



MINEHEAD TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE FINANCE AND STAFFING COMMITTEE MEETING

held on Monday 10 February 2020

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

The Meeting was digitally recorded

Present: Chair: Cllr T Venner*
Councillors: Cllr P Bolton* (Deputy Mayor), Cllr A Kingston-James, Cllr A Lawton, Cllr J Malin, Cllr C Palmer*, Cllr D Prosser, Cllr S Slade (Mayor), Cllr B Mandley
(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")
Mrs L Thornton – Finance Administrator and Notetaker

Councillor in Attendance: Cllr M Palmer

Members of the press and public: 0 members of the public
0 members of the press

433 TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE [LGA 1972 s85 \(1\)](#)

Apologies were submitted from Cllr T Bloomfield and Cllr N Hercock.

434 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	2020	Stayed in the room, spoke and voted
Cllr C Palmer	All	SWaT Councillor	2020	Stayed in the room, spoke and voted
Cllr T Venner	All	SWaT Councillor	2020	Stayed in the room, spoke and voted

DISPENSATIONS [Localism Act 2011](#)

No dispensations were requested.

435 TO ADJOURN THE MEETING FOR PUBLIC INCLUSION

No members of the public were in attendance.

436 TO AUTHORISE CHEQUES

436.1 **To approve Direct Debit payments between 1 January 2020 and 31 January 2020**

Cllr Venner asked members to approve the Direct Debit payments. There were no questions.

Cllr Venner proposed approval of the Direct Debits, Items 1 to 24 on the listing – this was seconded by Cllr C Palmer and unanimously agreed.

436.2 **To approve payments under £1000**

There were no questions. Cllr Venner stated that the Council was happy to be supporting the Cycle Scheme for employees.

Cllr Venner proposed approval of cheques under £1,000, Items 1 to 15 on the listing – this was seconded by Cllr C Palmer and unanimously agreed.

436.3 **To recommend to Full Council payments over £1000**

There were no payments over £1000.

436.4 **To receive Income report for January 2020**

Cllr C Palmer queried the Allotment income as 17 x £30 did not total £530 as shown. Mrs Thornton confirmed that not all the allotments were charged at £30, some being £40 and some £15 depending on the size/location.

The differing cost of purchasing a grave was queried. Mrs Thornton explained that burial fees varied between earthen graves and cremated remains, and that the Cemetery fees were available to see on the MTC website if further information was required.

The Wayleave was queried, and Mrs Thornton advised these were very small payments of a historical nature made for a number of sites.

The Webbers' contribution for the Christmas Tree was queried and Mrs Thornton confirmed this was for the Wellington Square tree.

The Council thanked the Officers for supplying the income report as they had not previously had information about the income and were finding it very interesting.

437 TO RECEIVE THE BUDGET MONITORING REPORT FOR THE PERIOD 1 APRIL 2019 TO 31 DECEMBER 2019

Mr Giles circulated the Budget Monitoring Report explaining that the budget was set so that the precept covers everything Council spends. The budget report to date covered April – December 2019 so, as only covering a ¾ year, most differences between budget and spent showed underspends. Mr Giles had, therefore, included probable figures at end of year, with corresponding probable overspends and underspends.

Salaries were overspent due to payments to Mr Giles and Mr Howe; democracy costs were overspent due to the need for a palantypist for meetings; depot costs were overspent due to new depot costs, vehicles, work at Marshfield site, and wages having taken on more staff.

Recreation Grounds were underspent as there had been less than expected refurbishment and no work on pond; Environmental Services were underspent as ground maintenance was now done by MTC staff; Grants were underspent as fewer requests had been received and there had been fewer town entertainments; Public Conveniences were underspent due to lower cleaning costs.

Generally spending was underspent.

Mr Giles went through the cost centres in more detail where highlighted in yellow, explaining reasons for overspends and how these may be offset by other underspends. Mr Giles confirmed that the cost of the chipper would be charged to reserves so would not affect the budget, and that money for the stewardship scheme and £10,000 for tennis courts were earmarked funds.

Grass cutting, which Council grounds staff do for which MTC receives a payment from SCC, beach cleaning for which we may need to pay a contribution, and CCTV running costs were all discussed.

Mr Giles confirmed budget was on target, if not slightly underspent, and that earmarked reserves would be used to cover spending on the Community Building.

Mr Giles distributed the Community Building Budget Monitoring Report, taking the Councillors through it. Mr Howe explained the additional contract costs. Mr Giles confirmed the original estimated costs to MTC of £300,000 plus £50,000 contingency, and that pre-contract costs of L Crossman were in the previous year's budget. Mr Giles advised Council that the budget is, therefore, on target, unknowns have gone, and confirmed that present administration had not borrowed to fund the project, preferring to raise the precept.

Mr Giles advised that the budget for 2020/21 had a lot of leeway built in and Officers and Cllr Venner confirmed, in response to Cllr Mandley's question, that the current administration had been transparent, had set a budget, were on budget and Councillors would be able to answer questions posed at the forthcoming AGM.

Cllr Venner thanked the Officers on behalf of the Council for their work and the budget.

438 TO RECEIVE A VERBAL REPORT REGARDING BANK RECONCILIATIONS FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 31 JANUARY 2020

Cllr Bolton confirmed he had signed reconciliations to 15 January 2020 and no problems found.

439 TO CONSIDER PROPOSALS FOR RENEWAL OF INSURANCE

Mr Giles explained that Council had received a proposal from Zurich of approximately £11,800 per year for a one-year agreement, or £11,099 per year for a three year agreement. Mr Giles recommended renewing with Zurich for 3 years, as a reputable insurer which MTC had been with for over 10 years and who had been very helpful with previous claims.

Cllr Venner commented that 3 years would cover the remaining term of the current Council and renewing with Zurich would provide continuity with any current ongoing claims.

Mr Giles explained that the premium would go up if the Council takes on additional risk and payments for insurance cover would be annual. Cllr Malin asked about cover for the Community Building and Mr Giles confirmed it would be for £1.5 million and that current insurance was with the builders until the Community Building was completed.

Cllr Venner proposed to renew insurance with Zurich for 3 years – this was seconded by Cllr Malin and unanimously agreed.

440 TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE REGARDING PROPOSED FLORAL DISPLAY FEES FOR SPRING 2020

Mr Howe explained that all floral displays would now be in plastic baskets and Council had ordered 100 baskets for BID, to be recharged to them, making a total of 270 baskets.

Mr Howe and the member of the grounds staff responsible for the floral displays had discussed the fees to the six businesses MTC charges directly. BID may take them on, so Council would charge BID rather than direct, but the charges would need to be standardised. Mr Howe would distribute details of charges to Councillors once he had finalised them and Cllr Venner asked if they could go to the next Full Council or Finance & Staffing Meeting to be agreed.

Mr Howe explained that the baskets would be stored over winter in the container at the depot and that Council was looking at the possibility of grounds staff replanting them ourselves in future.

Councillors discussed the idea of a polytunnel on an allotment site or at Marshfield Road and whether MTC could go back to growing all their own flowers.

441 TO DISCUSS THE RENTING OF KING GEORGE V PLAYING FIELD TO ALCOMBE FOOTBALL CLUB

Mr Howe confirmed that the Council was charging Alcombe Rovers Football Club £400 per year rent and re-charging the electricity costs to them, but was paying the water rates itself. Council would be charging Minehead Football Club £8,500 with all bills included. Alcombe Rovers FC is the sole user at King George V Playing Field so MTC could charge it for rent alone and let it pay its own bills. Councillors discussed whether the Football Club could sub-

let, the advantage of it being responsible for the running costs, if it overuses water, electricity, or if there was a water leak, for instance. Councillors also agreed they wanted to keep the rent low.

Mrs Thornton advised that the electricity contract for King George V Playing Field ended in December 2020.

Cllr Venner proposed to recommend to Full Council that the rent be kept at £400 but to pass on running costs when possible – this was seconded by Cllr C Palmer and unanimously agreed.

442 TO CONSIDER

442.1 **A grant application from Accessible Transport West Somerset (“Atwest”)**

No financial statement had yet been received from Atwest so this would be looked at in March.

442.2 **A letter from Minehead and Exmoor Music Festival**

A request for a regular, permanent, annual grant payment had been received. Mr Howe advised that MTC does not do this for anyone else and advised against entering into a regular agreement. Cllr Venner preferred an annual application.

Cllr Venner proposed to ask for an annual grant application – this was seconded by Cllr Bolton and agreed with one abstention.

443 LOCAL PLAN: SEMINAR FEEDBACK

Cllr C Palmer spoke about the Local Plan advising that it included 14,000 houses being built over 20 years, 900 being in Minehead, so 45 houses a year. Referring to planning applications, he advised that there seemed no appetite for development.

Councillors discussed whether there was a genuine need for this new housing, that the need might be for social housing, and that low wages and lack of permanent jobs made home ownership hard. They discussed whether Council should do its own Neighbourhood Plan or Housing Survey. Mr Giles advised that this may be very costly with a Housing Survey possibly costing circa £20K.

The need to find land for a Cemetery extension was discussed and Mr Howe confirmed this was going to the Amenities and Environment Committee.

Cllr Venner recommended the Local Plan goes to Full Council.

444 TO CONSIDER USING BRENDON ELECTRICS AS THE PREFERRED QUALIFIED CONTRACTOR

Mr Howe explained how the contractor could be used to check all electrics, all sites and that all electrical work would go to a preferred electrician, so Council employees were not put at risk by carrying out electrical work. It would be easier to arrange small jobs with no need to tender.

Cllr Venner proposed to recommend to Full Council the consideration of Brendon Electrics as the preferred qualified contractor – this was seconded by Cllr Mandley and unanimously agreed.

445 TO CONSIDER QUOTATION FROM MIKE HARDING LIGHTING SOLUTIONS LTD FOR ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Mr Howe explained how electricity for Christmas lights in Friday Street, Alcombe and elsewhere was supplied by local shops, businesses and the Church by passing cable through windows, etc. It was agreed this was not safe. Mr Howe also explained that BID wanted lights down the Avenue and how this has been provided without permission in the past.

Mr Howe explained that, having done a survey with Mr Harding, Mike Harding Lighting Solutions had quoted to provide a permanent supply in Friday Street, The Avenue, Alcombe, etc; in all, 28 new supplies - all of which would be tested, approved and legal.

Mr Howe explained that MTC must have permission from Highways, SSE, etc and Mike Harding could get that permission. Mr Harding could also get permission to use lamp posts for other purposes.

Councillors discussed getting three quotes, whether other tenders could get the permissions needed, that the quote seemed very good value. Cllr M Palmer suggested Council get two further quotes to be seen to be fair. Cllr Malin advised that Council could accept a sole quote in exceptional circumstances.

Mr Giles asked the Council to have a resolution not to allow unsafe practices to continue as before and he read from MTC's insurance documents regarding taking reasonable care in managing Council activities, doing risk assessments, providing training and following the advice of the Health and Safety Executive.

The Committee was in agreement.

Cllr Venner proposed to recommend to Full Council acceptance of the quote, subject to the necessary permissions – this was seconded by Cllr Bolton and unanimously agreed.

ITEM NOT ON THE AGENDA

Cllr Venner raised the matter of parking fees and recommended they be discussed at Full Council. Councillors commented on inequities of charges across the District, the need for MTC to be kept in the loop, and whether, as a seaside town, Minehead's charges on a Sunday needed to be different from an inland town for instance.

446 TO RESOLVE TO EXCLUDE MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

No press or public were present.

447 CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS

The Meeting closed at 9.35 pm.