

Minehead Area Panel

Notes of Meeting held on 13 March 2019 In The Hub, Hopcott Road, Minehead

Present:

Cllr Jean Parbrook (Chair)	Minehead Town Council and West Somerset Council
Cllr Mandy Chilcott	Somerset County Council and West Somerset Council
Cllr Andrew Hadley	West Somerset Council
Cllr Nicole Hawkins	West Somerset Council
Cllr Benet Allen	West Somerset Council
Cllr Sandra Slade	Minehead Town Council
Cllr Maureen Smith	Minehead Town Council and WSCLT and TMA
Cllr Paul Bolton	Minehead Town Council
Cllr Andrew Parbrook	Minehead Town Council
PCSO Katherine Williams	Avon & Somerset Police
Sharon Baker (Partnership Officer)	Avon & Somerset Police
Ray Tew	Minehead Development Trust/Regal Theatre
Marcus Kravis	The Arkade
D Fizep	Resident
Craig Palmer	Resident
Mimi Palmer	Resident
Sandra Davidson	Resident
Pete Broom	Resident
R Caddy	Resident
Colin Isherwood	Resident
H Compton	Observer
Susan Stapleton	Resident
Bridget O'Brien	Resident
Barbara Seacombe	Resident
Paul Johnson	Resident/Conservation Society
Mrs R Lawson	Resident
Martin Wilsher	Resident
Sam Murrell	West Somerset Council
Sarah Wilsher	West Somerset Council

1. Welcome, Introduction and Apologies

Jean Parbrook welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies for absence were received from Beccy Brown (West Somerset Council), Stephen Brown (Resident), Cllr Steven Heard (Minehead Town Council), Chris Jones (Devon and Somerset Fire & Rescue Service), Cllr Christine Lawrence (Somerset County Council), Lewis Lintern (MATA/The Avenue Methodist Church), Katrina Midgeley (Engage and MCCT)

2. Have Your Say – Community Issues/Concerns

Issues for Have Your Say, were as follows:

- (a) *Mimi Palmer asked what was happening about the tree stumps in the town which were about 4ft high:* David Peake and Mandy Chilcott explained that trees were generally only removed when they were dead or dangerous and that it was considered safer to leave the stumps at a standard height of about 4ft high as they were then visible; lower stumps could more easily become a trip hazard. Removal of the whole tree and roots would be difficult and

expensive due to the services (electricity cables, etc.) being underground and as such the trees could not be easily replaced.

Maureen Smith stated that a complex tree plan existed for trees on Town Council land, which was available for viewing in the Town Council offices.

It was agreed to invite a Somerset County Council Officer responsible for trees to a future meeting.

ACTION: Sarah to invite an SCC officer responsible for trees to a future Minehead Area Panel meeting.

Jean added that the trees were originally planted along The Avenue to make the avenue resemble the Champs Elysees.

(b) Maureen Smith advised that Minehead and West Somerset Plastic Free Communities were holding a Launch Event at the Beach Hotel on Sunday, 17 March from 2pm to 4pm. Also the AGM of the West Somerset Community Land Trust (CLT) was to be held at Williton Pavilion on Wednesday, 20 March at 7pm, with a speaker from Wessex CLT.

(c) *Pete Broom said that the Department of Transport were requesting that Highway Authorities make plans to ease congestion and asked what Somerset County Council (SCC) were doing:* Jean Parbrook advised that SCC would be undertaking parking reviews within Somerset and that Minehead would be one of the first areas to be looked at. WSC's Task and Finish Group had looked at car parking in West Somerset. A partnership between District, County and Town Councils would enable a better flow of traffic through the town and parking in the car parks, particularly if charges were lowered, would help to reduce on-street parking. Andy Hadley promoted the Shoppers Permit - £40 pa to park for two hours at a time in North Road, Alexandra Road and Quay West car parks.

Pete Broom clarified that he wished to know if there were any plans to build a by-pass between Williton and Minehead. David Peake advised that SCC worked with other organisations to put schemes together for tendering for Government funding. Yeovil and Bridgwater were being looked at at the current time. There were no plans to build a by-pass in West Somerset.

(d) *Benet Allen asked if there was any chance of the railway being opened between Minehead and Taunton?* Mandy Chilcott informed that SCC leased the land to the railway but did not run the railway. The running of trains between Minehead and Taunton was an ongoing issue. Andy Hadley advised that there was a pilot to run day tripper trains between Taunton and Minehead, with the change to heritage trains at Bishops Lydeard.

(e) Marcus Kravis reported that there was a parking area behind the Arkade which regularly flooded due to sand blocking the drains between Morrisons and the seafront. The issue had been ongoing for four years as no-one knew who owned the drains in the area. Andy Hadley offered to take up the issue with Asset Management at the District Council.

ACTION: Andy Hadley to talk to Asset Management at the District Council regarding drain ownership

Paul Johnson complained that there were debris and leaves in storm drains in some parts of Minehead, such as Alexandra Road. David Peake explained that the revenue budget for maintenance and repair works was dwindling fast and Highways could only afford to undertake a clear-out of existing drains on

a four year cycle. In contrast money for new projects, such as drainage installations, could be obtained from external sources when the opportunities arose.

Andy Hadley explained that the drains near the seafront were not able to deal with sand and the District Council were looking into alternative drainage solutions. It was a budgetary issue.

Mandy Chilcott stated that urban drain gully cleaning had been removed from the SCC budget but subsequently money had been found so this work had been reinstated.

Andrew Parbrook added that the type of sand and the possible solutions had been discussed in the past with The Environment Agency.

(f) *Mimi Palmer asked for the cost of the refurbishment of the shelters.* This information was not available at the meeting and Andy Hadley said he would find out.

ACTION: Cllr Andy Hadley to find out the cost of the refurbishment of the shelters on the seafront.

3. Annual Magna Report – Tony Murray, Housing Director, Magna

Tony Murray spoke to his report which had been previously circulated (see attached), as follows:

The average Magna rent was about £95 per week (excluding service charges) which was about 60% of the market rent. There were 2,000 homes in West Somerset including about 550 in Minehead and Alcombe (including sheltered and extra care housing). They were let through Somerset Homefinder. There was a high housing demand in Minehead in particular and not enough supply to meet the demand. Magna's 5-year strategy was to provide 600 new homes by 2021, which would be a mix of social rent and shared ownership. Forty homes for social rent were proposed to be erected on West Somerset Council land at Seaward Way and were currently going through planning. It was hoped to start building on site in the Summer.

Magna performed very well as a housing association in terms of collecting rent, leasing properties and improving housing stock. During 2018/19 a sheltered housing review was undertaken. The age range of those living in sheltered housing was 60 to 100 years, increasingly with older people of over 80 years of age and those with long-term illness and disability. More choice and flexibility was wanted with no increase in service charges and a greater staff presence on the ground. As a result of the review a 24-hour response was being piloted in West Somerset and Dorset. More staff were being made available for sheltered housing and volunteer co-ordinators were to bring in agencies to run events for the older people, such as flexercise, craft sessions, Age Concern, which reduce social isolation. Every new empty property in sheltered housing was to have a modern wet room. Currently tenants were given a paint voucher so that they could organise their own decorating, however, some occupants could not manage this so painting/decorating would be undertaken by Magna in the future.

Extra care housing was provided at Silvermead in Alcombe, which was a flexible alternative to residential care.

In 2018 Magna looked at under-occupation. They talked to 700 residents in larger properties to see if they wanted to move to smaller homes. The wishes of

the occupants were respected, but some people did choose to downsize or move to sheltered housing.

After Tony's presentation, questions were raised from meeting, as follows:

Nicole Hawkins said that she was aware of homes being unfurnished with no carpets, noisy neighbours, and older people feeling trapped and wishing to move to sheltered housing but not knowing how as they did not use the internet. Tony advised that Magna worked with agencies such as the Advice Bureau and Engage to help people find furniture, etc. He and Nicole to talk further about the issues after the meeting.

Tony added that a new post of Community Safety Officer for West Somerset had recently been appointed to deal with neighbour issues, work with the police, etc.

West Somerset Council's Housing Options Team and Magna officers could help people if they were struggling to register on Homefinder, and Katherine Williams told the meeting that Homefinder help could be obtained at the Talking Café in the Beach Hotel on Mondays from 10.30am to 1pm. The Talking Café was facilitated by Somerset Community Council and brought together a number of agencies to provide assistance and advice to residents. A Talking Café was also held in Williton and Dulverton.

Maureen Smith also knew of people who had found it difficult to register on Homefinder. Tony said that he chaired the Board of Somerset Homefinder and they were looking at making the process simpler and at busting the myths that surrounded the system.

Jean thanked Tony for an informative and interesting presentation.

4. Minehead Business Improvement District – Graham Sizer, Chairman, BID

Graham reported that a Business Improvement District (BID) was a designated area of the town where retail predominated, and in Minehead's case it was The Avenue, The Parade and the offshoot retail roads, the seafront and Seaward Way. All 245 businesses in this area had agreed to pay a small levy based on the size of their business into a kitty. This was then spent on projects in the town that they felt deserved to be invested in. £100K a year would be levied for the next five years to spend on this work.

The aim was to make Minehead attractive for residents and visitors and vibrant for retailers. BIDs could not take over Council services like toilets but could enhance existing services. All information about the BID could be found on the Minehead BID website.

One of the BID's spending themes was Public Realm. This Spring BID was working with Minehead Town Council to provide more hanging baskets in the town. Minehead Town Council already planted and maintained some very attractive displays in the town centre. BID would, over the years, tackle some of the other areas. Toward this end forty extra brackets had recently been installed and the baskets would go up in late May. They would look a little different to the conventional ones, and whereas Council baskets needed watering every day and only last a couple of years, the BIDs would only need watering once a week and would last 15 years, providing value for money for BID members. In the long-term these baskets would mean a 50% saving and it was hoped that the Town Council would adopt similar baskets next year, which would save public money.

Another joint project that worked well was the cost sharing of new electric cabling to The Parade that helped get back Minehead's brighter Christmas Lights. The

Avenue tree lights were a Chamber of Commerce initiative. However, the circuit breakers that County Highways insisted be used inside their lampposts were not fit for purpose and they kept cutting out. This was most unfortunate as the globes were a well-liked feature, but they had to be taken down for insurance reasons until the RCD sensitivity had been sorted. They had been tested and were fine and safely stored, and it was hoped that the BID may finance their return.

More brackets would be installed down The Avenue during the Summer to hold flags and baskets, and later in the year, Christmas trees. Complementing this it was hoped to install bunting.

BID also spent money on events. Last November BID financed much of the entertainment over the Lights Switch-On event weekend in November. On May Day this year BID would add a little colour to Wellington Square. Along with the Hobby Horse and Morris Men, there would be a Shanty Band and school maypole dancing. This would be a low-key affair but it was hoped that, if enjoyed, it would become an annual event.

The following week in May a Steam Punk Festival would descend on the town, taking over the Regal Theatre and the Old Hospital and maybe other venues. This again was a pilot event. It had developed year on year in other towns around the Country and it was hoped that it could take off in Minehead too

BID would be financially backing the Town Centre Cycle races again in June. 200 extra cyclists were expected. It had gained National status and because of great planning there would be four National Junior Races hosted early evening on the Saturday. This would bring extra families from all over the Country into the town and further put Minehead on the map. Gaps between races on the Saturday would mean that other things could take place on the course as well.

In October there would be a BID sponsored town-wide Eat Festival filling The Avenue and The Parade, and BID were working with the Railway to spread their Vintage weekend, that Watchet locked on to last year, to help develop this as an area event of real substance. Then BID would be helping to enhance the Christmas weekend once again. Other events were also in the pipeline.

A highly qualified BID manager had been installed and he was organising the BID in a very efficient way, together with business owners who voluntarily devoted many hours to doing the BID spade work. The BID operated on minimal overheads with no office or vehicle costs due to BID businesses providing time and space.

There were over 330 BIDs nationwide. They did their best to draw in match funding to supplement their annual income. Minehead's annual levy receipts would be £100,000 but already in their first 8 months £19,000 had been secured in match funding on the projects they had initiated. The overall objective was to keep the High Street clean, colourful and lively and be a nice place to visit and spend time in. It was hoped that the BID's actions and initiatives would be endorsed and supported by all.

5. Police Report

Sharon Baker reported that for the period of 1 January to 13 March 2019, a period of 10 weeks, 525 calls had been made to the control room in Portishead in relation to incidents across Minehead. Increasingly contact was made via the internet, through numerous social media accounts and by email to local officers. Of these 205 of the phone calls received were passed to the team to deal with which led to 129 criminal offences being recorded.

During this ten weeks Minehead Police had dealt with the following recorded incidents and offences:

- Missing people 13 (3 adults, 10 persons under 18). All located safe and well.
- Arrests 28 (8 voluntary attenders).
- Assault 39 (Anti social behaviour (ASB) – 21, common assault – 16, assault police – 2).
- Theft offences 17 (shop theft – 5, making off without payment – 3, theft from M/V – 3, theft of M/V – 1, theft other – 9).
- Drug offences 5 (possession – 4, intent to supply – 1).
- Burglary 14 (dwelling burglaries – 8, commercial burglaries – 6).
- Criminal damage 19
- ASB 46
- Public order 23
- Concern for safety 6
- Cruelty/neglect of children 1
- Harassment 2
- Malicious communications 9

Stop and Search

A total of five persons had been stopped and searched by officers during this report period under Section 23 Misuse of Drugs Act. This led to two of these people receiving police cautions for possession type offences.

Community Speed Watch

Motorists who speed through residential neighbourhoods were very often unaware of the impact their actions could have on local residents, or the danger they pose to other road users and pedestrians and this was something the Police were working with communities to address. Community SpeedWatch was a partnership between the Community, the Police and Local Authorities. Each scheme was operated by a group of local residents who were willing to volunteer a small amount of time each week to monitor speeds with speed detection equipment. A Community SpeedWatch could be set up in any village, small town, or urban area, governed by either a 20, 30 or 40 miles per hour speed limit. Vehicles observed speeding, would be sent a warning letter along with advice to help change their driving behaviour. Further action would be taken by the police against persistent and high end speed offenders as well as targeting individual locations. The Police were really keen to get Community Speedwatch schemes up and running in Minehead. For those interested in setting one up, to help with a speeding concern in their community, full information could be found on the Force website or members of the public could approach or contact any member of the local Police Team.

Neighbourhood Watch (NHW)

Neighbourhood Watch was all about neighbours coming together to have a say about the issues that matter most to them in their communities. The Police had been committed to supporting Neighbourhood Watch throughout the force since its introduction in 1982. There were many benefits to being part of a Neighbourhood Watch scheme:

1. It shows that members of a community are looking out for each other.
2. It keeps people up to date with what is going on in their area.
3. Working closely with the police, helps to prevent and tackle crime.
4. Money can be saved on home insurance.

The Neighbourhood Police Team were currently striving to rejuvenate all existing NHW schemes across Minehead and West Somerset and were very much focusing on identifying areas where new schemes could be implemented. The Beat Managers had been tasked with making personal contact with all existing NHW coordinators to improve working relationships and communication and later this year it was hoped to organise events that would bring the current coordinators and any new coordinators together to further build on the links between local officers and their communities.

In addition, PCSO Katherine Williams was looking at setting up the Drugs Bus Initiative for the town, which was an educational double decker bus with staff that engage with young people and provide substance misuse information.

The mini-police was an in-school project that worked with Year 5 children, learning about the roles of the Police family. It was hoped to introduce this in the September 2019 term if not before.

Paul Johnson asked how long it would take to get a police officer to an incident at a local school located close to Minehead police station. Katherine explained that the police were out where they needed to be. 101 or 999 should be called and the Police HQ at Portishead would determine the importance of the call and cascade it to relevant teams in the area. The case would be given a code and allocated to a police officer. The response time depended on the nature of the call and the level of information provided to risk assess the call. Each call was different and looked at on an individual basis.

Paul Bolton stated that he was familiar with response times of over 38 minutes for night crime, which he considered unacceptable. He had written to the Police and Crime Commissioner about it. Katherine advised that police officers had raised such issues and were gathering evidence of need. Education played a large part in reducing such crime.

Marcus asked if there were any statistics on drink driving in the area. Katherine advised that PC Sam Donati's Facebook page gave details of incidents involving drink driving and poor/reckless driving.

Katherine emphasised that crime needed to be reported to the Police not just posted on social media, such as the Minehead Conversation Group on Facebook. Information on incidents could be given confidentially through Crimestoppers.

6. Minutes of the Meeting held on 5 December 2018

The minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

Matters Arising

Item 2(d) – Sandra Slade had expressed concern with the treatment of recycling bins in Hayfield Road. With the school at one end and the children's centre at the other, there was much double parking. When the bins were emptied however, they were just returned to the pavement in an ad-hoc fashion, causing problems for pedestrians, particularly prams/pushchairs and wheelchairs and in windy weather easily became a traffic hazard on the road. She asked if the bins could please be returned to their respective homes: Jean had taken the issue up with the West Somerset Waste Partnership Group. Sandra advised that the situation had been much improved of late. However, recently her caddy had been emptied and not returned to her house. It had been left at a neighbouring property. Fortunately, she was at home at the time and thus able to ask the refuse/recycling collector of its whereabouts otherwise she may have needed to

request a new one from the Council, wasting time and money for all. Jean said she would raise this at the next meeting of the Somerset Waste Partnership.

ACTION: Jean Parbrook to raise the issue of emptied bins/caddies not being returned to the correct properties at the next meeting of the Somerset Waste Partnership.

Item 2(g) - Colin Isherwood had asked whether there was any response from Butlins regarding whether a residents pass for cinema use only could be set up, following the promise of Butlins employees to look into this at the Minehead Area Panel meeting in June 2018. Sarah advised that she had emailed John Whybrow at Butlins, but had not received a response. She would continue to try and make contact.

ACTION: Sarah to continue to follow up with Butlins whether a residents pass for cinema use only could be set up.

Item 2(h) Colin Isherwood had requested clarification on the traffic movement figures for 2017 as given in the minutes of the September 2018 meeting. David Peake advised that the figures were daily averages. The A39 at the Ellicombe roundabout was the third busiest stretch of County road in Somerset.

Item 3 - Paul Johnson had reported overhanging branches obscuring the left hand pole of traffic lights at Dunster Steep. David advised that trimming of the branches/tree would be undertaken to resolve the issue.

Maureen Smith reported that the residents in the Manor Road area expressed their thanks to Councillors for all their efforts to ensure that the required works were carried out to de-silt the brook at the 'Sheep dip'.

7. Minehead Development Trust – An Update

Ray Tew reported that there had been a footfall of 30,000 through the doors of the Minehead Information Centre. A new Centre manager had been appointed in February, but volunteers were needed for the Centre and for the Guided Walk Ambassador Scheme. Tourism newsletters were going out financed through the Hinkley Tourism Action Partnership. The Information Centre was moving to Summer opening hours.

The first Minehead Literary Festival would be held at The Avenue Methodist Church Hall on 27 April 2019. Further details could be found at: <https://www.mineheadliteraryfestival.org/>

8. Highway Matters

David Peake reported the following:

Completed Highway Works:

- Footway patching in Townsend Road, Minehead.
- Footway patching in Cher, Minehead.
- Footway patching in Marshfield Road, Minehead.

Ongoing Highway Works:

- Carriageway resurfacing on the A39 Bridgwater Road at East Quantoxhead with temporary road closures between 6.30pm and 7am on 7, 8 and 11 March.

Future Highway Works:

- Drainage improvement works and carriageway resurfacing on the A358 Taunton Road at Sampford Brett with a temporary road closure between 18 and 31 March. For further details go to: <https://www.travelsomerset.co.uk/sampford-brett/>
- Carriageway patching on the A39 Minehead Road between Court Place Lane in Withycombe and Bilbrook with a temporary road closure between 6.30pm and 7am on 3 April.
- Carriageway resurfacing on the A39 Bridgwater Road in Holford with temporary road closures between 6.30pm and 7am from 23 and 28 April (five nights).
- Carriageway resurfacing on the A358 Taunton Road at West Bagborough with a temporary road closure between 6.30pm and 7am in late April (one night).

David confirmed that the buses would still be running with the road closure at Sampford Brett and would take a diversion route via Raleghs Cross between Tropiquaria and Bishops Lydeard. It was noted that this would extend the journey by about 15 minutes.

David advised that the drainage works at Bilbrook which had been planned for November 2018 had been put on hold, but the work was still needed. Public support for this to happen was welcomed.

Andy Hadley stated that the lane from Hopcott Road to the car park at Hopcott was a very busy route and there were many potholes. David advised that it was a public bridleway so the Rights of Way team at Somerset County Council were looking at it from a right of way perspective.

Marcus asked if there were any plans to improve the road surface of Irnham Road. David advised that there was a four year rolling programme for such works and so it would be done within this cycle.

9. Minehead Coastal Community Team – An Update

A written report had been circulated in advance of the meeting (see attached). Andy Hadley reported that the Eastern Esplanade works for the seafront had started. This included landscaping, raised seating areas, lighting and play areas, etc. Plans of the proposed works would be displayed on the fencing around the site. A press release had been sent to the West Somerset Free Press for publication on Friday, 15 March and details had been posted on Facebook and the MCCT website -<https://mineheadcct.co.uk/> The works were due to finish by 31 May 2019. Andy further confirmed that the big wheel would not be returning.

10. Burning Issues

A written report had been circulated in advance of the meeting (see attached).

11. District Council Update

A written report had been circulated in advance of the meeting (see attached). In response to questions from residents Andy Hadley explained that Shape Mendip were the Council's legal services. Also, that due to new environmental legislation that comes into force when there is a change of lease on a property, Blenheim Gardens Café does not meet the requirements for an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC). The Council's Asset Group were considering the options. The aim was to get the building back into operation, but it would not be open for this coming season. The Council were also aware of the Covenants on the building.

Andy advised that he and Mandy Chilcott had talked to Barclays Bank about the closure of the Minehead branch in June, as a result of which Barclays were looking into having a contact centre in the town.

West Somerset Council and Taunton Deane Borough Council would cease to be on 31 March 2019. The Shadow Executive and Shadow Authority (Somerset West and Taunton Council) would take over from 1 April 2019.

12. Town Council Update

A written report had been circulated in advance of the meeting (see attached). Sandra Slade informed the meeting that the Town Council were organising the band concerts in Blenheim Gardens and a series of concerts for the Summer season 2019 were currently being worked on. With the unavailability of the café they were looking into the provision of a mobile refreshments van.

Maureen Smith advised that the Town Council's Public Convenience Advisory Group meeting had met on 1 March and she had brought copies of the Group's report with her for anyone interested. A public survey was being undertaken to find out what the public felt about the provision of public toilets, payments to use them and disabled access. Copies of the questionnaire had been brought to the meeting and Maureen encouraged residents to complete them.

13. Somerset County Council Update

Mandy Chilcott reported the following:

- Somerset County Council worked with the NHS and other health services and some of these staff would be moving to the County Council.
- The 111 telephone service was moving to Devon Doctors.
- The Council's Scrutiny Committee were looking at ambulances and the length of time it took to get to Minehead. A report on response times had been requested from the Ambulance Service.
- Panorama had been filming on adult social care provision in Taunton and this had also looked at Minehead.
- As at September 2018 SCC were £19m adrift on the budget. Due to extra monies being found in rates, etc. they were now predicted to come in under budget.
- Council tax increases for adult social care had gone to providers across the County.
- Somerset was in the top 14 areas in the South West for getting people back into the community.
- Delays at junction 25 on the M5 continued as works were ongoing.
- SCC were looking for mentors to get involved in the National Citizenship Programme, which was a very popular and successful initiative for young people of 16 and 17 years of age.

14. Dates & Venues of Future Meetings

Future meeting to be held on:

Wednesday, 26 June 2019 at 6.30pm at The Hub, Hopcott Road, Minehead.