



MINEHEAD TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE FINANCE AND STAFFING COMMITTEE MEETING

HELD ON MONDAY 9 NOVEMBER 2020 AT 7.30 PM

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

The Meeting was digitally recorded

Members are reminded that Council has a general duty to consider the following matters in the exercise of any of its functions: Equal Opportunities (race, gender, sexual orientation, marital status and any disability), Crime & Disorder, Health & Safety, Human Rights and Biodiversity

Present: Chair: Cllr C Palmer*
Councillors: Cllr M Palmer, Cllr T Venner*, Cllr T Bloomfield, Cllr A Lawton, Cllr Malin, Cllr A Kingston-James

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

Officers in Attendance: Mr B Howe – Deputy Clerk
Mrs L Thornton – Finance Administrator and Notetaker

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

Cllr C Palmer welcomed those watching on Facebook.

832 TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE [LGA 1972 s 85 \(1\)](#)

Apologies were submitted for Cllr P Bolton* (Mayor) and Cllr B Mandley and approved by Councillors.

833 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 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
Cllr J Malin	4.4	Personal	2020	Stayed in the room, spoke and voted

DISPENSATIONS Localism Act 2011

There were no dispensations.

834 TO ADJOURN THE MEETING FOR PUBLIC INCLUSION

No members of the public were in attendance.

835 TO AUTHORISE PAYMENTS

835.1 **To approve Regular Payments between 1 October 2020 and 31 October 2020**

Cllr Malin queried item 4, the water bill for the Summerland public toilets. The Finance Administrator explained that the usage, whilst high, was down on the same period last year and that this was hopefully due to the water saving measures that had been put in place, adding that the toilets had also been closed for a while during lockdown.

The Deputy Clerk confirmed that water bills generally were a significant cost for the Council and explained that the Council was looking at water harvesting options as part of the refurbishment plan for the Summerland public toilets.

Approval of the Regular Payments, items 1 to 40 on the listing totalling £11879.67, was Proposed by Cllr C Palmer – this was Seconded by Cllr M Palmer and unanimously agreed.

835.2 **To approve payments under £1,000**

Cllr Lawton questioned why item 22, Bristol City Council for £1534.80, was included with the 'Under £1000 payments'. The Finance Administrator apologised for the error and Cllr C Palmer proposed to move this item to the 'Over £1000 payments'. There were no further questions.

Approval of payments under £1,000 items 4 to 21 and items 23 to 27 on the listing totalling £6112.66 having moved item 22 to the 'Over £1000 payments', was Proposed by Cllr M Palmer – this was Seconded by Cllr Kingston-James and unanimously agreed.

835.3 **To recommend to Full Council payments over £1,000**

Cllr C Palmer explained that it had been requested that items 35 and 36 be moved to 'Urgent Payments'. The Deputy Clerk explained that these payments related to the additional asbestos removal and demolition of the old Football Club building and work on this was now well underway.

Cllr Malin queried item 36, asking why the asbestos was not found in the original survey and asked for assurance that there would be no further surprises resulting in further charges.

The Deputy Clerk explained this was an interim charge for additional asbestos removal since the initial removal which had already been paid. He added that he had been in the building to see the work that was taking place and was satisfied that all the asbestos had now been found and was being removed. He explained that when the initial survey was undertaken, the Football Club was still in use so a 'destructive' survey was not possible and that this had been explained in the initial survey report. Since then further asbestos had been found between floors and this had been confirmed by an independent surveyor for the Council.

Recommendation to Full Council of payments over £1,000, items 22 and 28 to 34 totalling £41648.38, items 35 and 36 having been moved to 'Urgent Payments', was Proposed by Cllr C Palmer – this was Seconded by Cllr Lawton and unanimously agreed.

835.4 To receive the Income Report for October 2020

There were no questions.

Cllr C Palmer acknowledged receipt.

835.5 To approve the wages for October 2020

There were no questions.

Approval of wages for November 2020 was Proposed by Cllr C Palmer – this was Seconded by Cllr Bloomfield and unanimously agreed.

Cllr C Palmer confirmed that the total for wages was included on the Payments Report under urgent payments and these, including items 35 and 36, totalled £59867.96. He noted that these payments were paid urgently under the provisions of Financial Regulation 5.5.1.

		Total minuted	Control total
4.1	Regular Payments October 2020	£ 11879.67	
Total of Regular Payments Report			£ 11879.67
4.2	Payments November 2020 under £1000	£ 6112.66	
4.3	Payments November 2020 over £1000	£ 41648.38	
	Urgent Payments	£ 59867.96	
Total of Payments Report November 2020			£ 107629.00

836 TO RECEIVE A VERBAL REPORT REGARDING BANK RECONCILIATIONS FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 30 SEPTEMBER 2020

Cllr C Palmer confirmed the reconciliations had been done and all were in order.

837 TO RECEIVE A VERBAL UPDATE ON THE ACTIONS LOG

The Finance Administrator explained that the Actions Log was being kept up to date for all Committees but that she had not yet published the half yearly activity as suggested last month. Cllr Lawton asked if the Actions Log could be made available as a Report for

Councillors on the Members' Area. The Finance Administrator confirmed she would do this.

838 TO RECEIVE THE CHAIRMAN'S MONTHLY REPORT

Cllr C Palmer said he had nothing to report this month.

839 TO RECEIVE A VERBAL REPORT REGARDING THE INTERNAL AUDIT

The Deputy Clerk gave a verbal report having read through the First Interim Update of Internal Audit Report 2020-21 provided to him by the Finance Administrator at the start of the Meeting concluding that the overall conclusion was OK. He confirmed that the Audit had covered 'Maintenance of Accounting Records & Bank Reconciliations', 'Review of Corporate Governance', 'Review of Expenditure', 'Assessment and Management of Risk', 'Review of Income', 'Petty Cash Account' and 'Review of Staff Salaries', and that overall conclusion of the Report was that 'the Council maintains adequate internal control arrangements.'

Cllr C Palmer asked if the Report could be published on the Members' Area so all Members could read the Report.

840 TO RECEIVE A RECOMMENDATION REGARDING AN ONLINE PAYMENT FACILITY AND/OR CREDIT CARD

Following on from the Finance Administrator's Report provided at last month's meeting, she asked the Deputy Clerk to explain the difficulties of acquiring a credit card for the Council. The Deputy Clerk explained that a credit card would need to be in a personal name and it was difficult to see who could be the named officer at this time, and that, as it could not meet the Council's requirement for 'three to sign' it would not be supported by our bank. He recommended that a pre-paid card would be a better option. The Finance Administrator confirmed that they were options available, citing Monese, which would not incur charges, depending on credit applied monthly, and that the card could also be used at the cash point to provide petty cash. Currently, to provide cash, a cheque needed to be signed by three signees and cashed at the bank which was not ideal with the current Covid-19 restrictions.

Cllr C Palmer asked if we could look online to check usage. The Finance Administrator confirmed that, for any option, being able to monitor the usage online was important. She confirmed that using PayPal linked to our bank account for payments online, as previously discussed, provided instant acknowledgement of payments and an online account of activity and she would investigate if pre-paid cards could do the same.

Cllr Venner raised his concern that more and more employees were using their personal credit cards to make purchases. He asked if we knew what others Councils did. He said he would prefer a pre-paid card with a limit of £500 be used.

The Deputy Clerk confirmed we had spoken to the Auditor last year and he is happy for personal cards to be used if the correct controls are in place and that this is common practice for Councils. However, he agreed he did not want employees to be using their personal cards if possible.

Cllr M Palmer suggested we needed two cards, one for the office and one for the Amenities Team, the latter being used instead of the current Fuel card as the fees for this were so high.

Cllr Venner proposed we apply for a prepaid card in the Clerk's name with a limit of £500 – this was Seconded by Cllr Bloomfield and unanimously agreed.

Cllr C Palmer added that he would investigate the possibility of a credit card that can be provided in one name with authorisation given by other signatories, possibly by email.

841 TO RECEIVE A VERBAL REPORT REGARDING THE USE OF STRIPE FOR TENNIS COURTS

Following on from the Finance Administrator's Report provided at last month's meeting, she confirmed that a 50% discount had been applied and advertised on the Minehead Town Council Website and Facebook page as a 'out of season' discounted price until April 2021. She confirmed that bookings were still be made and payment received. The Deputy Clerk added that the Tennis Courts and MUGA were temporarily closed due to the current Covid-19 restrictions but that, as playgrounds could remain open, the Outdoor Gym had also remained open. The signage urges users to follow Covid-19 guidance on sanitising hands and maintaining distance. He advised that over £40 in income had been generated (actual figure to 9th November subsequently reported as £68.56).

The Finance Administrator confirmed that the booking and payments system was working well and users had been positive about their experience. She added that it was not so easy to pay by cash, especially with the office being closed to the public. The Deputy Clerk advised users could pay by cash, with a receipt being issued, to Mr. Johnson who would then give them access.

Cllr Lawton commented that paying by cash did not involve the booking system which could be a problem if sessions clashed. The Deputy Clerk did not think this would be a problem whilst usage was low.

842 TO RECEIVE A VERBAL UPDATE REGARDING THE ELECTRIC CHARGING POD

Following on from the Finance Administrator's Report provided at last month's meeting, she explained that the cost had now been set as agreed at the last meeting. She confirmed that the cost was now correctly advertised on the Pod Point website at 16p for both charging points and that usage had dropped off since the charge was implemented. The Deputy Clerk confirmed that, as standard for any Pod Point, the Pod Point could be used without the app for the first 15 minutes free of charge as an emergency supply.

Cllr Venner thanked the Finance Administrator for providing detailed information regarding the Pod Point charging.

843 TO RECEIVE A VERBAL UPDATE REGARDING RENEWING OF ALLOTMENT AGREEMENTS FOR 20/21

Following on from the Finance Administrator's Report provided at last month's meeting, she confirmed that the one year tenancy agreements for 20/21, a covering letter and the invoice for 20/21 had been delivered to all allotment holders. She advised that we had had very few telephone calls or emails coming into the office but that we had received a lot

more payments than signed tenancy agreements. The Finance Administrator said the covering letter made it clear that payment without a signed tenancy agreement did not constitute renewal of the tenancy agreement and that we would have to chase up the receipt of the signed agreements at some point. She added that the process was slightly different this year as normally only an invoice was sent out and payment of this had previously been sufficient for renewal, so tenants may not have fully taken on board the change this year. Also, the Covid19 'lockdown' had come just a few days after the paperwork had been delivered, which may have made it harder for tenants to port their signed agreements back.

The Deputy Clerk also advised that we could not take card payments. The preferred method of payment was by bank transfer/internet banking or by cheque. As the office is closed to the public and with the problems associated with Covid-19, cash payments are discouraged and could only be accepted as a last resort.

Cllr Venner asked what would happen if a tenant paid, but refused to return their signed agreement. The Finance Administrator confirmed that cheques received without a signed tenancy agreement would not be banked but held in the safe and would be returned and the tenancy cancelled if a signed tenancy agreement was not returned. For online payments, cheques would have to be raised as refunds if the same happened.

844 TO RESOLVE TO EXCLUDE MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

No press or public were present.

Cllr C Palmer proposed to exclude the press and public and end the live Facebook feed – this was Seconded by Cllr Bloomfield and unanimously agreed.

(The live feed to Facebook ended)

The Finance Administrator, as note-taker, left the Meeting at 8.20pm before Confidential Items were discussed.

845 CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS

The Meeting closed at 8.35pm.