

Minehead Area Panel

Notes of meeting held on 14 December 2011 at St Michael the Archangel Church Hall, Quarry Close, Minehead

Present:

Cllr Sandra Slade (Chair)	Member of the Public
Adrian Dyer	West Somerset Council
Cllr David Sanders	West Somerset Council
Cllr Richard Lillis	West Somerset Council
Cllr Maureen Smith	West Somerset Council/Transition Minehead & Alcombe
Cllr Paul Grierson	West Somerset Council/Minehead Town Council
PS Tom Mayberry	Avon & Somerset Police
PCSO Jon McAteer	Avon & Somerset Police
Andy Elliott	Transition Minehead & Alcombe
David Peake	Somerset County Council (Highways)
Penelope Dobbin	Church of England
Clara Lawrie	About My Area news website
Meigan Lyon	Member of the Public
Ken Sims	Member of the Public
John Vicary	Member of the Public
Martin Wilsher	West Somerset Council
Sarah Wilsher	West Somerset Council

1. Welcome, Introduction and Apologies

Sandra Slade welcomed everyone to the meeting and the new venue.

Apologies for absence were received from Jenny Lennon-Wood (Minehead Development Trust), Graham Sizer (Minehead Chamber of Trade), Marcus Kravis (Minehead Town Council), Cllr Brenda Maitland-Walker (Somerset County Council), Inspector Lisa Simpson (Avon & Somerset Police).

2. Have Your Say – Community Issues/Concerns

A number of issues were raised as follows:

(a) Graham Sizer had raised the issue of replacement paving in Friday Street.

Peter Owen from West Somerset Area Highways Office had replied to say that 'In relation to the paving in Friday Street I am unable to provide a timescale for these works as the budgets for the next financial year and beyond will not be confirmed until February 2012. However, work will be concentrated if necessary on renewing areas where defects exist, such as Blenheim Road where tree roots have pushed up the roadway surface'.

David Sanders advised that paving on Blenheim Road had just been re-done and Meigan Lyons informed the meeting that the pavement alongside Whitegate Road had been resurfaced.

(b) Graham Sizer had raised the issue of the half-demolished lamppost at the Butlins end of Seaward Way

The Highway Lighting Technician from Somerset County Council had replied to say that Balfour Beatty would be replacing the lighting column as their first job on Monday, 19 December 2011.

The lighting column was replaced in January 2012.

(c) *Graham Sizer had raised the issue of the damaged BT box opposite the bottom end of Friday Street outside Blockbusters.*

BT Openreach had advised that the 'site had been made safe' on 9 November 2011. However, as this was before Graham had raised his concerns, Openreach were asked on 7 December to check the site again and an engineer was 'hopefully' to investigate that same day (job no. WW8DCA77).

Maureen Smith stated that the BT box was currently wrapped in plastic and taped up. Sarah would follow up this issue with BT Openreach.

ACTION: Sarah to continue to follow up the issue of the damaged BT box outside Blockbuster.

The box was permanently repaired before Christmas, however between Christmas and New Year it was damaged again. BT made the area safe – barriers around the box, and on phoning BT Openreach on 13 January 2012 Sarah was informed that the work to permanently repair the box had been passed to BT's contractors but no date had been set for the work.

Richard Lillis provided an update on the section of the footpath between Morrisons and West Somerset Railway which was owned by West Somerset Council (Minehead Area Panel minutes of 8 June 2011, agenda item 8 refers). The majority of lights had been vandalised so the footpath was virtually in darkness. However, Corinne Matthews (Economic Regeneration Officer for West Somerset Council) had advised him that new high level lighting was to be installed, purchased from Section 106 monies, and West Somerset Railway would be putting up a new hedge and Morrisons had agreed to maintain the culvert.

3. Update on Minehead Eye – report by Molly Studley

Sandra advised that the report had not been received, but hopefully would come to a future meeting.

4. Emerging New Local Plan for West Somerset – report by Martin Wilsher, Principal Planning Policy Officer

Martin Wilsher reported that West Somerset Council (WSC) were working on a replacement Local Plan for the West Somerset District Local Plan 1999 to 2011. This Plan would cover all of the district outside of the Exmoor National Park (who had their own Local Plan) from 2012 to 2032. Consultations had taken place in recent years looking at where development should occur over the next 20 years and now WSC were writing policies rather than considering concepts. The policies were very strategic and did not address individual plots of land; they would enable future development within the district to be managed. The writing of detailed policy would follow these strategic policies.

At a Full Council meeting held on 15 November 2011 Members had decided on the geographical areas where future strategic directions of growth may take place. The overall strategy was to fall on Minehead, Watchet and Williton, and 80% of new house building over the last 20 years had taken place in these three areas. These

three settlements would be the best areas in which to concentrate new houses as they already had an infrastructure of shops, businesses, schools etc. so additional householders would not need to travel too far for their needs, which made the schemes sustainable. Another five areas had been considered, such as Stogursey – with the influx of workers for Hinkley C – but either the Parish (as in the case of Stogursey) had asked not to be put forward or the area had been rejected by Council. Minehead, being the largest settlement, would have to take the bulk of the new housing.

Consultation on the future direction of growth would take place on areas within the three main settlements – west and south of Minehead (up to Exmoor National Park) and 11 sub-areas.

The sub-areas included:

- The Mount – west of Minehead near the cemetery
- Land south of Hopcott Road between Middlecombe Cross and the Fire Station
- Land around and including the Rugby Club
- Land to the east of Seaward Way

Land to the west of Dunster Marsh was also to be consulted on.

Development would not go up to the boundary with Exmoor National Park and flooding issues would be taken into account.

The eight week consultation period was expected to start mid to late January 2012, leading to a document being produced based on the consultation responses by the Summer of 2012. An Examination in Public would follow in late 2012.

Information on the consultation could be found on the Council's website: <http://www.westsomersetonline.gov.uk/Council--Democracy/Council-Meetings/Full-Council/Full-Council---15-November-2011.aspx> (agenda item 10).

Martin explained that the proposals contained within the consultation exercise were based on information collected to date for the erection of 2,500 dwellings within West Somerset over the next 20 years, via a rolling programme which would be continuously reviewed. These would need to be mainly concentrated in Minehead, also Watchet and Williton. Other areas would not be totally excluded but there was no wish to increase traffic on the roads. Land was still being sought for both affordable and open market housing, plus mixed use sites (residential, business, retail, etc.).

Sandra asked whether there was really the demand for such a larger number of dwellings within West Somerset. Martin advised that the 2008 and 2009 Strategic Housing Market Assessments had shown that West Somerset had a problem with lack of housing, particularly affordable housing, and there was currently a very long waiting list for housing. This was exacerbated by the average price of a house in West Somerset being just over 14 times the annual average salary yet the banks would only lend 3.5 times the annual household income. The current definition of affordable social rent was 80% of the open market rent, although the Council's Housing Department's benchmark was 60%.

Affordable housing was usually provided as a 'by-product' of an open market housing development and linked to the development by means of a legal agreement. However, if the viability of a developer's scheme was affected by the number of affordable homes requested by the Council, then this number would need to be revised in order to ensure the scheme remained viable. The Council worked with Summerfield Homes who provide good developments of affordable housing with

higher proportions of affordable housing than normally expected. Larger builders were unlikely to show any interest.

Richard Lillis asked that as there was a shift in demand for 3-bed houses, would WSC be working with Summerfield and Magna to ensure affordable 3-bed houses? Martin replied that both developers and housing associations were aware of need based on surveys. Also the Council's Planning Obligations SPD (Supplementary Planning Document) provided a starting point for negotiations on the ratio of open market to affordable housing.

The Panel noted that once a house went onto the open market then there was no control over who bought it and 1 in 2 houses went to people from outside the area. Richard asked whether WSC could prevent people buying open market houses as second homes. Martin replied that this was not possible without legislation, and such law was unlikely given that Central Government did not want local authorities to interfere with free market forces. Adrian advised that local government could give a discount between 10% and 50% on council tax for second homes and that WSC gave the least discount (10%). Sandra felt that second and holiday homes drove up the cost of houses. Paul Grierson stated that he used to own a holiday home in West Somerset and that as he had visited the local attractions, etc. he had helped to put money into the local economy. He therefore felt that people who owned second/holiday homes should be encouraged.

5. Local Impacts of Hinkley

Unfortunately, Corinne Matthews was unable to attend the meeting and the paper to be presented had not been brought to the meeting. Adrian advised that the paper, entitled 'Hinkley Point C Project – Latest Update (Dec 2011)', would be put on the Council's website - <http://www.westsomersetonline.gov.uk/getattachment/Planning---Building/Planning/Hinkley-Point/Hinkley-Point-C---Latest-Update.pdf.aspx>, and it was emailed to Panel members on 15 December.

Adrian advised that West Somerset Council were not forgetting the impact Hinkley C would have on Minehead, particularly the tourism and housing markets. If anyone wished to make comments in respect of EDF Energy's application to the Infrastructure Planning Commission (IPC) for permission to build two nuclear reactors at Hinkley Point and associated development, they needed to register with the IPC. Registration had to take place on or before 23 January 2012 on an IPC form. If you did not register with the IPC then your comments would be ignored.

WSC would be attending meetings and compiling a Local Impact Report that identifies all the impacts that could occur across the district and the ways these impacts could be mitigated should be put into S106 agreements. WSC would be marketing the area as a whole using EDF monies and promoting the use of Taunton as a route into the area rather than via Bridgwater.

6. Minutes of the Meeting held on 14 September 2011

Matter of Accuracy

The Minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting, subject to the Councillor being referred to under agenda item 5 – Civil Parking Enforcement and On Street Parking, on page 3 – is named as Councillor Harvey Siggs (Cabinet Member for Highways dealing with CPE).

Matters Arising

Item 4 – Out of hours emergency cover by medical professionals in West Somerset: Sandra advised that Cllr Brenda Maitland-Walker had taken this issue to the County Council's Scrutiny Committee in October and had since met with Jan Hull of Somerset PCT. At the latter meeting the question of out of hours cover in West Somerset had arisen and Brenda had suggested that it may be a good idea for someone involved in the Out of Hours Service to make a presentation to the Area Panel and suggested Sandra be contacted via WSC. This contact was awaited.

It was not known whether the proposed meeting between the South Western Ambulance Services NHS Foundation Trust, the Somerset Partnership NHS Foundation Trust and representatives from Minehead Area Panel would go ahead and Sandra was awaiting further news from Brenda regarding this. Meigan Lyon suggested that Dr Edward Ford from Irnham Lodge Surgery be invited if a meeting was set up.

Richard Lillis reported that West Somerset Council's Scrutiny Committee had called for a meeting with the Somerset Partnership NHS Foundation Trust and NHS Somerset regarding the closure of beds at Williton Hospital.

Item 4 - Business waste collection and disposal: Adrian apologised for not yet contacting Somerset Waste Partnership to ascertain whether there were any plans to help businesses co-ordinate their waste collection and disposal. He would do this for the March meeting.

Item 5 – Civil Parking Enforcement and On Street Parking: Cllr Christine Lawrence had suggested that the Panel write to Councillor Harvey Siggs, Cabinet Member for Highways dealing with CPE (see Matter of Accuracy above) on behalf of the town of Minehead.

ACTION: It was agreed that the Panel should write to Councillor Harvey Siggs on behalf of the town of Minehead.

A letter was sent to Cllr Siggs in late December 2011 and a reply received in mid-January 2012 from Mr Brian Cull, Group Manager for Traffic Management at Somerset County Council, stating the following:

'It is anticipated that CPE will come into effect in June of this year. The establishment of CPE will bring a number of benefits for the residents and businesses of Minehead.

Firstly, the employment of dedicated parking attendants will ensure that the current parking restrictions are not abused. This will lead to much freer movement of traffic around the town and will ensure that businesses in particular will benefit from more timely deliveries and collections.

Secondly, by rigidly enforcing the time limits where on-street parking is permitted, businesses will benefit by shoppers and clients having easier access to their premises.

Thirdly, the establishment of CPE gives the opportunity to establish Residents Parking Zones in those areas currently affected by commuter and other vehicles.'

It was noted that the Police had undertaken a recent purge on illegal street parking in Minehead.

Adrian reported that Somerset County Council (SCC) wished to introduce Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) from 1 June 2012. SCC had applied to the Department

for Transport for permission to enact CPE and would shortly go out to tender to invite contractors to apply to enforce it. WSC was unsure at the moment as to whether to join CPE and like the other district councils in Somerset had only signed up in principle.

Item 8 – The Road Safety Partnership would be holding an event at Minehead Eye to educate youngsters on safe driving: Tom Mayberry advised that this event had been a success.

Item 8 – Martin Carnell to forward his presentation and contact details to Sarah for circulation to the Panel: Unfortunately, the presentation and contact details were not received, however, Devon & Somerset Fire and Rescue Services were now heavily publicising their community scheme of Participatory Budgeting in the local media.

Item 9 – Bryan Stevens to find out if there was any additional crime in Minehead on the day of the Summer Festival, Wednesday 10 August 2011: Tom Mayberry had found out that there had been one theft reported from a seafront arcade and two local people arrested for breach of bail conditions.

7. Strategic Vision for Minehead – an Update

Adrian reported that, although he had not been able to attend the last meeting of the Visioning Group held on 6 December, he understood that it had been poorly attended with little or no progress being made. WSC's Cabinet were frustrated at this lack of progress as there was money to be spent in Minehead which was not being used.

Minehead Development Trust update

Sandra advised that both Jenny Lennon-Wood and Graham Sizer were working on the submission of a bid for funding from the National Heritage Lottery in relation to the old hospital site.

8. Police Report

Within the sector the current detection rate was 36.5%, which was up 4.6% on the previous year, whilst the total sector crimes year to date was 1,256, which was an increase of 96 on the same time last year.

Current police priorities:

Morning – schools, shop thefts, drug activity and parking.

Afternoon – rural non-dwelling burglary patrols, licensed premises.

Night – Friday and Saturday from midnight to 3am – the night time economy in Minehead.

48 crimes had been committed by local people in Minehead over the past two weeks. These included assault (violence tended to occur around 2am on Sunday mornings around Wetherspoons), woundings, public order offences, non-dwelling burglaries, dwelling burglaries, fraud, criminal damage, domestic arguments, drug offences, offensive weapons and theft/lost property. In addition, Pubwatch had recently led to ten people being banned over the past five weeks due to bad behaviour.

Adrian asked whether Tom envisaged that there would be more crime with the construction work at Hinkley Point. Tom felt that Bridgwater would suffer more than Minehead. Adrian felt that increased CCTV would be needed in Minehead and asked whether the Police could raise this with the Infrastructure Planning Commission (IPC), particularly as with cuts in local government funding the local

authorities could not afford to run the CCTV, whereas EDF Energy would be able to both maintain and enhance the system.

Richard Lillis felt that a camera was required at the end of the Quay. Tom replied that more volunteers were needed at present to man the current CCTV cameras before thinking about increasing the number of cameras. Richard felt the lack of manpower was due to the amount of paperwork needed to be completed and that if this was reduced and simplified volunteers would be less likely to be put off.

Tom further informed the meeting that the rave in Nutcombe Bottom on 13 November had led to seven arrests for conspiracy and public nuisance and the equipment had been seized. 95% of people present at the rave had been non-residents.

Clara Lawrie expressed her disappointment that no press releases had been issued to the local media by the Police for the last few months and asked the reason for this. Tom explained that this task was no longer being done due to staff changes. However, press releases could be found on the Police website.

Ken Sims expressed his concern that there were people driving around with faulty headlights, illegible registration number plates, etc. and that a purge was needed. Tom advised that staff resources meant that purges into these things could not currently happen. Jon McAteer advised, however, that parking around the area of Alcombe surrounding the Britannia Inn had been looked at recently leading to parking tickets being issued.

9. **Highway Matters**

David Peake reported the following:

Completed works:

Carriageway resurfacing along Townsend Road
Drainage works at Parks Lane

Ongoing works:

Footway reconstruction along Blenheim Road
Footway resurfacing along Whitegate Road

Future works:

Carriageway resurfacing at Renscombe Court requiring a temporary road closure from 19 to 20 December inclusive.
Footway reconstruction along The Parade from 3 to 13 January inclusive.

It was noted that footways were inspected once per month.

David also advised that as part of the Local Transport Plan there was a proposal to put waiting restrictions in the vicinity of the junction between Paganel Road and Cher. A Traffic Regulation Order had been advertised and Somerset County Council had received representations in response to the proposal. He urged anyone who wished to make comments on the proposal to submit them now to the West Somerset Area Highway Office on Mart Road, as a decision would be made in the New Year. Richard stated that owners of homes along Cher were unhappy with the proposal as they would be unable to park outside their homes. Again, David stated that they should make representations.

David further reported that the 'salt run' had started last Friday eve, 9 December, which was later than in previous years. A patrol would be out tonight and again tomorrow morning and evening as the forecast was poor for tomorrow. Meigan stated that Exford had been very slippery this morning. David advised that salt had

been put on the roads, but the weather had changed and the rain had washed the salt away making the roads slippery when the temperature dropped. Low pressure and low temperatures were difficult weather conditions to deal with. David informed that the salt bins should have been filled and that if they were not full to contact County Highways on 0845 345 9155.

Maureen Smith asked why the bottom of Marshfield Road was virtually rubble. David explained that the highway stopped at the end of the tarmac. The area further on was not owned by a local authority. Adrian stated that it was probably owned by the people who owned the old farm house. The Panel agreed that it would be nice if the area could be turned into a proper turning area, but acknowledged that this would require much work including drainage, tarmacing, etc. and may need land from Minehead Town Council who own the nearby allotments. Sandra recalled that there had been a planning application on the land about 8 years ago for a dwelling and turning area, but that as it had needed Minehead Town Council land to work, the proposal had not materialised. The meeting were also informed that Minehead Town Council were considering putting in an application for the land as they did not know the owner.

10. Burning Issues

There was no report as there was no representation from the Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service.

11. District Council Update

Adrian reported the following:

- The West Somerset Strategic Partnership (WSSP) had been disbanded so no further representation from Minehead Area Panel was needed.
- The coach parking facility behind the West Somerset Railway was up and running.
- West Somerset Council and Minehead Town Council had agreed in principle to Minehead Town Council taking over the ownership and maintenance of Blenheim Gardens and Wellington Square in the future.
- There would be no winter closures of public conveniences, but this was not to say that closures next year would not be considered.
- A confidential report would be going to Cabinet in January regarding the sale of land off Seaward Way for housing – 49 units, of which 17 would be affordable.
- The Olympic torch relay would be going through Minehead, however, as Adrian had signed the Official Secrets Act he could not divulge the roads the torch would be carried along. Minehead Town Council had been asked if they wished to put on an event and Butlins would be organising a junior ‘Olympic’ style event. A photo shoot for the Olympic torch and nominees had not been held as branded clothing could not be worn for it and the Council may have had to purchase white t-shirts, etc. to be worn instead.
- The development of Hinkley C would have an impact on Minehead and work was being done on how the impacts could be mitigated, particularly in the areas of housing, tourism and community safety.

John Vicary and Meigan Lyon were unhappy with their wheelie bins being unstable and blown around in bad weather and also not being put in safe locations behind walls, etc. by the contractors once they had been emptied. Adrian advised that the implementation of Sort-It Plus had caused problems, for instance workers from Bridgwater had had to be called in to assist, and as they had a lack of local knowledge the care taken by the usual refuse workers had not taken place. Sandra

reported that a representative of the Somerset Waste Partnership would be coming to the March meeting of the Area Panel to discuss Sort-It Plus.

12. Any Other Business

Community Event

Penny Dobbin informed the Panel that a recent event in Exford had brought together organisations and agencies providing services to people on benefit, the elderly, etc., for example, Forum 21, Age UK, etc. She had put on a similar event in Torridge involving the voluntary and community sector and statutory bodies, as well as leisure organisations, which had proved very successful and Penny wondered if there was any interest in such an event being held in Minehead.

Adrian replied that WSC had organised a meeting of strategic delivery partners, including representatives from the voluntary sector, last week to discuss forming an alternative to the West Somerset Strategic Partnership. The meeting had decided that a high priority for the area was 'inter-generational interaction', ie increasing the opportunities for people of all ages to come together. This was particularly important in West Somerset where the average age was 52, the highest district average in the country.

It was agreed that Penny would email Adrian so that he could put Penny's suggestion to the next meeting of strategic delivery partners.

ACTION: Penny Dobbin to email Adrian Dyer with details of her event suggestion so that he can put it to the next meeting of strategic delivery partners.

Bus Services

Maureen Smith reported that Somerset County Council had decided to implement cuts in bus services as they would be halving their subsidy. An online consultation was underway on the County Council website and Maureen urged everyone to respond. The Labour group in West Somerset had asked whether an equalities impact study would be undertaken. Maureen was concerned that bus services run by small, local firms, such as Webbers, would still be viable with a reduced subsidy.

Aerial Displays by Butlins

Ken Sims asked whether the Battle of Britain air display would be available next year if Butlins were once more putting on the Summer Festival. Adrian replied that he was aware that Butlins were working towards the event for 2012, but whether the planes would arrive on the day was largely dependent on the weather.

Consultation on the Mineral Options Paper and Waste Core Strategy

Martin Wilsher advised that Somerset County Council were consulting on the above documents, both of which would have a minimal impact in West Somerset. The Minerals Options Paper would be going out to consultation in December/January for an eight week period and the Waste Core Strategy Development Plan Document (DPD) went out for consultation on 31 October and runs until 6 January 2012.

Briefing notes on both consultations were available at the meeting and can be emailed to you by Sarah upon request.

13. Date & Venue of Future Meetings

Future meeting to be held on:

Wednesday 14 March 2011 at 6pm at the St Michael the Archangel Church Hall, Quarry Close, Alcombe, Minehead