

Minehead Area Panel

Notes of meeting held on 10 September 2014 at The Avenue Methodist Church Hall, The Avenue, Minehead

Present:

Sandra Slade (Chair)	Resident
Penny James	Taunton Deane Borough Council & West Somerset Council
Cllr Maureen Smith	West Somerset Council & Transition Minehead & Alcombe
Cllr Andrew Hadley	West Somerset Council
Cllr Richard Lillis	West Somerset Council
Cllr David Sanders	West Somerset Council
Cllr Mandy Chilcott	West Somerset Council
Cllr Gail Everett	Minehead Town Council
Sue Sanders	Minehead Town Council
Cllr Christine Lawrence	Somerset County Council
Cllr Terry Venner	Somerset County Council
David Peake	Somerset County Council Area Highways
Chris Jones	Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service
PC Mark Curran	Avon & Somerset Police
Ray Tew	Minehead Development Trust
Jerry Burge	Minehead & District Social Club
Sarah Fitzgerald	Butlins
John Clyde-Smith	Longbay Sea Power
Lynne Wooldridge	College Pastors
Ian Candy	College Pastors
L Webb	West Somerset College Debate Group
Emma Bradley	West Somerset College Debate Group
Sarah Ryan	West Somerset College Debate Group
Jennifer Yates	Minehead First School
T E Mote	Resident
Ron Blundell	Resident
Anne Clarke	Manor Road/Staunton Lane Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator
Sue Lloyd	Resident
Daphne McCutcheon	Resident
John Gray	Resident
Colin Isherwood	Resident
Cath Isherwood	Resident
Mike Pretty	Resident
H Compton	Resident
Jane Pretty	Resident
Sarah Wilsher	West Somerset Council

1. Welcome, Introduction and Apologies

Sandra Slade welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies for absence were received from Graham Sizer, Cllr Doug Ross (West Somerset Council), Andrew McCausland (Minehead Baptist Church), Cllr Ian Melhuish (West Somerset Council), Jenny Lennon-Wood (Minehead Development Trust), Cynthia Stevens.

2. College Pastors Initiative

Lynne explained that the College Pastors Initiative had been going for two years at West Somerset College following an initiative by the churches to ensure a caring presence for the young people. They go in at lunchtimes and chat to them. In wet weather a room is opened up and board games are played. The idea is to provide a safe and secure environment. This is accepted and appreciated by the students, and this year the incoming year 9's have been friendly and have approached the pastors.

The pastors are DBS checked. There are 15 volunteers and an administrator plus a steering group of six. They are now looking at a pilot scheme which would focus more on the transition points students take to go from school to school and would like to have pastors at the points students move up from First to Middle Schools to College, including move-up days. Also, pre-school too. They would like to be there for children who arrive early in the morning, provide discussion groups at lunchtimes, etc. and a quiet space for times of bereavement/trauma and when young people become anxious, for example, towards the end of terms if their holidays are upsetting times with divided parents, etc. The pastors could also go on the buses if children feel insecure. It is hoped that the pilot could become a full pastors scheme for Minehead. More volunteers would be needed to put this in place.

The street pastors are out most Saturday evenings until the early hours, looking out for the vulnerable. They would like to move the College Pastors Initiative outside the College and into the streets – between the First and Middle Schools and College, Parks Walk, etc and to provide support to students on their way home. A meeting was recently held with Taunton Academy, which has school pastors who patrol the streets around the school two days per week.

It was noted that the Pastors Initiative came under the Ascension Trust which provided uniform, insurance, etc.

The pastors have been talking to shops in Alcombe, schools and the Police, and need the support of schools, the Police, local authorities and the church in order to progress the scheme. There was also an invisible partnership with the whole community.

Ian Candy confirmed that all the pastors were from the church but that there was no element of religious instruction/preaching in the Pastor Initiative.

Sandra thanked Ian and Lynne for their interesting talk.

3. Police Report

Mark Curran reported that he had known the pastors for most of the time he had worked in Minehead and they provided an excellent service, particularly during the time before an emergency service arrived.

Mark informed the meeting that crime was exceptionally low and that there were no crime issues to report. At the last Minehead Area Panel meeting in June 2014 it had been raised that one adult weekend had not been properly policed. Mark assured everyone that this would not happen again and to ensure this was the case he would be on duty for all the known future adult/music weekends. Ian Liddell-Grainger would be coming to Minehead during a music weekend to see what happens in the town and how the Police interact with the visitors. Mark also advised that Butlins' security services were very good.

Mark also advised of changes in the local Police personnel, in that Inspector Carey would be leaving Minehead in the near future and then retiring. Locally Sgt Andy Whysall would be covering for the next six months and Mr Bob Muckett would be a

temporary inspector covering the area, but not based in West Somerset. In addition, Sgt Nigel Downey would be based at Williton Police Station and was the current 'sector deputy'. The whole plan was currently being revised as part of a Force-wide Operating Model which should take place in West Somerset on 1 April 2015. Further changes would occur then, but these had not yet been confirmed.

The new Minehead custody suite would open next week staffed by Minehead Police. Qualified sergeants would be covering staff holidays and absences.

Mark referred to an email which the Panel had received from Trevor Short who was concerned with speeding along Porlock Road through Woodcombe following the results of two speed indicator device checks in July and August - which showed a median of 32mph and that 85% of drivers were doing 36mph. Trevor asked whether the Police would be able to do any speed checks in the area and questioned why there was currently no speed complaint area at Woodcombe shown on their website despite him having raised the issue for the last two years. Mark replied that the Police were aware of driving speeds at Woodcombe and that they were not as high as expected. However, he would arrange for the area to be assessed for speed gun work, together with the stretch near the camp site and Bratton Straight. He could not comment on the website as he was not involved in this, but would make enquiries.

ACTION: PC Mark Curran to arrange for Porlock Road at Woodcombe, near the camp site and Bratton Straight to be assessed for speed gun work by the Police and to look into the lack of speeding complaints for the Woodcombe area on the website.

Anne Clarke raised the issue of speeding on the A39 heading into Carhampton from both directions. Mark advised that he would raise this issue at the Dunster Area Panel.

ACTION: PC Mark Curran to raise the issue of speeding into Carhampton from both directions at the Dunster Area Panel.

Terry Venner advised that a meeting with the Police and Minehead Town Council was going to be held at the end of October to discuss the Butlins Music weekends. He was concerned that it was difficult to contact the Police over a weekend when the stations were shut and getting through to 101 was not easy, also that although there was a police presence in the town on the Saturday, there was nothing on the Friday night for when the Butlins' visitors had arrived. Mark urged people to persevere with 101 and advised that the station would soon be opening from 10am to 6pm Monday to Friday. Mandy Chilcott felt that some weekends were more difficult than others as the music weekends appealed to different age groups, and advised that some people were frightened to go into town during the Butlins weekends. Joint working would ensure better harmony between Butlins visitors and Minehead residents.

Sarah Fitzgerald informed the meeting that Butlins was trying to achieve more of a festival feel to their events with all-day entertainment and less need to venture into the town. Butlins wished to have a good reputation and were strict with their visitors in order to promote good behaviour outside the camp.

Mark Curran reported that the Shop Watch and Pub Watch schemes had combined to make Minehead Town Watch. Richard Lillis added that there were now 20 premises in Minehead using radios as part of the Town Watch scheme. They now needed two to three volunteers to carry a radio, oversee the calls coming in and liaise with the premises. Also, voluntary help was required with the CCTV scheme. A volunteer came forward at the meeting. Any other interested persons should contact Richard via Sarah on swwilsher@westsomerset.gov.uk or 01984 635296.

Sandra advised that future Music Weekends were as follows:

- Ultimate 80's – 26 to 28 September
- We Love the 70's – 10 to 12 October
- Ultimate 80's – 31 October to 2 November

Sandra asked to receive future lists so that she could disseminate this information at the Area Panel meetings. It was noted that the information was also available on the Revive Minehead Facebook page.

ACTION: Butlins to please keep Sandra/Sarah up-to-date with the details of future music weekends by emailing: swwilsher@westsomerset.gov.uk

4. Have Your Say – Community Issues/Concerns

A number of issues were raised as follows:

- (a) *Sandra read out an issue raised by Cynthia Stevens in that there used to be two swings in the Cross Farm play area and now there was only one. Could a second swing be reinstated?*

Sue Sanders advised that Minehead Town Council maintained the play area and that the Grounds staff had been asked to look into the issue and put in place a second swing.

ACTION: Minehead Town Council to reinstate a second swing.

- (b) *Sandra read out an issue raised by Cynthia Stevens regarding the disgraceful flower bed by the mini roundabout in Alcombe.*

There was some confusion as to which flowerbed was being referred to, but probably the bed below the bench on the bend between Gladstone Terrace and Alcombe Road. Mandy Chilcott said that she would check the ownership of the flowerbed.

ACTION: Mandy Chilcott/Penny James to check on the ownership of the flowerbed below the bench on the bend between Gladstone Terrace and Alcombe Road.

The meeting then generally stated how unhappy they were with the increase in weeds around the town and the decline in grounds maintenance standards.

David Peake clarified that Somerset County Council were responsible for getting rid of the noxious and invasive weeds, but did not do the kerbside. This used to be done by West Somerset Council on behalf of the County Council but the District Council withdrew from the arrangement due to financial pressures. It was now undertaken by Minehead Town Council. Sue advised that the weeding was being done twice per year by approved contractors at a cost of £6,000 pa – in April/May and at the end of September.

Rob Blundell asked about accountability – who signed off the work – and expressed concern that the local authorities were being paid twice/three times by the tax payers for doing the same work.

Sue said that she would check the state of the weeding on an unofficial basis as she walked around the town. There was no official 'signing-off' as such, although poor workmanship could be penalised by withholding the payment or the work being re-done.

Penny James stated that she was happy to work with Minehead Town Council and Somerset County Council in respect of the disgraceful flowerbed, and explained that no local authority was being paid more than once for their services. Due to financial cuts Councils had no choice but to only provide the services, which they were statutorily required to do. Local authorities needed to work together better in order to serve the public.

Terry Venner added that due to a lack of money coming in from Central Government, Somerset County Council had cut their budget by £18 million and there would be further cuts over the next three years.

It was noted that Minehead Town Council had picked up a lot of the work that Somerset County and West Somerset Councils could no longer do. Ron Blundell gave his appreciation of the work being done by Minehead Town Council.

A resident said that he used to live in a city and in comparison he was very happy with Minehead, it was beautiful. Sandra thanked him for his comment but added that compared to how it used to be certain areas were now considered rather shabby by the locals.

Terry advised that following a letter of complaint in the West Somerset Free Press concerning land at Lower Park, Minehead Town Council had stepped in to maintain the land on behalf of Somerset County Council and had prepared it for planting.

Sandra explained that due to local authority cutbacks it was difficult for the land to be maintained as it had previously. At the same time the Conservatives' Localism Act had given empowerment to communities to get involved. In this respect Gail Everitt advised that she had run a volunteer weeding day but only two people had turned up to help.

- (c) *Anne Clarke, asked, on behalf of a resident in Staunton Lane, when Manor Road had last been resurfaced as there were a lot of pot holes and filling them in didn't work.*

David advised that Staunton Road had been resurfaced last in 2005 and Manor Road probably in the 1990's. The highways were not resurfaced on a rota basis but on a priority basis depending on usage and finances. Pro-active maintenance would be ideal but sadly was not financially possible.

- (d) *Anne Clarke asked about progress being made for a request she had made in March 2014 for a larger sign (bridleway and speed restriction) to be put at the entrance to Alcombe Combe.*

Sue Sanders advised that the Alcombe Councillors had been consulted and the issue would next go to Minehead Town Council before being further progressed.

- (e) *John Clyde-Smith was concerned about the lack of cardboard recycling facilities for small businesses. He paid business rates but could not use the West Somerset Council recycling depot. He had been using the facility at Tesco but this was not going down well with the Manager of the supermarket. He did not want to pay Viridor to take it away.*

Sandra read out the reply by Andy Mallinson, Operations Officer with Somerset Waste Partnership, which stated that the producer of the waste had a legal 'Duty of Care' to store and dispose of any waste that was generated as a result of a business. Business rates did not include the cost of waste

collections and must be paid for. The business owner had a duty of care to arrange a trade waste collection through an authorised waste contractor and must request collection from outside their business premises. Trade waste could not be transported in a domestic car or vehicle without a trade waste carriers licence from the Environment Agency.

West Somerset Council had no responsibility for waste generated by a business. The Council only provided a service for domestic households paying Council Tax. The Somerset Waste Partnership website provided the procedures for dealing with trade waste from businesses. Andy would be writing to Mr Clyde-Smith.

Andrew Hadley advised that he paid to have his recycling waste collected. Maureen Smith informed the meeting that Somerset Waste Partnership had, a few years ago, paid for an officer to liaise with businesses and look into providing a facility in Minehead. John Clyde-Smith explained that premises in Mart Road were mooted as a possible site but they were seen as a fire hazard so no action was taken or continued. He asked whether Minehead Town Council could help to fund an additional recycling waste collection which could solely be for businesses. Mandy Chilcott did not think that this would be possible as Council tax payments made by residents and not business rates financed Minehead Town Council.

- (f) *Jenny Lennon-Wood was unable to attend the meeting but wished to request, on behalf of her neighbours, that Periton Lane not be re-opened as per the County Council's intention.*

David Peake advised that technically it was possible to keep the Lane closed permanently but in order to do this a turning head would need to be established to enable drivers to turn round and in this respect a Road Traffic Order would be required.

The residents of Periton Lane should raise the permanent closure of Periton Lane with Minehead Town Council and get it considered it as a Small Improvements Scheme bid. This scheme would then compete for funding along with the proposed pedestrian crossing at Bircham Road.

David then referred to the email which the Panel had received from Trevor Short, who was concerned with speeding along Porlock Road through Woodcombe. Trevor asked whether Highways would be able to put 'slow' on the road approaching from either side and 'No Footpath' signs at Porlock Road. David advised that any signage on the road needed to go to Minehead Town Council for consideration and then be passed onto a Traffic Engineer.

ACTION: Sarah to advise Trevor Short of the process.

- (g) *Emma Bradley spoke on behalf of the West Somerset College GCSE Debate Group in that more than 400 people had signed a petition for the Headteacher's removal and for OFSTED to take over. The GCSE pass rate this year had been only 38% and it was felt that this poor pass rate and poor headteaching would have an impact on future generations of school children. Emma asked whether the Area Panel had a view on the situation.*

The GCSE Debate Group felt that Gaynor Comber was responsible for the poor pass rate as at her previous school the GCSE pass rate was also low – even down to 31%.

Also, the College had a captive audience in West Somerset with few people being able to afford to take their children to another School.

Mandy Chilcott advised that problems had been inherent for some time prior to Mrs Comber taking on the role, particularly in maths and English, and felt that the children needed to be empowered to do well and the strength of the parents was required.

Maureen Smith advised that the Labour Party were concerned about the control of the College being taken away from Somerset County Council.

Christine Lawrence felt that it was a difficult situation for the Area Panel to get involved in. However, both Christine and Penny James felt the best way forward for the Panel was to write to the Board of Governors expressing concern with the GCSE results and asking them to approach Peter Lewis, Director of Children Services at Somerset County Council, for the County Council's assistance.

Terry Venner added that he attended all the Governor meetings but was always asked to leave when financial issues were being discussed. He suggested that the WSC GCSE Debate Group contact the Commissioner for Academies in Bristol.

ACTION: Sandra Slade to write to the West Somerset College Board of Governors asking them to approach Peter Lewis, Director of Children Services at Somerset County Council for assistance.

This has been done.

The following issues were received from Ron Blundell prior to the meeting. The majority of responses were emailed to him in advance of the meeting, and the rest secured afterwards, as follows:

1 Highways Issues

- (a) *Drains Clearance – Queens Road and King Edward Road - Somerset (SCC)* Highways replied that the Highway Superintendent had inspected the blocked gullies in 26 and 27 Queens Road and raised an order for the clearance of a number of gullies in the area. Also, the Highway Superintendent had attended the service road adjacent to 23 Queens Road and cleared some leaves from the top of the gully. Otherwise the gully seemed to be clear. The Highways Superintendent had visited 21 King Edward Road and arranged for a repair to the loose channel block to be carried out within 28 days in accordance with the Highways Safety Inspection Manual.
- (b) *Weeds in Gutters – as per 2(b) above – Minehead Town Council* was undertaking the weeding on behalf of Somerset County Council twice per annum. In addition, West Somerset Council replied that Veolia (contractor) only swept over the gutters and were not responsible for the gutters themselves.
- (c) *Sweeping of public service back lanes, particularly between Summerland and Glenmore - West Somerset Council* replied that Veolia swept the back lanes on an eight-weekly basis and this area was due in another three weeks. Also, that they were currently without a small sweeper so these areas were having to be cleaned by two men.
- (d) *Grass cutting at Seaward Way – have Butlins accepted an ongoing commitment to cut this area? If so where will the resultant savings be spent –* Chris Hall, Assistant Director of Operational Delivery with Taunton Deane Borough Council and West Somerset Council, replied that he knew nothing of

this issue. There were elements of Seaward Way under different ownership and West Somerset Council would maintain their sections either themselves or through the use of third parties who wished to cut and take away the arisings for their own use.

- (e) *Planned highways maintenance. Have the Highways department got a forward looking (5 year?) plan for the maintenance of Minehead and Alcombe roads? If so, where is it publicly available? If not, why not? If not, how can this area in the form of its elected representatives, be assured that we have a fair share of the cake if there is no local highway plan to consult and bid with even if it is only a wish list.* SCC Highways responded to say that in general the budgets, both revenue and capital, were allocated to each area office based on the proportion of road length, so this meant that each area got its fair share. In the case of revenue works, such as grass cutting and gully cleaning, these budgets were allocated on a proportional basis taking into account the area of grass to be cut or the number of gullies, respectively. The capital schemes such as road and footway resurfacing and major drainage schemes were based on need within each area and a scoring system was implemented to prioritise the individual schemes. It was not possible to provide any information on five year programmes as the budgets were normally only provided one or two years ahead.

2 Minehead Development Trust (MDT)

- (a) *Why are the Trust's web based assets in terms of the website and Facebook page not being updated?* – On behalf of MDT Ray Tew responded in that the MDT Board had been experiencing some difficulties with the existing website, particularly in relation to updating information. To overcome these problems, they were in the process of reviewing and re-commissioning the website design.
- (b) *Why were the Trust's accounts submitted to the Charity Commission late?* – Ray replied that there was unfortunately a misunderstanding with their accountant about who would be submitting MDT's 2012/13 accounts and so the annual return to the Charity Commission resulted in the late submission.
- (c) *Who are the current MDT Trustees and who currently holds any elected office in MTC, WSC or SCC?* – Ray replied that MDT's trustees were: Jenny Lennon-Wood (Chair), Mike Downes, Bernard Maynard-Smith, Graham Sizer and Ray Tew. All were volunteers and none of the trustees held elected (or unelected) office in MTC, WSC, SCC or any other local authority.
- (d) *Do members of MDT regularly brief all full meetings of MTC and WSC and keep Minehead SCC councillors updated?* – Ray replied the MDT Board greatly appreciated the support it received from all three local authorities and had provided briefings and updates, including reports at meetings as required. MTD was constituted as an independent not-for-profit organisation, running community-led projects for social, economic and environmental regeneration. As such, they were not expected to be given regular opportunities to brief all full council meetings. However, they always welcomed council representation on MDT's advisory group, drawn from the Arts, Business, Church, Conservation, Environment, Local Authority and Voluntary sectors. Their understanding was that these advisors acted as a two-way conduit for communications between MDT and the groups they represented.
- (e) *With the recent news on the Hospital site is my question on pledges likely to be answered?* - Ray responded in that, since August 2013, there had been no satisfactory bids for the Old Hospital site and MDT had now re-registered it

as an Asset of Community Value. They succeeded in persuading the owner, NHS Property Services Ltd, to include MDT's proposals and architect's drawings in the marketing pack. However the site was on the market for offers, leaving MDT with no target figure, both for fundraising to bid for the site and as a basis for a financially sustainable business plan. They had secured community pledges exceeding £30k but could not realise them until they had secured additional funding to submit a bid. The MDT Board was working to overcome these barriers and, in response to their request for advice, the Chief Executive of the Princes Regeneration Trust would be visiting the site on 17 September 2014.

Ray also provided further information on MDT and its projects in a briefing paper (attached).

3 Minehead Vision Group (MVG)

- (a) *What are the details of the public consultation that took place prior to the production of the MVG Minehead business plan?* - Corinne Matthews, Regeneration and Tourism Manager for West Somerset Council, responded in that the Action Plan, which was 'owned' by MVG had recently been refreshed and was about to go out for wider consultation; MVG were currently planning on how to do this most effectively. The Business Plan was the MVG Manager's funded business plan (funded from Seaside Strategy Funding) and consultation on this was undertaken with MVG, Minehead Area Panel and various other groupings including business networks, Chamber of Trade, the wider membership of MDT, etc.
- (b) *Are all members of MDT briefed by MVG and encouraged to take an active interest in the work of the Group and also have a positive regular input into the business plan and its updates?* - Corinne replied that MVG was keen to communicate as effectively as it could with all stakeholders. MTC had three representatives on MVG and the Chair of MVG was recently asked to present to MTC and talk about the Group's activity. Both MVG and MTC were working hard to try and improve levels of interest, input and communications.
- (c) *Who are the current members of MVG?* Corinne replied that MVG comprised representatives from the following organisations: WSC (three reps), YMCA, MTC (three reps), SCC, MDT, Minehead Chamber of Commerce, Additional Business Representation (non-High Street), Voluntary Sector, Skills/Education Sector (West Somerset College and Somerset Skills and Learning), Young People (Minehead Eye), Revive Minehead, Regal Theatre, ARTlife, West Somerset Railway and Butlins.

4 Minehead Town Council (MTC)

- (a) *From an answer I got at the annual MTC Town Meeting about who owns the Minehead Town/Parish plan I believe that the future direction for Minehead and Alcombe does not lie with all the elected or co-opted members of MTC but mainly with WSC, Minehead Development Trust and the Minehead Vision Group.*
- (b) *Can an explanation of the interdependent roles of these three organisations be given please* – Sue Sanders, Town Clerk of MTC, responded to say that this question could be discussed with the Mayor and invited Mr Blundell to come into the Town Hall at his convenience and speak to the Mayor, Cllr Smith and herself about this issue.
- (c) *With regards to the hedge at Minehead Recreation Ground on Queens Road - accepting the need to protect nesting birds why was it necessary to have to*

request, after both vertical hedge faces had been cut, that the top also be cut? Part was done within two hours of the request but one stretch still remains uncut. – Sue replied that she had spoken to the Grounds staff who informed her that the hedge would be finished by the end of this week (week commencing 8 September) as long as the weather remained reasonable.

- (d) *What will be the benefits of the new MTC website and are there any plans for a Facebook presence to mirror other Minehead Facebook pages? Such a Facebook page may encourage wider involvement of the voting public in the work of the Council?* – Sue replied that there was no problem with a Facebook page but that it may incur extra staff costs so that monitoring may be carried out at all times in order for questions to be dealt with when they arose.
- (e) *Who is responsible for maintaining the zig-zag once regarded as an asset for Minehead? My main concern is the neglect of the triangular park accessed directly off Northfield Road and Quay Lane where there are seats covered with undergrowth.* - Both Sue and West Somerset Council responded to say that the Zig Zags/Marina Gardens were maintained by WSC. A plan of this area could be found on the West Somerset Council website: www.westsomersetonline.gov.uk/Docs/Grounds-Maintenance-Maps/Minehead/Minehead--The-ZigZags.aspx All the grounds maintenance works were mapped and available on the website for members of the public to view: www.westsomersetonline.gov.uk/Tourism--Leisure/Parks-and-Open-Spaces/Grounds-Maintenance/Minehead-Maps. Darren Hill, who was in charge of the grounds maintenance team had been made aware of Mr Blundell's concerns. Chris Hall also commented to say that the ownership of the benches was not clear and that they were in need of repair.
- (f) *Have MTC any plans to encourage West Somerset College students to attend Council meetings in order to raise awareness in the next generation?* – Sue responded to say that this question could also be discussed with the Mayor (as per point b above).
- (g) *Have MTC any plans to encourage more members of the public to attend Council meetings in order to raise civic awareness?* – Sue responded to say that this question could also be discussed with the Mayor (as per point (b) above). Also new regulations meant that members of the public with permission could now video and record, etc. any council meeting. Councils could also hold meetings at any premises (not licenced premises) that may make it easier for members of the public to attend. A person only had to talk to Sue about their requirements and she would see what she could do.

5 West Somerset Council (WSC)

- (a) *Has a budget been agreed for Blenheim Gardens sufficient to ensure that not too much dependency is made of volunteers and there is no need in future to 'find' additional pots of money to allay residents and adverse visitor comments?* – Chris Hall responded to say that there was no additional budget for this area, the Open Space Manager was revising how the maintenance of the Gardens was delivered and was now able to move a wider pool of resources to cover employee absences. Volunteers would remain a key way of delivering routine maintenance in the Gardens. There were additional financial pressures as WSC thought that an agreement had been put in place for MTC to pay for the plants in the Gardens. WSC purchased them on this basis but MTC had confirmed that this was not the case and their contribution was a one-off in a previous year. Either a new agreement would need to be made or other ways of reducing plant costs would need to be considered.

Corinne also responded to say that MVG, using Seaside Strategy Funding, had paid for the refurbishment of the bandstand.

- (b) *Have WSC any plans to encourage West Somerset College students to attend Council meetings in order to raise civic awareness in the next generation?* Cllr Stuart Dowding, Chairman of WSC, responded in that the Council usually supported the holding of Pupil Parliaments at West Somerset House, which were organised by the schools, and he made every effort to attend. The last Pupil Parliament was held in June 2014. These Pupil Parliaments were aimed at a younger age group than those at the College, however, he was open to ideas on how a similar forum could be set up to benefit the students at the College.
- (c) *Have WSC any plans to encourage more members of the public to attend Council meetings in order to raise civic awareness?* Cllr Stuart Dowding responded in that the WSC did not currently have any plans to encourage more members of the public to attend Council meetings, although the meetings were open to the public and more attendance would be welcomed. Forthcoming meetings were publicised on the Council website: <http://www.westsomersetonline.gov.uk/meetings>
- (d) *The recent edition of News Trader reported that the public were happy with the Council services. Was this active reporting by the newspaper or a statement issued by the Council? The article said that up to the end of June 667 replies had been received, what percentage of the households that could have replied does this represent? It highlights the things that were good but what are the ones that were unsatisfactory?* Paul Harper, Corporate Strategy and Performance Manager for Taunton Deane Borough Council and West Somerset Council, responded in that the Council had issued the press release which the News Trader had picked up on and published. The Council felt it was important, given the large number of residents who had kindly taken the time to complete the survey, to air the results. The survey itself was issued to each of the 17,600 households along with their Council Tax bill (for reasons of economy). Therefore, that was the potential sample size. The response rate equated to approximately 3.79% of the total number of households. The lowest levels of satisfaction were for the planning service. This was fairly consistent with surveys undertaken by other Councils and often was a product of the legitimate decision made rather than the standard of the planning service per se (eg, applicants who have had their applications refused were unlikely to be satisfied and neither were those who didn't want a development to take place, which had been given legitimate approval). A number of free-text comments were received as part of the survey, none specifically pointed to a particular issue with the planning service. Many responses were very complimentary of the Council. Of those who raised concerns, the majority related either to services for which WSC was not responsible (eg pot holes, roads, street lighting). For WSC services, grounds maintenance (grass cutting) and litter/dog fouling were the most frequently mentioned issues.

6 General Comments

- (a) *It would seem to me that in a time of financial pressure from personal experience a minority of rate/tax payers services are only effectively delivered when complaints are made.*
- (b) *It could be helpful if all agencies could confirm that they are confident that their procedures in terms of management and, very importantly supervision, are capable of coping with these financial pressures effectively in order to minimise complaints and repeat reports via third party websites such as*

'fixmystreet'. Penny James, Chief Executive for Taunton Deane Borough Council and West Somerset Council, responded in that WSC had a performance management system that should ensure that programmed work was done competently and on time. Sometimes their procedures and systems did breakdown and errors occurred. They relied on the public to report or feedback when the Council had got it wrong. Complaints were tracked to establish any patterns or underlying issues which then needed to be dealt with. Budget pressures created more pressure on staff and systems, but if expectations matched the budget available then this should be manageable.

- (c) *Some description of how forward planning and prioritisation decisions are made would be helpful.* Penny James responded in that Councillors collectively agreed the priorities of the Council. These should reflect the priorities of the electorate and those things WSC were statutorily obliged to deliver. These priorities then formed part of the Council's forward-looking Corporate Strategy. The Medium Term Financial Plan would then be forecasted based on those priorities and statutory demands.

These two strategic documents steered the annual budget setting and work programme/plans. Progress on these was then reviewed on a quarterly basis, linking into the performance management system referred to in (b) above.

- (d) *Perhaps the correct method of reporting problems could be outlined and consideration be given to each agency reporting on the number of complaints received at each Panel meeting?* – Sarah advised that each of the three local authorities could be contacted in a number of different ways, as per their 'contact' webpage:

www.westsomersetonline.gov.uk/Home/Contact-Us

www.somerset.gov.uk/contact-us/

www.mineheadtowncouncil.co.uk/contact.html

5. Minutes of the Meeting held on 11 June 2014

Matters of Accuracy

The Minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

Matters Arising

Item 2a – Overgrown hedge alongside the properties opposite Sainsbury Hall: Sue advised that Mr Gray had provided full details of the hedge, etc. and this had been pursued by Minehead Town Council. John Gray added that the hedge was to be cut within the next 14 days by the contractors who should have done the work previously.

Item 2b – Student parking across the road from West Somerset College in the Ellicombe Meadow estate: Colin Isherwood confirmed that double yellow lines had been painted for about 50 yards along the Ellicombe Meadow access road. No problems had since been encountered of students parking along the road.

Item 2c – Drivers blocking the entrance to the flats along Warren Road and whether a yellow hatched box could be provided to keep the access free and whether the roundabout at the bottom of Seaward Way could be looked at with regards to vehicles waiting on the roundabout: The meeting were advised that the issues had

been taken to Minehead Town Council and Terry Venner had taken them up too. The hatching on Seaward Way was in the work plan.

Item 2d – Mandy to investigate whether the playing fields in Minehead could be put on the Minehead App: Mandy apologised as she had not yet done this.

ACTION: Mandy Chilcott to investigate whether the playing fields in Minehead could be put on the Minehead App.

Item 3 – State of the double yellow lines along North Road, Station Terrace and Glenmore Road: David Sanders expressed concern with the state of the double yellow lines and Terry Venner advised that he had asked SCC for all lines to be checked before the Winter.

Item 12 – Gail Everitt asked whether there were any plans to clear the drains on the seafront before the Summer Festival in August: Gail advised that the drains had been partly done by WSC. 45 tonnes of sand had been removed and another 20 tonnes needed to be removed in order to clear the gullies. Costings were being sought.

6. Minehead Vision Group – an update

A report had been prepared by Corinne Matthews, Regeneration & Tourism Manager with West Somerset Council, which Sandra read out, as follows:

This quarter the Minehead Vision Group refreshed its action plan and would be going out to wider consultation on this during the Autumn. The Events Group comprising Cllr Richard Lillis, Cllr Paul Grierson (up to and including the Harbour Festival), Cllr Andrew Hadley (Summer Festival) and Cllr Roger Thomas (MTC) supported by Cllr Karen Mills/Cllr Mandy Chilcott, Graham Sizer, Robert Downes and Nicki MacLean had been working extremely hard, culminating in a very successful Summer Festival.

Minehead Vision Group had also been supporting/helping to shape a variety of project proposals for the use of the Morrisons S106 funding – which had the intention of improving the linkage between the supermarket and the town centre. MTC were consulted on these proposals on 9 September.

7. Minehead Development Trust – an update

Ray Tew reported the following:

Minehead Development Trust (MDT) comprised five amateurs and volunteers working within the Localism Act, to secure the Old Hospital site for the community. They were also the accountable body for the post of the Vision Manager, and sat on the Minehead Vision Group, but there was no other working together. It had been one year since the expiry of the moratorium for the Old Hospital being registered as a community asset and they were now renewing this to obtain another six months in order to finally try to purchase the Old Hospital. After this time there would be no further opportunities to acquire the building, as it was believed that it would go to auction.

8. Highway Matters

David Peake reported the following

Completed Highway Works:

Surface dressing at West Street, Minehead.

Surface dressing at Hopcott Road, Minehead. The road was tarred and chipped then rolled in by traffic. After a few days it was swept and then again at regular intervals.

Andrew Hadley said that he had received complaints about white cars, houses and verges after the surface dressing along Hopcott Road. David advised that the amount of dust had been unexpected and that in order to obtain compensation complainants needed to write into the West Somerset Highways Depot in Mart Road. Chris Jones thought that drivers exceeding the speed limit of 20mph along the road had not helped with the problem of dust raising. Colin Isherwood added that he used to be a highways engineer and the road needed washing. He had also noted that a stretch of it was rippling.

Future Highway Works:

Surface dressing at Park Street at the end of September – *Since the meeting David has advised that this has been postponed to 6 October for four evenings.*

Surface dressing in Bampton Street was to take place on 2 October but had been postponed and no new date was available at the current time.

Kilton Corner in Kilve would be closed for highway works from 7pm on 23 September to 7am on 24 September.

The proposed roundabout at Washford Cross would be soon commencing construction and this would run until July. Two-way traffic would be allowed and there may be traffic lights, but the A39 would not be closed. However, during this time the road by Tropiquaria to Watchet would be closed and buses would have to run through Williton and Doniford to reach Watchet.

BT fibre optic broadband was heading towards Minehead. The cabinets were in place in Minehead and the cabling was now at Williton.

South of Dunster on the A396 Wessex Water would be undergoing road works after Christmas for three months, which would involve a road closure. The cobble enhancement scheme and work in respect of the new doctors surgery in Dunster would be done at the same time.

9. Burning Issues

Chris Jones of the Devon & Somerset Fire and Rescue Service reported the following:

Operational News

- Minehead Crews attended 50 operational calls during the last quarter. These included eight road traffic collisions both serious and minor, and a number of small property fires. Crews also attended a number of agricultural related fires as to be expected at this time of year. These included three tractor and machinery fires along with attending two barn fires. There were also several special service calls to assist other agencies and two fires in commercial buildings. Crews had also been in attendance at a number of domestic smoke alarm calls.
- There were no cases of deliberately ignited fires during the last quarter in the Minehead area.
- With the commencement of cooler weather, owners of properties with log fires and log burners were being encouraged to be prepared and have their chimneys swept before using them. Birds may have nested as well as the usual build up from the previous year. This was in association with the National Fire Kills

Campaign Chimney Fire Safety Week which was running from 9 to 15 September (see attached leaflet).

- Gas Safety Week would be taking place from 15 to 21 September as part of the Fire Kills Campaign (see attached leaflet).

Community Safety News and Activities

- Following on from the successful Job Centre Plus Phoenix programme run from Minehead Fire Station earlier this year, another group called 'Active Plus' were running a similar scheme from the Station's community room facilities. They were working in partnership with the Job Centre and engaging in four six-week programmes with people over the age of 40 who were currently seeking employment. These sessions were designed to help boost confidence and team building. They were delivered by ex-servicemen and women who shared their backgrounds and struggles in order to help others move forward.
- There had also been several other Community Safety events run in the area. These included road traffic collision reduction work at both the Red Arrows Summer Festival and the Dunster Show. This involved the use of a crashed car from a real time drink driving incident. There were also plans to assist the Police at two more events at both West Somerset College and on Minehead Seafront during September. These would also be alcohol related.
- Finally a Road Safety Day, targeted at motorcyclists, was held on Minehead Seafront at the end of August.
- All these events had been in close partnership with the Police, Somerset County Council Road Safety and Ambulance teams.
- Public information could be sought from the website: www.dsfrs.gov.uk

Chris also advised that parking in and around Alcombe was shocking and meant that it took 12 minutes to go half-a-mile from the Fire Station to a property in Alcombe, whereas it should take five minutes. He urged drivers to be more thoughtful and not to park too close to junctions or too far from the kerb. Hayfield Road was also a problem with double parking, blocked vehicular accesses and blocked access to hydrants. Sandra advised that tenants of Magna houses in Hayfield Road had to pay Magna if they wished to put in a dropped kerb and for the privilege Magna increased their rent. She felt that rent should be reduced as an incentive to tenants to have dropped kerbs and therefore move their cars off the highway. As Tony Murray, Director of Magna, would be presenting Magna's annual report at the December meeting of the Minehead Area Panel it was agreed that this issue should be raised with Tony at this time.

ACTION: To raise the issue of dropped kerbs at Magna properties with Tony Murray at the Minehead Area Panel meeting on 10 December 2014.

Chris further advised that the Fire Service were changing the size of some of their trucks to suit current road conditions.

Ray Tew asked whether it was the case that fire hydrants no longer needed to be painted yellow. Chris affirmed that this was so, as onscreen maps within fire engines showed the crew where the hydrants were located. Complaints used to be received from members of the public about the ugliness of yellow fire hydrants!

10. Town Council Update

Sue Sanders reported the following:

- Meetings had been held with Penny James concerning Blenheim Gardens. £5,000 to £6,000 had been put into the Gardens which had enabled a big improvement.
- West Somerset Council had not cleaned out the drains before on the seafront. Now with Penny's help this was being done.
- New play equipment for Culvercliffe play area (one of five play areas in Minehead) could now be provided following the securing of £6,250 of S106 funding from West Somerset Council, £1,000 from Minehead Town Council and £50 from Somerset County Council. SCC had also provided £500 for the health and fitness equipment in the King George IV recreation ground.
- The cemetery staff were cutting the grass in Minehead South.
- 132 allotment plots and five recreation grounds were owned by Minehead Town Council.

Andrew Hadley asked why there had been very few concerts held in Blenheim Gardens during the Summer. Sue Sanders said that about four/five groups/bands had played in Blenheim Gardens during the Summer and Ray Tew explained that for many years ARTlife had organised the band concerts via a Service Level Agreement with West Somerset Council. ARTlife, in turn, had more recently engaged the services of Superact to book the bands, etc. However, as ARTlife's funding from WSC had reduced, this year it could no longer afford to pay Superact. Superact had hoped to find additional funding to put on the band concerts, but had been unable to do so. Whilst constraints on funding continued therefore, the band concerts were unlikely to take place, but they would return in the future when funding allowed.

Mandy Chilcott added that the bandstand and sound system had been refurbished in recent years due to Seaside Strategy Funding.

11. District Council Update

Penny James reported the following:

- Blenheim Gardens public conveniences were re-opened on Monday, 31 March for the Summer. They would close for the Winter on Monday, 27 October 2014. The main ladies and gents facilities at The Carousel public conveniences on Warren Road were also re-opened on 31 March and would also close for the Winter on 27 October, however the two unisex public conveniences would remain open.
- Council had approved additional funds in July 2014 to pay for the clearance of the drains and gulleys along the seafront in Minehead. Work had taken place during the week commencing 28 July. In five shifts 45 tonnes of sand had been removed. It was estimated that it would take about another three shifts and the removal of approximately 20 more tonnes of sand to clear the gullies. Further work was required to clear the 450mm drain where there was approximately 40 tonnes of sand, which would take about 6/7 days to remove. Work was ongoing to obtain costs for these works.
- After a few initial technical difficulties which resulted in the webcam being off-line, the Harbour webcam was now up and running and had now had in excess of 40,000 views since being installed in May, with over 750 viewing on Red Arrows day. The webcam could be accessed via www.mineheadharbour.co.uk. The process by which businesses could advertise on the webcam site was now in place and would be actioned in September. With the introduction of the monitoring of the Watchet cameras, the team in the Control Room were now

busier than ever and were continuing to seek more volunteers to assist them (see Police Report above).

- The cycle/footpath and lighting between Morrisons and the West Somerset Railway had now been completed. Contact with SCC's legal team was now awaited in order to revise the present agreement in place for the two Councils. The intention was that SCC would adopt the entire cycle/footpath from Seaward Way to Station Road car park.
- A replacement flagpole had been installed at Minehead Harbour in July. An order had been raised to redecorate the Harbour shelter and the Harbour Master's office/Fishing Tackle Kiosk. A replacement metal galvanised post was to be fitted next to the Fishing Tackle Kiosk to prevent vehicles accessing the Harbour.

Sandra thanked Penny for her report and welcomed her to the meeting as the Council officer for Minehead Area Panel, replacing James Barraah.

12. County Council Update

Christine Lawrence reported the following:

- She had met with the Crown Estate on 8 August to express concern about the sale of Crown properties in West Somerset. She had spoken to Ken Jones, who was employed by the Crown Estate to write the policy and who was now employed to deliver the policy. He had failed to consult with the local authorities, housing organisations/RSLs and did not want to do so now. Christine felt that it was a 'done deal'. The Crown wished to use the money raised to purchase retail land and land in London.
- Minehead Town Council were happy to progress the idea of the pedestrian crossing on Bircham Road and would be looking at either a Small Improvement Scheme bid or S106 monies.
- A meeting would be held regarding road closures at the end of October in Dunster Tithe Barn. Anyone concerned about road closures could attend. Date?

Terry Venner reported the following:

- He was concerned that the construction of the Washford Cross roundabout and the roundabout at Bishops Lydeard would be undertaken at the same time. David explained that as they were developer-led schemes and would be done by external bodies, SCC had less control over the timing of the schemes.

Mandy Chilcott informed the meeting that the number of A boards in Minehead town centre was on the increase. It was noted that modest signs were allowed, but they could be removed by SCC if they were deemed to be a risk to health and safety, and the owners of the boards could be prosecuted.

13. Any Other Business

Forthcoming Events

Maureen Smith reported that a Cuckoo Meadow Play Area Consultation Event would be held on Thursday 2 October at Sainsbury Hall, Sainsbury Road, Minehead. Open from 4.15pm to 6.45pm. This consultation event was to seek the views of local residents on their preferred pieces of play equipment and activities in the play area. These views would be sent to the Big Lottery for the application for Cuckoo Meadow.

Maureen added that eleven eco homes around Minehead would be open on Saturday, 20 September from 11am to 3pm and she had leaflets available giving further details (also available from the Energy Saving Centre in the car park in the Summerland Avenue).

Ray Tew advised that the Summer show at the Regal of the school version of Les Miserables had been outstanding. The new Autumn brochure for the Regal Theatre was now available.

14. Date & Venue of Future Meetings

Future meetings to be held on:

Wednesday, 10 December 2014 at The Avenue Methodist Church Hall, The Avenue, Minehead at 6.30pm.

Wednesday, 11 March 2015 at St Michael the Archangel Church Hall, Quarry Close, Alcombe at 6.30pm.