

Minehead Area Panel

Notes of meeting held on 10 June 2015 at The Lawns, Townsend Road, Minehead

Present:

Sandra Slade (Chair)	Resident
Bruce Lang	West Somerset Council & Taunton Deane Borough Council
Cllr Andrew Hadley	West Somerset Council
Cllr Mandy Chilcott	West Somerset Council
Cllr Adrian Behan	West Somerset Council
Cllr Roger Thomas	West Somerset Council
Cllr Terry Venner	West Somerset Council & Minehead Town Council
Cllr Christine Lawrence	Somerset County Council
Cllr David Archer	Minehead Town Council
Cllr Andy Lewis	Minehead Town Council
David Peake	Somerset County Council Area Highways
Charlie Fitzpatrick	Avon & Somerset Police
Paul Ramsey-Read	Town Watch Radio
Andrew McCausland	Minehead Baptist Church/HomeStart West Somerset/Hope Centre
Catherine Horsfield	Resident
Colin Isherwood	Resident
Sarah Wilsher	West Somerset Council

1. Welcome, Introduction and Apologies

Sandra Slade welcomed everyone to the meeting, particularly the new Councillors for the Minehead and Alcombe Wards.

She explained that Penny James could no longer attend Minehead Area Panel meetings as Taunton Deane Borough Council's Executive Committee meetings were also on a Wednesday evening. In Penny's place James Barraah or Bruce Lang would attend and Sandra welcomed Bruce this evening. (In the future it was more likely to be James.)

Sandra paid tribute to Simon Stokes, who had passed away recently. In the past he had been a West Somerset Councillor and also Sandra's predecessor as Chair of the Minehead Area Panel.

Apologies for absence were received from Anne Clarke (Manor Road/Staunton Lane Neighbourhood Watch), Cllr Gail Herbert (Minehead Town Council), Cath Isherwood, Penny James (WSC/TDBC), Chris Jones (Devon & Somerset Fire and Rescue Service), Maureen Smith (Transition Minehead & Alcombe).

2. Have Your Say – Community Issues/Concerns

An issue had been received for Have Your Say, as follows:

- (a) *Sandra reported that Jenny Lennon-Wood had been approached by a Minehead resident with an issue for Minehead Area Panel: She was concerned that people, particularly those who are less able, have difficulty crossing Irnham Road to and from Bancks Street to access the two GP surgeries and pharmacy. The road was quite busy, especially on Fridays when traffic was diverted for the Farmers Market, and street parking blocked the view of oncoming traffic.*

David Peake advised that there were single yellow lines in this area of Irnham Road which meant no parking from 8am to 6pm, apart from disabled blue badge parking, but then only if this would not cause an obstruction and block visibility. He stated that Somerset County Council's Parking Enforcement team needed to patrol this area, particularly on Fridays and urged the Panel to contact them to this end.

ACTION: Sarah to contact Somerset County Council's Parking Enforcement team and ask them to patrol the area of Irnham Road/Bancks Street, particularly on Fridays.

This had been done.

Disappointingly, there were very few members of the public at the meeting. Sandra advised that she had sent a letter about the meeting to the West Somerset Free Press for publication, but this had not been done. The Panel then discussed how they could try and attract more residents to the Panel meetings. Ideas put forward included:

- Speaker presentations.
- Posters giving future meeting dates put up around Minehead/Alcombe.
- Email the agenda again a week before the meeting to remind people.
- Social networking – the agenda already goes on the Revive Minehead Facebook page and West Somerset Council website. Andrew Hadley agreed to put a poster with future meeting dates on the Minehead Events Page.
- Screening the meeting on social media for those who are unable to attend.
- Not changing the venue.

Suggestions of possible presentations included:

- Residents only parking schemes.
- Work of the Clinical Commissioning Group and 999/101 procedures and systems behind the scenes.
- Volunteers on the West Somerset Railway (WSR) (John Glover of WSR wrote an article stating that volunteers on the WSR were dwindling).

Bruce advised that most of the Area Panels struggled to get members of the public to their meetings, although the other Panels mainly existed in order for the town/parish councils within the Panel area to come together.

Terry Venner stated that when the West Somerset College obtained the poor OFSTED report many parents attended the Governor meetings. However, numbers had steadily dwindled and no parents had turned up at the most recent meeting. Also, no volunteers had come forward to fill the four Governor places.

3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 11 March 2015

Terry Venner reported that in agenda item 5 (County Council Update) it stated that 'the proposed Alcombe/Ellicombe crossing for Bircham Road had been approved by SCC as a top five priority...'. It should have read that 'the proposed Alcombe/Ellicombe crossing for Bircham Road had been approved by Minehead Town Council as a top five priority ...'. Subject to this amendment, the minutes of the meeting were agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

Matters Arising

Item 2(b) – A request to be made to Minehead Town Council for a SID to be installed in the shopping area of Alcombe. Minehead Town Council to forward this to Dave Grabham at SCC: It was not known whether this had been done. However, Sandra had received from Dave Grabham the figures for the Alcombe (A39) SID and the SID at The Parks, Woodcombe from 20 April to 5 May 2015. For Alcombe the median speed was 31mph and the 85 percentile was 36mph. For The Parks the median speed was 32mph and the 85 percentile was 37mph. It therefore did not look as if speeding in these two areas was as big a problem as expected.

David Peake further advised that a proper speed survey would give all the scores recorded so that you could ascertain the maximum speed, but this would usually have been set by a very low number of vehicles, and any highways speed prevention scheme would not be installed based on only a few vehicles speeding. Schemes would only be set up based on the median speed and 85 percentile which were recorded by SIDs throughout the County. The installation of a SID on a regular basis was dependent on the speed intervention level (the posted speed limit plus 10% plus 3mph) being equalised or exceeded. SIDs were temporary road features to ensure that drivers did not get complacent.

David Archer said that at times boy racers were seen speeding through The Parks. Mandy Chilcott advised that a few years ago the Police caught boy racers speeding along the seafront. Andy Lewis clarified that if 85% of drivers were travelling at 36mph this meant that 15% (1 in 6) were travelling at more than 36mph.

The Panel asked about the rulings relating to 20% speed limits. David informed that the Department of Transport provided guidance on 20mph zones and this guidance was sufficiently fluid to allow variations between Local Authorities as to which areas were limited to 20mph speed limits.

Item 5 – Members of the public to report A boards that were health and safety hazards to Cllr Terry Venner who would advise David Peake accordingly: Terry informed the meeting that he had approached the Chamber of Commerce and done a survey of boards in town. About 20 outlets had boards either on their forecourts or the pavement. The worst offenders were down The Avenue. The Hobby Horse had a sign on the highway at the junction of The Esplanade with The Avenue/Seafront. This had been taken down by Highways.

Terry to inform Peter Owen of the results of his investigations so that it could be looked into and action taken.

ACTION: Terry Venner to report his investigations on A boards in the centre of Minehead to Peter Owen.

Item 14 – Mandy Chilcott to talk to the Police regarding patrolling Blenheim Gardens: It was noted that Blenheim Gardens was subject to a police patrol, however, once moved on, the offenders tended to go to other identified areas, such as the recreation ground on Irnham Road.

4. Minehead Visioning Group – An Update

Sandra read out the report which had been produced by Ian Timms, Assistant Director for Business Development and Cllr Karen Mills, Lead Member for Economic Development, as follows:

Vision Project

The project had been completed. Stephen Hooper had completed his employment. A report had been produced on the delivered projects. Five banners on projects covered by Minehead Visioning Group (MVG) were available for display and currently were held at West Somerset Council in Williton. It was intended to move them to Tesco and Morrisons and possibly the former Threshers shop. Leaflets were available for use on the completion of projects.

Coastal Communities Funding and Action Plan

A bid was to be made to the Coastal Communities Fund for £10,000 to enable the creation of a new strategic plan for Minehead. This would review the old plan and enable a fresh focus on the town. The intention was that this would enable engagement with all partners and a fresh start. The plan should be drawn up by the key Minehead based organisations with support from West Somerset Council.

The plan would enable access into a new fund of £3million called the Coastal Heritage Revive Fund. This was seen as an unlocking fund. The plan should also aid focus on the use of future Section 106 monies and serve as a new economic plan for Minehead.

Current Projects

Clanville Gardens was ongoing and needed more volunteers. Maureen Smith was leading this project. There was a small group reviewing the possibility of placing a pirate ship on the beach with the aims of enabling play and being an attraction. There would be a report to the next meeting of Minehead Visioning Group (MVG) on the issues involved and how the project could be delivered. The tree lights would be installed over the next month. This project was being led by Graham Sizer of the Chamber of Commerce. The Old Hospital project was making good progress following a successful consultation event instigated by the new owners, which 700 people had participated in.

General

The Secretary of MVG was currently Cllr Jean Parbrook on behalf of the Town Council. This was a temporary position. Jean had replaced Cllr Brenda Maitland-Walker.

Roger Thomas, Chair of the Minehead Visioning Group, then added that the display of free-standing posters depicted issues that had been looked at by the Group. This display would hopefully go into Threshers. More leaflets on completed projects were to be produced.

At the last MVG meeting Charlie Kennedy had given an excellent presentation on the proposal to erect a pirate ship on the beach. It would have decking and several levels and be sunk in concrete. The cost was approximately £16,000.

The action plan would be refreshed at the next MVG meeting.

5. Minehead Development Trust – A n Update

Jenny Lennon-Wood had prepared a report, which Sandra read out as follows:

Update on work towards Minehead Development Trust's key aim, the creation of a community hub in Minehead's Old Hospital:

On 26 March, Minehead's Old Hospital was bought at auction by two consulting engineers, Bill Howard and Bob Jones, who intended to develop the site with due respect to its three heritage buildings. They aimed to include community facilities and were working with Minehead Development Trust (MDT), drawing upon proposals for the site generated through MDT's earlier community consultation and feasibility studies.

From 30 April to 5 May, MDT and the new owners ran a joint community consultation event. Minehead's community responded enthusiastically to the chance to help shape the future of the Old Hospital. Ideas that had been strongly supported at MDT's earlier community consultations were listed in a questionnaire, which also welcomed new suggestions. Analysis of over 700 completed questionnaires demonstrated a high level of support for preserving the buildings' heritage (682 responses) and for developing the site with a focus on community uses (686).

From the comments on the questionnaires, it was clear that respondents really hoped that the Old Hospital would become a focal point that brought the whole community together, with shared space for people of all ages and interests. The great majority of respondents were local but some were regular visitors to Minehead. Around 55% of responses were from people aged over 65. Although this was demographically representative of the local community, MDT was planning to approach local schools to give younger people a chance to have their say.

In the meantime these early results gave the owners and MDT strong evidence of the community support needed to generate a site development plan. Approaches were being made to potential anchor tenants, particularly those who attended the joint SCC/MDT Asset Opportunity Workshop in 2014. The aim was to bring parts of the site into revenue-generating use at an early stage, allowing more time for the recovery of the heritage buildings.

6. Police Report

Charlie Fitzpatrick reported that the Police worked closely with Butlins who provided two police officers, plus two PCSOs from Taunton and Bridgwater to accompany them, every Saturday from 10am to 6pm during Butlins Music Weekends. Local policing was therefore not affected. The public houses employed door staff at these times and worked with the Shop and Pub Watch schemes. In addition, the Police patrolled the A39 on Fridays.

Butlins had a wristband scheme and if any adults behaved inappropriately outside the camp they would be given black wristbands and would not be allowed at a future Butlins complex.

In general, there were no problems with the 60's and soul weekends; the problematical Music Weekends were those that attracted young men.

Sandra Slade suggested that a representative from Butlins be asked to attend a future Minehead Area Panel meeting in order to update the Panel on how the holiday venue worked with the town/community.

In terms of crime in west Somerset there had been 43 crimes in May 2015 compared to 45 in May 2014. These crimes broke down into 10 criminal damages, 20 violences against the person (usually associated with drinking), 9 thefts of pedal cycles, 1 theft of a motorised vehicle, 1 theft against a person and two sexual offences. In April 2015 there had been 40 crimes, which were more of a mix with no particular crime predominant. It was noted that thefts tended to increase during the Summer months.

Christine Lawrence asked if any of the crime figures included domestic abuse. Charlie advised that a breakdown category for domestic abuse was not provided, but the 20 violences against the person could have included domestic abuse.

The Summer safety campaign – Operation Tonic – was concentrating on drink and drug driving. Charlie asked anyone concerned about a driver to call the Police.

With regards to Blenheim Gardens, PCSOs patrolled the Gardens regularly. This did, however, lead to the drinkers going elsewhere and recently they had been moved off the beach.

There were no plans to move the Police from Minehead, just to a new building within Minehead. No major staffing changes were taking place at the current time.

Terry Venner reported that he had spoken to Sue Mountstevens, the Police and Crime Commissioner, about cuts in the Police and that if Williton police station was lost, the Minehead police station downgraded and officers moved to the Bristol area, he was concerned about how west Somerset would fare if there was a major incident here. Paul Ramsey-Read stated that Pub Watch landlords were also worried that if there was a major incident in Minehead there would be few, if any, police officers to deal with it.

Adrian Behan asked whether all crimes reported to the Police were logged. Charlie replied that all crimes reported were put on the system and allocated a crime number.

Andrew McCausland, in his HomeStart West Somerset role, felt that both the draining of resources of both social workers and the Police from the district was an urgent issue and suggested that it be arranged for representatives from both SCC and the Police to talk to the Panel at a future meeting.

Christine Lawrence reported that Somerset County Council could not recruit enough social workers, particularly for children. This was partly due to the high cost of houses in the area. Mandy Chilcott added that this was true for the NHS too and the recruitment of doctors and nursing staff. The poor road network also did not help as it generally took a long time to get to places.

Andrew McCausland added that the result of lack of employed staff meant that the charitable/voluntary sector were having to pick up the 'tab'. He asked how he could find out what the social issues were in the local community. Christine Lawrence replied in that SCC's Scrutiny Committee discussed local social issues and that members of the public could attend their meetings and ask questions. The agendas for the meetings could be found on the County Council website. Mandy Chilcott informed that SCC were putting in place a support website or portal, bringing together details of local groups.

Andrew McCausland added that he was going to a meeting in Bristol on human trafficking to ascertain whether there would be an impact in west Somerset.

7 Highways Matters

David Peake reported the following:

Completed Highway Works:

- Drainage work at Ellicombe Cross, Alcombe.
- Kerbing, drainage repairs and carriageway resurfacing on Hayfield Road, Alcombe – it was noted that an innovative technique had been employed to do the resurfacing which had been a success. Sandra Slade added that the

workers had also been very helpful to the residents whilst the road repairs were being undertaken.

- Water main renewal, footway improvements, traffic signal system upgrading, electricity supply upgrade, telephone duct work, highway works in relation to new doctor's surgery and carriageway resurfacing on A396 West Street and Church Street in Dunster.

Ongoing and Future Highway Works:

- Construction of new roundabout on the A39/B3190 at Washford Cross.
- 'Big Weekends' (closure of the B3190 south of the junction from 7pm on Fridays to 7am on Mondays) to take place from from 3 to 6 July and 10 to 13 July. All roads would be open, including the road to Watchet, for the Summer holidays, with work recommencing in September.
- Resurfacing, drainage and kerbing works on the A39 from Williton to Nether Stowey, with temporary road closure, from 1 to 5 June and 8 to 12 June.
- Surface dressing on the A39 from Williton to Nether Stowey, with traffic signals, from 15 to 19 June.

8 Burning Issues

Unfortunately, Chris Jones of the Devon & Somerset Fire and Rescue Service, was unable to attend the meeting but he produced a report for inclusion in the minutes, as follows:

Operational News

- Since the last Minehead Area Panel meeting held in March, Minehead Crews attended 50 operational calls during the last quarter. These included five road traffic collisions, ten property related fires most of which were cooking or electrical related, and four special service calls to assist other agencies including an animal rescue. Chimney fires increased recently which was usual at the end of the 'open fire season'. Crews attended nine incidents of this type. Crews also attended ten fires in the open. These included unattended or poorly controlled bonfires or fires on open heath and moorland. Crews had also attended a small number of domestic smoke alarm calls.
- There had been two cases of deliberately ignited fires during the last quarter in the Minehead area. These were linked to fires in the open on moorland.
- Owners of properties with log fires and log burners were being encouraged to be prepared and have their chimneys swept before using them.

Community Safety News and Activities

- As the beginning of the Service's safety year starts, a number of planned events would be held throughout the seasons up to and including March 2016.
- Minehead Fire Station's Local Community Plan this year included three Road Safety initiatives. These would be held at the West Somerset College with new and prospective drivers, a dedicated motorcycle safety event and road safety awareness at the Summer Festival in partnership with other agencies.
- Home and agricultural fire safety advice would be delivered at the Dunster Show.
- Dedicated sessions around fire safety in the home for the elderly and vulnerable would be delivered including open sessions and dedicated home visits.
- Protection teams would also be inspecting around 40 businesses in the area to check on fire safety compliance.
- Public information could be sought from the website: www.dsfrs.gov.uk

9 **Town Council Update**

David Archer reported that Jean Parbrook had been elected as Mayor. The Amenities and General Purposes Committee had interesting items to discuss at their next meeting. More information would be available at the next Minehead Area Panel meeting.

10 **District Council Update**

Bruce Lang reported the following:

- The elections on 7 May 2015 had been a challenge for West Somerset and Taunton Deane Councils with General, District and Parish elections all on the same day. There had been a high turnout of nearly 70%. West Somerset Council (WSC) had 28 Members, 12 of whom were new and 7 of these represented wards in Minehead and Alcombe. Previously there had been 19 Conservatives, there were now 21. The other 7 Councillors formed the West Somerset Opposition Group. Congratulations were due to Mandy Chilcott as the new Deputy Leader. The Committees had now been formed and all Members were getting down to local business.
- The financial situation was still grave. The Revenue Support Grant from Central Government was being phased out and being replaced by business rates and New Homes Bonus, neither of which favoured West Somerset Council's rural position. A recent appeal for business rates from Hinkley Point had gone against WSC and cost the Council £200,000. The Council currently had a large deficit.

Further information for the Panel included:

Public Conveniences

- Blenheim Gardens public conveniences – the gents were currently closed (as at 5 June) due to issues with the drains which were being investigated.
- Summerland Car Park public conveniences – works had now been completed to re-felt the flat roof and undertake internal decoration. The graffiti had been removed and Veolia had removed and repainted the door. An arrest was made for the damage.
- Carousel public conveniences – there had been a water leak which closed the toilets for three days. The pipes had been replaced and the toilets re-opened.
- Warren Road public conveniences – the coin operating system had jammed on various cubicles simultaneously. This had been fixed and was now working correctly.

Minehead Harbour - Dredging

Approximately 2,700 tonnes of stones and 1,500 tonnes of sand were cleared from Minehead Harbour in April.

Minehead Harbour – Maintenance

Work was currently underway to replace sections of railings and handrails around the harbour.

Bratton Walk

Protection/prevention works had been undertaken to stop the further erosion of the bank. This would also ensure that the water flowed into the pond and kept it clear.

Bedding Plants

Bedding plants had been planted in Blenheim Gardens, Wellington Square and the planters around Minehead. The plants were sourced from the Taunton Deane Borough Council nursery rather than from external providers.

Community Payback

The Community Payback Service Team had spent time recently in Blenheim Gardens sanding down and painting the benches.

The Rhynes

The Council had carried out more works on the rhynes at a cost of about £1,500 to increase the flow. They were working on options to make further improvements utilising the Grounds team.

Other Issues

The dog waste bunker at the bottom of Marshfield Road had been reported by members of the public to Environmental Health for causing a smell nuisance. Minehead Town Council had asked whether it could be moved away from the residential area to Brunel Way. However, West Somerset Council did not have the room to house it at Brunel Way so other options needed to be looked into. Also, neither Minehead Town Council nor West Somerset Council hold the hazardous waste licence required for dog bin waste.

Recent erosion on Minehead beach had uncovered wire from broken 'sausage groynes' which had formed part of the old sea defences that were smashed in the 1980s. The Council had been quoted about £2,000 for their removal and were looking into other options.

The lock on the gates at the Warren Road car park had malfunctioned closing the car park for 4½ days. The lock was replaced by Butlins and keys were cut and handed to all that needed them.

11 County Council Update

Terry Venner reported that congratulations were due to Christine Lawrence for being appointed to the position of Chairman of Somerset County Council. Although not the first Chairman from West Somerset, it was thought that Christine was the first lady Chairman.

Christine Lawrence reported that they were still waiting to hear from the Small Improvements Scheme as to whether there was any money available for the Blenheim Road crossing. She would be talking to Angela Summers, Communities Officer with West Somerset Council and Taunton Deane Borough Council, regarding possible Section 106 funding.

A volunteer celebration event had recently taken place at the Beach Hotel. The volunteers at Engage West Somerset undertook an enormous amount of good work and there were more volunteer drivers in West Somerset than anywhere else in the County. However, due to the ageing population of the voluntary sector the number of volunteers was diminishing and more people from the lower age groups were needed to fill the gap. Terry expressed the concern that as cuts continued to bite into local authority funding at all levels more pressure was being put on the voluntary sector to pick up the pieces, yet there would come a point soon when the voluntary sector would find itself unable to do this.

12. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

13. Date & Venue of Future Meetings

Future meetings to be held on:

Wednesday, 9 September 2015 at 6.30pm – The Avenue Methodist Church Hall, The Avenue, Minehead

Wednesday, 9 December 2015 at 6.30pm – The Avenue Methodist Church Hall, The Avenue, Minehead

Wednesday, 9 March 2016 at 6.30pm – St Michael the Archangel Church Hall, Quarry Close, Alcombe.