

Minehead Area Panel

Notes of meeting held on 12 December 2012 at St Michael the Archangel Church Hall, Quarry Close, Minehead

Present:

Sandra Slade (Chair)	Member of the Public
Bruce Lang	West Somerset Council
Cllr Paul Grierson	West Somerset Council
Cllr Andrew Hadley	West Somerset Council
Cllr David Sanders	West Somerset Council (part of meeting)
Cllr Maureen Smith	West Somerset Council/Transition Minehead & Alcombe
Cllr Brenda Maitland-Walker	Somerset County Council
Ray Tew	Minehead Development Trust
Brian Cull	Somerset County Council Traffic Management
David Peake	Somerset County Council Area Highways
Chris Jones	Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service
Anne Clarke	Manor Road Neighbour Watch Co-ordinator
Colin Isherwood	Member of the Public
Cath Isherwood	Member of the Public
Jean Davies	Member of the Public
Margaret Mundy	Member of the Public
Ivor Priscott	Member of the Public
Irene Priscott	Member of the Public
Victor Rich	Member of the Public
Ken Sims	Member of the Public
Tony Bullen	Member of the Public
John Vicary	Member of the Public
Sarah Wilsher	West Somerset Council

1. Welcome, Introduction and Apologies

Sandra Slade welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies for absence were received from Penny Dobbin (Church of England), Cllr Doug Ross (West Somerset Council), Jenny Lennon-Wood (Minehead Development Trust), Adrian Dyer (West Somerset Council), Meigan Lyons, Graham Sizer (Minehead Chamber of Trade), PC Charlie Fitzpatrick, Trevor Short.

2. Have Your Say – Community Issues/Concerns

A number of issues were raised as follows:

- (a) *John Vicary was concerned about students from West Somerset Community College (WSCC) parking in The Shires. The new headteacher had banned students from parking on the College grounds and had arranged for students to park at the Rugby Club. However, it was easier and more convenient for them to park in local residential streets such as The Shires. Occasionally they were parking illegally, ie too near the junction and the number of cars meant that The Shires became a single track road, which was difficult to enter/exit at the top, particularly for larger vehicles such as those involved with refuse collection. With the forthcoming new College Gardens development starting to become available for occupancy from March 2013 the situation would become exacerbated as the amount of traffic through The Shires increased, also the number of newly qualified drivers would increase during the School year. Mrs Comber had written*

to all residents in The Shires asking residents to phone the College if students were parking in The Shires. John had done so.

Most residents did not want yellow lines, which would also make it difficult for visitors and trades people to park and John wondered whether a residents only parking scheme would work in The Shires.

Brian Cull advised that residents only parking schemes were not always the best solution. Parking for limited periods or periods where no parking was permitted should be considered, either scheme likely to prevent long-term parking. A local traffic engineer from Highways could work with residents to come up with the best solution.

ACTION: it was agreed that as Paul Grierson would soon be meeting with Gaynor Comber, he would raise this issue with her, and Sandra agreed to write to Mrs Comber on behalf of the Panel.

Sandra Slade wrote to the Headteacher of WSCC regarding this issue on 13 December 2012.

- (b) *Paul Grierson and residents from Alcombe expressed their concern with illegal and thoughtless parking/congestion in Church Street, particularly in the vicinity of Raglan Lodge, which meant that with reduced visibility of oncoming traffic pedestrians were at risk of being knocked down. In addition, emergency vehicles would have problems of access and the Somerset Waste Partnership lorry was unable to go up Church Street, meaning the workers had to collect the refuse by hand, leaving the lorry parked at an end and potentially causing problems for other road users.*

David Peake advised Paul that Sue Sanders, Minehead Town Council Clerk, should raise the issue with Richard Newby, Traffic Engineer at West Somerset Highways. Also that the Police should be kept informed. Brenda Maitland-Walker could also take up the issue with Highways.

ACTION: Paul Grierson to talk to Sue Sanders about her raising the issue with Richard Newby of Highways. Brenda Maitland-Walker to talk to Somerset County Council Highways.

- (c) *John Vicary and his neighbour were concerned with the state of the bus stop on Bircham Road by the West Somerset Community College. The immediate area around the bus stop marker post was mainly soil with some grass and when damp became muddy, slippery and dangerous. Footwear also could get soiled making walking more hazardous. Could whoever was responsible for this area provide a hardstanding at the stop?*

ACTION: As the bus stop area was under SCC Highway's control, David Peake agreed to consult with the Public Transport section at Somerset County Council to see if they could do some minor works – ie put tarmac down.

It was also noted that a hedge needed cutting on the Taunton to Minehead side of the road, by Dene Lodge, as it was difficult to see the bus stop.

ACTION: David Peake to investigate.

3. Review of Civil Parking Enforcement Service for on-street parking in West Somerset – presentation by Brian Cull, Group Manager, Traffic Management, Somerset County Council

Brian Cull gave the meeting a presentation on the Civil Parking Enforcement Service (see attached slides). Points to note included the following:

- CEO = Civil Enforcement Officer
- In Taunton drivers can pay for their parking over the phone – cashless parking. This could be rolled out to other parts of Somerset, including West Somerset.
- About 400 penalty charge notices (PCNs) had been issued in Minehead since CPE commenced on 11 June 2012, which is a period of about 450 deployed hours).
- Most PCNs were issued in The Avenue.
- The number of PCNs issued and the number of hours deployed are the criteria used to monitor the CPE service.
- CEOs had been spotted in Church Street, Alcombe, but not very regularly and it would be useful if they patrolled this area more frequently, particularly in light of recent parking problems.
- Car park income had reduced over the past few months – this was because CPE of on-street parking had led to people only parking for a limited period of ten minutes or so in The Parade, etc. meaning that other car users did not have to resort to using a car park.
- Due to a higher turnaround of vehicles parking in the main shopping streets trade should be better.
- The money obtained from PCNs went back into running the CPE service and any surplus income had to be reinvested into traffic and traffic related projects.
- NSL, the company used to receive the monies, operate the service, etc was based in Oldham. Somerset County Council, who had checked the NSL's financial standing, had successfully awarded NSL the contract. It was noted that NCP used to be part of NSL.

On behalf of Graham Sizer and in his absence, Sandra Slade raised the following issues:

- Parking along the seafront in Minehead is £2.60 for two hours, whereas in Burnham-on-Sea it is £1.60 for two hours. Is conformity expected in the future?

Brian explained that the respective Local Authority currently set these charges, however, in the future it would be the decision of a Somerset County Council Cabinet Member following officer recommendation.

The off-street and on-street parking charges, when both under District Council control, tied up, but where one Authority controls off-street and another on-street then the charges no longer 'matched'.

- Customers have been caught parking outside the chip shop in Bampton Street and the fish bar in Alcombe when they have been collecting their orders. Could the traffic wardens patrol elsewhere between 12.30 and 2pm, particularly until the current appeal is resolved?

Brian advised that the complaint had been received and was going through the proper channels. In terms of Traffic Regulation Orders no changes had been made. The CEOs follow guidance in carrying out their duties. They cannot make favours for particular streets nor make judgements. The aggrieved person

(person issued with the PCN) can challenge the PCN with Somerset County Council and, if this fails they can go to the Traffic Penalty Tribunal (group of lawyers who sit in Manchester) who will consider whether the PCN has been issued fairly or not and their decision has to be obeyed.

Sandra thanked Brian for his informative and interesting presentation.

4. Minutes of the Meeting held on 12 September 2012

Matter of Accuracy

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

Matters Arising

None.

5. Strategic Vision for Minehead – an update

Brenda Maitland-Walker reported that a Visioning Manager had been appointed and the next meeting of the Minehead Visioning Group would be held on 13 January 2013.

6. Minehead Development Trust – an update

In Jenny Lennon-Wood's absence Ray Tew, Chair of the Regal Theatre and Trustee of MDT, reported the following:

Minehead Development Trust had spent the last four years working to try and obtain the old hospital for community use. They were currently liaising with Somerset NHS Partnership Trust to obtain a realistic valuation of the building. Covenants by previous owners, the Luttrell family, had been put on the building when it was enlisted as a hospital during the Second World War and these were now being sought to find out what they said. Public consultation had taken place a few years ago on the use of the old hospital, which had endorsed MDT's aims and on 5 December 2012 West Somerset Council's Cabinet had approved the hospital as a community asset, which gives the community/MDT first dibs on the building when it comes to being sold. MDT set up the Minehead Information Centre which had been successfully operating since May 2012. In addition, MDT wished to take on West Somerset Council owned Clanville nursery.

Ray advised that the old hospital car park was being used by the contractors working on the Regal Theatre and had permission to do so. It was noted that on occasion the lights and heating in the old hospital would be switched on by the NHS Partnership Trust.

7. Police Report

In the absence of a representative of Somerset & Avon Police, there was no report given at the meeting.

However, for information, PC Charlie Fitzpatrick, Alcombe Beat Manager, advised after the meeting that there had been an 8.6% reduction in crime and 104 fewer victims than last year. The current detection rate was 34.8%. Local issues discussed at the meeting were passed back to PC Fitzpatrick for dissemination to the local beat teams.

8. Highway Matters

David Peake reported the following:

Completed Highway Works:

Water main refurbishment at the Alcombe Road/Hopcott Road mini roundabout (A39)
Carriageway resurfacing at the Alcombe Road/Hopcott Road mini roundabout (A39)
Drainage repairs along Poundfield Road and Paganel Road

A39 Emergency Routes Scheme – in conjunction with the Police, Highways were looking at the Bridgwater to Minehead road, the Taunton to Minehead road and the Minehead to Lynmouth road, breaking the routes down into sections/phrases. If an accident occurred on a particular section then a particular diversion route would be put in place. The Police would be in location and Highways would be installing and modifying road signs which would be self-explanatory. The signage would be completed on site by the end of March 2013. The signage was being funded from the Small Improvements Schemes section of the Highways budget. There would also be signs explaining where the accident was.

David had brought some plans along and requested Panel members' comments on the Emergency Routes Scheme.

ACTION: Panel members to send comments on the A39 Emergency Routes Scheme to Sarah on email: swwilsher@westsomerset.gov.uk or tel: 01984 635296, who will forward them to David Peake, SCC Highways.

Brian advised that www.travelsomerset.com provided live traffic information on the route from Taunton to Minehead, information on when the gritters were and where roadworks were situated, etc.

Sandra Slade, raised an issue, on behalf of Minehead resident, Trevor Short, who was unable to attend the meeting. Mr Short was concerned with speeding in the Parks area, particularly in relation to the Woodcombe turn-off and wondered if this could be monitored and flashing signs installed.

David Peake advised that Speed Indicator Devices (SIDs) were available from Somerset County Council for those Town/Parish Councils who showed an interest in them and stated where they would wish to site them. Mr Short's email was passed to Cllr Paul Grierson for consideration by Minehead Town Council.

ACTION: Minehead Town Council to be asked to consider Trevor Short's request regarding obtaining a Speed Indicator Device from SCC for use in the Parks area of Woodcombe.

9. Burning Issues

Chris Jones reported the following:

- DSF&R had responded to over 50 emergency calls and 1300 calls in two days due to the flooding. Unfortunately motorists stuck in floodwater had prevented the Service getting to fire call-outs
- They had rescued the residents at Blue Anchor Caravan Park.
- They had attended the recent traffic accident at Bilbrook.
- They had attended seven property fires, including the fatality at Trinity Way.
- They had attended barn fires.
- They had attended a fire at the paper mill.

- Their community work was ongoing and they were working on a project with WSCC in bringing students closer to working with the elderly members of the public.
- On 24 December the Service would get the news from Government on their grant for next year. They were expecting a cutback of between £11.8 million and £15.3 million out of a budget of about £70 million. More of their grant would therefore be put into the prevention budget to try and reduce fire incidents, etc. Today there were 200 call outs compared to 350-400 call outs ten years ago. However, the number of road traffic collisions was on the increase.

10. Town Council Update

Paul Grierson reported the following:

- The Town Council were working with WSCC and had given them an allotment at Marshfield Road for the use of students.
- Minehead Town Council would be maintaining the roundabouts for Somerset County Council, although Ellicombe roundabout was actually in Dunster Parish. WSCC would be designing the flowerbeds, etc. for the roundabouts.
- Students were causing problems at the Cross Farm Park and King George IV playing field in Alcombe. The Town Council wished to develop a BMX site at the bottom of Marshfield Road using planning obligations/S106 funding, and also erect shelters where students could congregate.
- Minehead Town Council were supporting a funding application for S106/planning obligations monies for the old church by the fire station on Hopcott Road to be used as a community venue – family centre, soft play area, etc.

11. District Council Update

Please see the attached sheet. In addition, Bruce reported on the viability of West Somerset Council (WSC) in that a report issued by the Local Government Association (LGA) on the future viability of the Council had been made public. The Local Authority had been saying for a number of years that it would not be viable in the long-term and had asked the LGA to look into this. The LGA had talked to WSC and neighbouring councils and had agreed that the Council was not viable. Central Government had now become more interested in the situation and wanted WSC to continue. WSC was not in a unique position, with about 14 other rural sparsely populated Councils following behind.

Bruce confirmed that the Council was not dead, but had big challenges to overcome. At a meeting of full Council that afternoon it had been agreed to investigate with due diligence the practicality of becoming either a commissioning authority or a collaborative authority sharing management and services and in this respect it had been agreed to work with Taunton Deane Borough Council to draft a business case for the commissioning or sharing of services, management and staff.

Whilst no decision had been taken to hold a referendum to increase council tax above the capping limit it was agreed that this would remain an option in order to provide a reasonable level of services.

Tony Bullen expressed his concern that Minehead would be badly affected by West Somerset's decline. He had read the LGA report which had recommended that the Aquasplash site be marketed. As the swimming pool had been set up for the community he felt that the public should be consulted if this happened. Areas within Exmoor National Park were protected by Exmoor National Park Authority for tourism,

but this was not the case with Minehead. He wondered what had happened to the monies obtained by selling the Vulcan Road site to Morrisons.

Tony added that WSC was the smallest District Council at the moment, but pre-2008 there were three smaller councils: Teesdale, Berwick-on-Tweed and South Shropshire, all of them now surviving as parts of unitary authorities. Minehead would prosper more under a unitary authority as there would be less duplication of services. Maureen Smith advised that the Government would not contemplate any more unitary authorities at the present time. Bruce added that only a few years ago a high percentage of the public did not want a Somerset unitary authority and that if West Somerset did become part of a unitary authority Minehead/West Somerset would have a much smaller Member representation.

Tony was also concerned with the lack of communication direct from WSC regarding it's current/future position. He had only found out the news from the West Somerset Free Press. Bruce advised that a press release had been issued by the Council and Ray Tew suggested using the Council website for up-to-date news (www.westsomersetonline.gov.uk).

12. County Council Update

Brenda Maitland-Walker advised that Somerset County Council's debt of £360m had now been heavily reduced.

13. Any Other Business

Somerset Minerals Plan: Preferred Options

Sandra reported that in January 2013 Somerset County Council planned to launch a consultation on the 'preferred options' of the Somerset Minerals Plan, which would form part of the Minerals and Waste Local Development Framework. An information sheet was available to take away. However, all relevant documents could be found on the County Council's website: www.somerset.gov.uk/mineralsandwaste and the Preferred Options consultation could be accessed via <http://www.somersetconsults.org.uk>

Energy Saving Centre

Maureen Smith reported that the new Energy Saving Centre in Summerland Road car park was becoming increasingly busy.

14. Date & Venue of Future Meetings

Future meetings to be held on:

Wednesday 13 March 2013 at St Michael the Archangel Church Hall, Alcombe
Wednesday 13 June 2013
Wednesday, 11 September 2013
Wednesday, 11 December 2013
Wednesday, 12 March 2014