

Minehead Area Panel

Notes of Meeting held on 8 March 2018 at The Hub, Hopcott Road, Minehead

Present:

Cllr Andrew Hadley (Chair for part of meeting)	West Somerset Council
Cllr Jean Parbrook (Chair for part of meeting)	Minehead Town Council and West Somerset Council
Cllr Mandy Chilcott	West Somerset Council and Somerset County Council
Cllr Christine Lawrence	Somerset County Council
Cllr Maureen Smith	Minehead Town Council and Chair, West Somerset Community Land Trust
Cllr Andrew Parbrook	Minehead Town Council
Cllr Roger Thomas	Minehead Town Council
Cllr Ralph Dinnick	Minehead Town Council
Cllr Gail Everett	Minehead Town Council
Cllr Benet Allen	West Somerset Council
Sgt Stuart Williams	Avon & Somerset Police
PC Sam Donati	Avon & Somerset Police
PC Joe Sanderson	Avon & Somerset Police
Graham Sizer	Minehead Chamber of Commerce
Steven Hadley	Chambers Bistro
Lucy Watters	Chambers Bistro
Marcus Kravis	The Arkade
Mandi Usher	Resident and Member of Minehead Community Group
Percy Hill	Resident and Member of Minehead Community Group
Pete Broom	Resident & Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator, Queens Road
Paul Johnson	Resident
Steven Heard	Resident
Lin Reed	Resident
Cath Isherwood	Resident
Colin Isherwood	Resident
Bridget O'Brien	Resident
Sarah Wilsher	West Somerset Council

1. Welcome, Introduction and Apologies

Andrew Hadley welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained the purpose and composition of the Area Panel.

Apologies for absence were received from James Barra (Taunton Deane Borough Council and West Somerset Council), Alex de Mendoza (Minehead Chamber of Commerce), David Peake (Somerset County Council Area Highways), Chris Jones (Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue), Doug Ross (Resident), Elaine Ross (Resident), Ray Tew (Minehead Development Trust).

2. Appointment of Chair

Andrew Hadley proposed and Gail Everett seconded that Jean Parbrook be elected as Chair. Voting took place and Jean was duly elected.

3. Have Your Say – Community Issues/Concerns

Issues for Have Your Say, were as follows:

- (a) Maureen Smith advised the meeting that the West Somerset Community Land Trust was an organisation dedicated to providing low cost housing for those on low incomes and would be holding their Annual General Meeting on Wednesday, 14 March at the Friends Meeting House in Bancks Street, Minehead at 7pm. Alan Fox, the founder of Cornwall Community Land Trust and now technical advisor to the National Community Land Trust, would be giving a talk after the meeting.
- (b) Graham Sizer introduced the Minehead Business Improvement District (BID). There were 240 other BID towns in the country. The purpose was to raise the profile of their towns. He reported that all businesses in Minehead had been consulted over the past six months on how to increase footfall within the town and had been asked to vote on the resultant business plan. If a yes vote was given by the majority of businesses then each business would pay into the BID according to the rateable value of their premises. Butlins and the three supermarkets along Seaward Way (Lidl, Morrisons and Tesco) would pay about £10-20,000 each pa, equating to about 40% of the pot, whilst the small businesses would pay about £1 per week. A Board of Directors would be voted on and would oversee individual projects. A copy of the Business Plan was available to view at the library. It promoted more events, street entertainment, tidying of public areas such as Wellington Square, more effective marketing of Minehead, an improved Christmas event and Summer events, bringing back more coaches to the town, working to achieve a Blue flag for Minehead beach and approaching garden centres with the aim to re-enter Britain in Bloom.

Graham added that in the 10-15 years he had been on the Chamber branding had never been raised. It was up to individual businesses to use the branding they preferred, eg Gateway to Exmoor, More to Sea, More to Shore.

- (c) *Steven Heard raised issues of concern, including the dog fouling in the town, particularly along the path at Culvercliffe, which stuck to the wheels of his mobility scooter. Also, the dry stone wall in the vicinity of the path between Morrisons and Minehead railway station which was in danger of collapse.* Mandy Chilcott advised that she had counted 20 loose bricks in the wall and had put in a report to Somerset County Council to get the wall fixed. She would continue to chase it and would report back to Steven.

ACTION: Mandy Chilcott to chase Somerset County Council regarding the stability of the wall between Morrisons and Minehead railway station.

Steven also added that glass had been broken in one of the shelters along the seafront. Andrew Hadley said that he would investigate.

ACTION: Andrew Hadley to investigate the broken glass in the seafront shelters.

- (d) *Mandi Usher raised the issue of branding on behalf of the Minehead Community Group. None of the residents within the Group seemed to have been consulted and the chosen brand was not liked. Many people wished to know why so much money was being spent on the brand when money was so badly needed to improve the town, eg there was flaky paint on the*

shelters. *The Community Group wished to have a meeting with the Minehead Coastal Communities Team (MCCT).*

Andrew Hadley advised that the state of the shelters was known and the contractor had been notified to improve the shelters, but this would not be done until the weather had improved. Consultation on the whole Esplanade re-development had been undertaken in November 2016 and for the latest phase three separate consultation events had been held at Minehead Eye. Advertisements had been published in the West Somerset Free Press on 27 December, the Somerset County Gazette and on the I Love Somerset facebook page. MCCT were now aware that the people who wanted to be reached had not been reached and that there was a need to work using social media and non-social media to reach as many residents, businesses, voluntary organisations, etc. as possible. A meeting had been held that morning on how to involve local people in the next stage of the re-vamp of The Esplanade. A Minehead Coastal Communities Team facebook page had been set up and MCCT wished for other community facebook groups to link to it. Nothing was being hidden.

Mandy Chilcott explained that there were specific criteria that had to be met for the award of the funding and that it had to be used for specified coastal type funding. This restriction could be frustrating and meant that bids had to be tailored and ready to be submitted to fit the funding pot within a short timescale. The Council were short of capacity to write the bids. If anyone within the community had knowledge/skills of bid-writing they would very much like to hear from them.

Maureen Smith added that community engagement needed to be done to reach as many people as possible. This had been done in Watchet with regards to the East Quay development and plans were tweaked following public consultation.

- (e) *Gail Everett raised the issue of sand clearance from The Esplanade and steps to the beach, etc.* Andrew Hadley informed that this would be done as well as could be done with the money available on 12 March. He clarified that West Somerset Council were responsible for clearing the sand on The Esplanade whilst The Environment Agency were responsible for clearing the steps. The minimum they could clear was four of the seven steps. It was agreed that Minehead Area Panel would ask The Environment Agency to clear all the steps.

ACTION: Jean to write to The Environment Agency to ask them to clear all the sand off the steps to the beach.

- (f) Andrew Hadley reported that the Minehead Events Group had events lined up for the next few months, as follows: the observation wheel would return to Minehead for the May bank holiday for two weeks; a bike race was being organised with the Minehead Cycling Club for 24 June; a Summer Festival was being planned for August, a soapbox derby in October and they were working with other groups towards an improved Christmas event.

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

Tony Murray spoke to his annual report, which had previously been circulated (see attached). Tony reported that Magna owned about 9,000 properties in Devon and Somerset and 2,000 of these were in West Somerset. A year ago the three Magna housing associations in Somerset, Dorset and Devon had merged into one organisation, Magna Housing, in order to make financial savings and reduce duplication and inefficiency. The offices in Williton still existed and

tenants should see no difference to the quality service provided. Magna had sold their homes in Devon but still had homes in all the Somerset districts bar Mendip and three districts in Dorset.

An average Magna rent was approximately 60% of a rent in the private sector at just under £100 per week. Magna provided housing for families, single persons, sheltered housing and extra care housing.

The Magna Board had decided that up to 400 new homes should be built for social rent funded from Magna's own resources and from Government grants if available. Also they aimed to build up to 200 homes for shared ownership (part rent part buy). In West Somerset demand exceeded supply. They were therefore purchasing a site on Seaward Way for 40 homes to be built (30 for rent and ten for part-ownership) subject to planning permission.

Tony then took questions from the meeting, as follows:

Andrew Parbrook asked whether there was a housing association policy on relocating families from one district to another. A problem family had been relocated to Minehead and were continuing to cause difficulties, although it was noted that they were not in Magna housing. Tony replied that references were sought from private landlords, etc and if there were rent arrears, instances of anti-social behaviour and similar then Magna would not offer them a home. However, if the people lived outside the district it was more difficult to ascertain this information. If it was a Magna tenant they would have to abide by a tenancy agreement and Magna would work with the local police. They also had a track record of taking legal action where necessary. Other social landlords would follow similar practices. In West Somerset there was an inter-agency approach whereby organisations would work together to discuss issues and resolve the situation.

Maureen Smith said that she was aware of the Somerset Homefinder system not being responsive to people's needs, which was leading to people not registering with Homefinder lettings scheme. Tony responded in that Homefinder was an open register and anyone who had been in Somerset for three years could register. At the current time 620 people were registered across West Somerset. There was a lot of support given by Magna, other Housing Associations and the Housing Options team at West Somerset Council. The register did not always reflect housing needs in the villages and surveys of housing needs were being undertaken to find this out. There were also myths about the housing register which were untrue, but meant that people did not bother to register. Magna and other Housing Associations were working hard to bust these myths.

Mandy Chilcott asked whether there were any details/drawings available with regard to the Seaward Way project. Tony advised that public consultation had been undertaken and he would ensure details of the scheme were made available.

Gail Everett asked whether people living in Minehead were housed in Minehead. Tony reported that the S106 legal agreement for the Silvermead development in Alcombe stated that the first priority for housing was to go to those in Minehead and Alcombe. In 1998 when the dwellings owned by West Somerset Council were transferred to Magna peoples' preferences were taken into account. Today people in Minehead tended to be housed in Minehead properties.

Tony reported that over the last 12 months to 31 January 2018 the average time for re-letting a property was 2.5 weeks, and from the annual tenant satisfaction survey 88% of tenants were satisfied overall with Magna's services, 84% were

satisfied with the way Magna dealt with repairs and maintenance and 89% of new tenants were satisfied with the condition of their homes.

During 2018/19 Magna would be focussing on reducing under occupation to try and free up some family homes. At present 400 single people were living in 3-4 bed properties. It was recognised, however, that this was a delicate issue that needed to be treated with sensitivity.

There were about 100 sheltered housing units in Minehead and Alcombe. Somerset County Council used to fund the care service, but this grant had been much reduced. Rural sheltered housing was difficult to let. Magna were looking into this and how the service could be funded. In Alcombe, Watchet and Dulverton extra care services providing an in-house care and meals package was available in partnership with Somerset County Council and a care agency. Christine Lawrence advised that 25-35% of the rural community were over 65 years of age.

Marcus Kravis asked how many people were in private rented properties. Tony could not provide this detail, but advised that Magna housed people from private rented properties and occupiers of such dwellings could go on the housing register. The private rented sector had increased over the last ten years.

In reply to a query regarding what the response would be if there was a fire in a property, Tony stated that there had been a serious fire in Chard which had burnt down a property. The tenants had been put in temporary accommodation until permanent accommodation had become available. Magna used the Council's out-of-hours helpline service.

Finally, Tony reported that the annual programme of neighbourhood walkabouts covering all areas in West Somerset was being compiled and all Councillors were welcome to participate in a walkabout. Those interested should contact Amanda Shirani, Area Housing Manager, on 01305 216060 or email: Amanda.Shirani@magna.org.uk

Jean thanked Tony for his interesting and informative talk.

5. Talk by Ryan Kelly, Community Safety Officer for Sedgemoor and West Somerset

Unfortunately, Ryan was unable to attend due to illness. He would be attending the Minehead Area Panel meeting on 6 June 2018.

6. Minutes of the Meeting held on 11 October 2017

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

Matters Arising

None.

7. Minehead Coastal Community Team – An Update

Andrew Kingston-James, secretary to the Team, had provided a written report which was circulated in advance of the meeting (see attached). Andrew Hadley reported that new consultation would be taking place which would be publicised

via a press release, on the Council's website – www.westsomersetonline.gov.uk and on Facebook.

8. **Minehead Development Trust/Minehead Information Centre – An Update**

Ray Tew had provided a written report which was circulated in advance of the meeting (see attached).

9. **Police Report**

PC Joe Sanderson had provided a written report which was circulated in advance of the meeting (see attached). He introduced PC Sam Donati who had joined the Minehead team last week. Joe reported the following:

- No culprit had been identified for the spate of domestic burglaries that had taken place in the south of Minehead – Parkhouse Road, Paganel Road, etc. It was felt that they had come from Taunton and Joe thought they may have been caught. Benet Allen said that 14 large car batteries had been stolen from Ridlers in Watchet. Stuart Williams said that rural thefts seemed to be on the rise and were a problem across West Somerset, Bridgwater and Taunton, as well as being a national issue. He urged people to report such crimes.
- There had been two serious assaults recently in Minehead involving young adults. CCTV had been consulted, but no suspects identified. A further six incidents had been mentioned on social media but these had not been reported to the police. Joe asked for the Police Twitter release to be put on Facebook by local community groups and urged victims of public order offences and witnesses to come forward.
- Response teams were still running out of the existing Minehead and Williton police stations, but the plan remained to lose the large police station and have a small hub in the centre of Minehead.

Andrew Hadley encouraged people to report crime in order to keep the police on the streets of Minehead. 999 for emergencies, 101 for non-emergencies and if not time critical online was the most efficient form of reporting.

Stuart Williams advised that at a recent meeting of the Exmoor Area Panel, the Panel had declared their priorities for the police to be poaching and speeding. He asked the Minehead Area Panel for their priorities and it was decided that people should put forward suggestions for discussion at the next meeting.

ACTION: Suggestions of priorities for the police within Minehead and Alcombe to be sent to Sarah on email: swwilsher@westsomerset.gov.uk or tel: 01984 635296.

10. **Highway Matters**

David Peake had provided the following report in advance of the meeting:

Completed Highway Works:

- Carriageway resurfacing of Clanville Road in Minehead.

Ongoing Highway Works:

- Level crossing replacement at Seaward Way in Minehead with temporary road closures from 5 to 9 March.

Future Highway Works:

- Carriageway resurfacing of Townsend Road in Minehead with temporary road closures from 26 to 28 March.
- Carriageway resurfacing on the A39 west of Bilbrook with temporary road closures between 6.30pm and 11.30pm on 16 and 17 April.
- Carriageway resurfacing on the A39 Blue Anchor turn to the Butchers Arms with temporary road closures between 6.30pm and 11.30pm on 18 and 19 April.
- Carriageway resurfacing on the B3190 (Brendon Road) in Watchet with temporary road closures between 6.30pm and 11.30pm from 24 to 27 April.
- Drainage improvement works on the A39 at Dragons Cross in Bilbrook with temporary road closures between 9.30am and 3.30pm from 5 to 9 November and 12 to 16 November.

Christine Lawrence asked the Panel to write to David to thank him and his team for all their hard work in keeping the roads clear in the recent bad weather. This was agreed.

ACTION: Jean to write to David Peake to thank him and his team for all their hard work in keeping the roads clear in the recent bad weather.

11. Burning Issues

Chris Jones had provided a written report which was circulated in advance of the meeting (see attached).

12. Town Council Update

Sue Sanders had provided a written report which was circulated in advance of the meeting (see attached). Jean reported the following:

- A frozen pipe had recently burst in the unoccupied flat above the Minehead Town Council offices and flooded the offices below. This was being fixed. In the meantime the phone service was still working. Mandy Chilcott said that many of the town councillors had come in to help mop up the water, showing excellent teamwork.
- A bid for funding had been submitted to the Community Impact Mitigation (CIM) fund for Hinkley Point C to replace the football club's facilities with a community hall. A recommendation for approval had been obtained from the Planning Obligations Board and West Somerset Council's Cabinet and would now go to West Somerset's Full Council for consideration.

13. District Council Update

Andrew Hadley reported the following:

- The Secretary of State's decision on the formation of one local authority from the merger of West Somerset Council and Taunton Deane Borough Council was awaited. A restructuring programme known as transformation was currently in its consultation period, following which officers would need to apply for new jobs.
- Public consultation on the forty houses (30 for rent and ten for part-ownership) plus industrial units on land at Seaward Way had been undertaken recently by Magna.

- Somerset West Lottery had raised £25,585 for the first six months from July 2017 to January 2018 comprising £5,648 in West Somerset, £7,575 in Taunton Deane and £12,361 for good causes. The first round of good causes payout was forthcoming.

14. **County Council Update**

Christine Lawrence reported the following:

- Following poor OFSTED ratings of childrens' services in the past, the recent OFSTED rating of 'requires improvement to be good' was a step in the right direction. The seven point improvement programme was now being updated and amended to reflect the recommendations. This would clearly set out the milestones required to reach 'Good'. Over 500 children were in care.
- 97.5 of children in the County had been offered a place at one of their top three secondary school preferences, which was a slight increase on last year's figure of 97.17%. In total 93% received their first preference, an increase on last year's figures of 92.332%.
- At the full Council meeting in late Febuary the County Council unanimously agreed to begin work to move towards the withdrawal of all single use plastics across all of its sites. Somerset Waste Partnership were also independently engaging through social media, local media and through the 'Schools against Waste' programme about the impact of plastic, particularly considering the recent regulatory changes in China.
- Discussions were continuing with DEFRA officials regarding the Somerset Rivers Authority becoming a self-precepting body. The Environment Minister, Therese Coffey, had reaffirmed the Government's commitment to introducing legislation, which was likely to be via a Private Members Bill.
- The libraries consultation was continuing and recent community engagement events had been well attended. It was important that as many people as possible were encouraged to engage with the consultation in order for comprehensive feedback to be received from those affected by any potential changes in the service. No decisions would be taken until the results of the consultation had been fully analysed.
- A stakeholders' event for the 'County Vision' on working together more with partner councils and organisations had been well received by the 69 attendees.
- There was a serious problem in Somerset regarding the health and wellbeing of the older generation, particularly in rural areas. Loneliness was a major concern. In times of emergency, such as poor weather, more attention was given to the elderly, but this care was needed 24/7.
- Somerset County Council needed more volunteer drivers across the County to help people get to medical appointments, day care centres, schools, etc. Drivers needed to be over 18, have a four-door car, a current driving licence and commit to as little as one hour per week. Mileage expenses would be reimbursed at up to 50 per mile. More information was available on: www.somersetvolunteer.co.uk

15. **Any Other Business**

Mandy Chilcott explained that the Planning Obligations Board were responsible for assessing the bids submitted for funding from the Community Impact Mitigation (CIM) fund for Hinkley Point C. It was used to fund projects across

Somerset which had been affected by the Hinkley Point development. In the last recent round of bids £2.2 million had been bid for.

The Somerset Community Foundation were also calling for bids for community cohesion and awards of up to £5,000 were available.

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16. Dates & Venues of Future Meetings

Future meeting to be held on:

Wednesday 6 June 2018 at 6.30pm at The Hub, Hopcott Road, Minehead.

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