

MPAPP Meeting Minutes – 23rd January 2024

In attendance: Fiona Toms (FT), Zara Aitken (ZA), Ray Tew (RT), Nicki Maclean (NM), Cllr Craig Palmer (CP), Cllr Andy Hadley (AH), Maureen Smith (MS)

Guests: Scott Jenkins (SC) Somerset Chamber of Commerce, Graham Sizer (GS) Chair, Minehead Chamber of Commerce, Ben Jewell (BJ) Minehead Business Association

Apologies: Paul Matcham (PM), Marcus Kravis (MK)

1. Minutes Of Last Meeting/Matters Arising/Action Log Review

Minutes from last meeting approved. A review of action points from previous meeting undertaken and action log updated.

Action log updates:

Action 19 - FT to look at initial actions of setting up 'educational' sub-group to take educational actions on Minehead Plan forward

Update: PM is now the champion for West Somerset Connecting Somerset Programme. The aim is to tie this role and the identified actions in the Minehead Plan together. FT to follow up with PM.

Action 20 - FT to take Walkers are Welcome project forward

Update: FT raised with the GS and BJ. Hold until an active business group representing Minehead is established and can take forward.

Action 21 - MCDT to speak to MTC re funding for Project Coordinator role

Update: Conversations ongoing between MTC & MCDT. Proposal sent by MCDT to MTC Operations Manager for review.

Action 27 – FT will pull together immediate Blue Flag Award ‘quick win’ actions that will enable a fast start next year.

Update: Awaiting response from Jim Whittaker with contact names for outstanding action points. Report to be shared with the group (attached with minutes)

Action 30 – Minehead Cultural Festival

Update: FT spoken with West Somerset Railway who don't have a plan for 2025 yet. Steampunk Festival keen to be involved. Waiting reply from Butlins representative. Ongoing action.

Action 32 – AH & CP to review potential locations for fish sculpture on seafront

Update: The meeting started by group walking to the seafront to review a potential location for the Beach Fish sculpture. A location near to the new Esplanade shelters was selected. FT to follow up with Somerset Council Assets Team and potential members of a new group to be formed to manage.

Action 42 - FT to create comms plans for MPAPP

Update: Facebook group created. First post this week to share a business update re free mentoring. Comma draft plans and briefing note shared with these minutes. All to review and provide feedback.

Action 44 – FT to update group following Somerset Chamber of Commerce meeting

Project Manager for Somerset Chamber of Commerce, Scott Jenkins, present to give presentation at end of meeting. **Complete**

2. Individual Updates

i. Somerset Council – Nicki Maclean

NM shared brief update on financial situation at Somerset Council. Full council to meet on 20th Feb. No Minehead specific updates. NM feels LCNs will be important. FT queried if anyone else had received the minutes from the last LCN meeting. RT has received and will forward to FT.

Action: RT to forward minutes of LCN meeting on to FT. **Complete**

ii. Minehead Town Council (MTC) – Cllr Craig Palmer

MTC meeting tonight (23rd Jan) to set budget for precept.

iii. Minehead and Coast Development Trust – Ray Tew

RT gave update on Esplanade shelters and National Lottery Community Fund second stage bid due by end of January.

iv. West Somerset Green Forum – Maureen Smith

WSGF are still working on retrofitting homes project, working with Somerset Climate Action Network (SCAN) to set up a Somerset-wide project.

Currently developing a job description for a full-time Project Worker to take projects forward. Will be looking for funding for this role. Spark Somerset and Somerset Community Foundation are assisting and advising. RT emphasised the need for joined up thinking to ensure all groups aren't applying to same funders without referencing other projects in bids. MS agreed to keep in touch re this.

v. Somerset Council (SC) – Cllr Andy Hadley

Budget is still priority for SC. Several meetings coming up to agree budgets.

AH will chase up the clearance of sand on seafront to determine what will happen with this going forward.

Action: AH to chase up plan for sand clearing on Minehead Esplanade.

vi. Minehead and Coast Development Trust – Zara Aitken

Free Beach Toy Library has been removed by Beach Hotel who have removed the beach huts it was located in. Plastic Free Minehead are currently looking for a new location, with consideration being given to several locations outside Minehead Information Centre, Jubilee Café or Channel Adventure. However, business would need to be able to manage the toy library and keep an eye on it, so Channel Adventure was ruled out due to not being open enough. ZA requested FT to provide introduction to Jubilee Café manager.

Action: FT to make introduction for ZA with Jubilee Café Owner – Mel Gale.

3. Clanville Gardens

MS has found a 2015 consultation regarding Clanville Gardens in which there seemed to be a lot of enthusiasm in the community to develop Clanville Gardens but no volunteers to take the lead on the project. MS feels an idea of maintenance costs would be crucial to understand the level of commitment required. CP registered concerns about the structural stability of the retaining wall. FT feels the first question would be to establish what Somerset Council's thinking around the project is. Once ascertained, a visit to the gardens could be arranged for interested parties to view.

Action: FT to discuss Clanville Gardens with Sally Stark, Somerset Council Assets Team and then arrange visit to gardens.

4. MCDT Project Coordinator Role Funding

ZA gave update that MCDT had been successful in securing £10,000 funding from Hinkley Point C Small Grants Programme to fund Project Coordinator role for a further 5–6 month period. MCDT working on National Lottery Community Fund second stage bid to be submitted at end of January.

5. Guest Speaker, Scott Jenkins, Somerset Chamber of Commerce (CoC) – LSIP Report

SJ gave brief presentation on new Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) Report that has recently been released by Somerset CoC. Somerset CoC were invited to bid for and deliver the LSIP plan. This then led to a number of engagement meetings being planned, with a local West Somerset session being delivered in Dunster towards the end of 2023. Attendance of this session was poor, with no local businesses in attendance.

SJ also updated on his other roles with Hinkley Point Supply Chain to ensure opportunities are being kept local. SJ also manages the Glastonbury Town Deal Supply Chain and is working with projects in Wellington and Bridgwater. SJ shared that businesses do not need to be a CoC member to join supply chain.

AH queried why Dunster had been selected as the location for the West Somerset session, rather than Minehead which is the largest town in West Somerset. SJ advised CoC were trying to target more than one area per session, and while it may be acknowledged the location wasn't the best choice, they were trying to make the sessions central to as many areas as possible. SJ advised the session was promoted on various social media channels, including local Facebook groups. None of MPAPP group were aware of this meeting, so engagement with public and local businesses could be improved.

FT and NM both queried if there were any opportunities to hold another session in Minehead to ensure Minehead-based businesses could still feed into the plan. SJ is happy to attend another session to give a presentation on the LSIP plan. SJ advised there are still opportunities for Minehead businesses to feed into the plan, advising that the LSIP will eventually feed into the Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF) from which funding could be obtained for local projects. NM suggested sharing the session via Somerset Council's Business Newsletter would improve engagement and reach.

FT enquired about the key messages from the LSIP plan. SJ advised the following key skills gaps had been identified:

- Digital skills
- Soft skills
- Project Management Skills
- Advanced manufacturing
- Green construction

AH queried whether low engagement at the Dunster event could have been due to local businesses, which are heavily reliant on skills in tourism, hospitality and care, not identifying with the above skills. SJ acknowledged that these categories aren't particularly relevant to Minehead businesses, but these categories had been pre-selected by Department for Education. A second round LSIP will commence (unknown start date) and the criteria for this stage will be selected by Somerset CoC, providing an opportunity for a more local skills focus.

Discussion ensued around education provision in Minehead with distinct lack of vocational qualifications provided at West Somerset College. FT feels first action would be to determine how many students in Bridgwater and Taunton currently have registered address in Minehead. This could determine whether there is a real need to provide further vocational training in Minehead.

Group agreed another meeting with Scott Jenkins to provide presentation to business community in Minehead would be appreciated. FT proposed an initial engagement session to outline the LSIP, determine appetite for a full session and also provide information on how to access and join supply chains for various projects mentioned by Scott previously during the meeting.

Action: FT to work with GS and BJ to develop this LSIP meeting in Minehead.