report had previously been circulated to Councillors of both Committees and the Finance and Staffing Committee were recommending that Option 1 be adopted, and to use a local supplier.

The Acting Clerk confirmed that the Amenities and Environment Committee should consider from an operational viewpoint, as the Finance and Staffing Committee had assessed the financial implications at their Meeting the previous evening.

The Acting Clerk continued by explaining that the specialised multi-purpose "Stiga" machine used by the Amenities Team at the Cemetery to mow and transport earth, has malfunctioned - it is also a hazard to Amenities Staff as the body work is cracked and the brakes are faulty. Enquiry has been made of local supplier Tom Williams to have it repaired, although this is problematic as some of the required parts are not available. The quotation received to repair the machine exceeds £5,000, but an alternative suggested by Amenities Staff is to trade in the old machine and purchase a separate mower, electric wheelbarrow and small trailer for a total of £6,550.

It was proposed that Full Council consider at their next Meeting the adoption of Option 1 in the Report.

Proposed by: Cllr Harvey

Seconded by: Cllr Bolton

Carried with one abstention.

638 TO DISCUSS THE MAINTENANCE AND CLEANING OF THE QUEEN ANNE STATUE

Cllr Bolton provided an overview of the history of the Queen Anne Statue, which was commissioned in 1719 and has Grade II listing.

The alabaster statue was originally sited in St Michael's Church but removed and placed in storage in 1880 when the Church was emptied for restoration: the intention being to site it in the Town Hall thereafter. It was erected in its current position in 1893 after purchase of a plinth to protect it, although it was never intended to be displayed outside.

It requires cleaning but cracks are forming, so specialist advice is required before any remedial work can be undertaken.

The Acting Clerk stated that MTC has a file on the statue showing that it was last cleaned in 2010 at a cost somewhere between £6,500 and £10,000 - so an expensive undertaking. He continued with information that a representative from SWaT had contacted him about the matter, after seeing the item on the Agenda, and wished to make a site visit to discuss how best to rectify its problems - it was emphasised that it was not designed for outdoor display and should be cleaned, repaired and then re-sited in a suitable place.

The Acting Clerk recommended Councillors should view the MTC file on the statue.

It was proposed that a Working Group should be established to meet with the SWaT Representative and discuss the options available going forward. The Working Group was agreed as the following Councillors: Cllr Bolton, Cllr C Palmer, Cllr M Palmer and Cllr T Bloomfield. The Working Group should also take the advice of the Acting Clerk and view the file before a Meeting with SWaT is scheduled.

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

639 TO RECEIVE A VERBAL UPDATE FROM THE ACTING CLERK REGARDING THE COMMUNITY CENTRE

The Acting Clerk confirmed that he had reported to Councillors at the Finance and Staffing Committee Meeting also, but from a budgeting angle.

It is hoped that the contractors will complete at the end of July 2020, with MTC then taking possession. MTC has the responsibility of completing the areas not covered in the contract, for example the fencing and gates and internal contents. The Finance and Staffing Committee are to propose to Full Council a budget for these works.

It is hoped to open the Community Centre in September.

Cllr Bloomfield confirmed that the Advisory Group would meet the following week.

640 TO RECEIVE A VERBAL REPORT FROM THE ACTING CLERK REGARDING NEW SIGNAGE

The Acting Clerk explained that on reviewing the Section 106 monies of more than £8,000 received in 2019, part was earmarked to fund new signage for the Community Building, Blenheim Gardens and the Public Toilets. He has received a quotation from Active Signs to provide standard blue/brown signs with the MTC logo and appropriate symbols as follows: sixteen double-sided toilet signs for the town, four for Blenheim Gardens, six for the Community Centre and two for the MTC Depot - for approximately £1,200.

The Acting Clerk agreed to Cllr Bloomfield's suggestion that the quotation be circulated to all Councillors for consideration before the next Full Council Meeting.

641 TO RESOLVE TO EXCLUDE MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Proposed by: Cllr Bolton **Seconded by:** Cllr Bloomfield
Unanimously agreed.

Cllr Bloomfield concluded by thanking the earlier speakers and the public viewing via the Facebook streaming service.

642 CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS

The Meeting closed at 9.10 pm.