

## **MPAPP Minutes – 21<sup>st</sup> Jan 2025**

In attendance: Fiona Toms (FT), Cllr Andy Hadley (AH), Zara Aitken (ZA), Maureen Smith (MS), Cllr Marcus Kravis (MK), Ben Jewell (BJ)

Apologies: Paul Matcham (PM), Cllr Craig Palmer (CP), Ben Parker (BP), Ray Tew (RT)

Guest: Dr James Gilgrist (From 11:00)

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

Minutes of last meeting agreed.

Actions log update:

Retail Mentoring – FT & BJ met last year to discuss. FT wrote to Graham Sizer to enquire whether any funding from Minehead Chamber of Commerce could be made available. GS agreed that they could co-fund this. Fran Riseley (consultant used previously) is putting together a brief for hospitality mentoring which would be a 2 hour session at a cost of £10-15 for the business owner. There will be group sessions available, and attendees can also book independent sessions if needed.

Action: FT & BJ to meet again to take forward.

Community / Youth Awards – Maya compiled a list of awards currently available and circulated to the group. Action to be discussed next month when PM attends.

Swimming Pool – Colin Johnson's group now established, with bank account. They are meeting regularly. FT meeting with CJ after this MPAPP meeting.

Action: FT to provide an update in Feb after meeting with Colin's group.

Public Transport – FT had a phone call with the Hinkley Point C (HPC) reps. HPC felt that if we focused on the students at Bridgwater College, there may be more support available through funding. They suggested applying to Somerset Community Foundation and that using evidence based data would provide a stronger case. FT has contacted Bridgwater College to ask if a Google Form could be shared with Minehead-based students at Bridgwater college to see if we can determine the scale of the problem. MS suggested we should also try to determine how many potential students don't attend because of the transport issues.

Anti-social behaviour – BJ reported that the issues seem to have lessened. Trying to get more members to join the Town Watch scheme. Rumours re 'bail hostel' have gone. AH & Cllr Mandy Chilcott met with the owners of The Gascony Hotel. The owners would like to be informed of any problems with specific residents so they can handle.

Climate Adaptation Plan – ZA sent 2 emails to Andy Westcott but had no reply.

Business Directory – BJ has started developing an online business directory.

Spend Local Card – BJ reported that businesses are not keen to resurrect the Spend Local card.

## 2. Individual Updates

### i. **Cllr Marcus Kravis, Somerset Council**

MK reported that assets and services are being devolved to Minehead Town Council from Somerset Council. These include the Esplanade, Blenheim Gardens, North Rd and Summerland Rd car parks and the land at Ellicombe Roundabout, among others.

### ii. **Cllr Andy Hadley, Somerset Council**

No updates on the Post Office situation. Followed up regarding the removal of the burnt out caravan but needs to chase again.

### iii. **Maureen Smith, West Somerset Green Forum (WSGF)**

WSGF are meeting this week to discuss a way forward. Thinking of creating an online hub or directory for people to find groups, organisations, events and activities they can get involved in. ZA mentioned that this was an action in the Climate Adaptation Plan recently launched by MCDT.

### iv. **Ben Jewell, Minehead Together Business Association**

Traders are positive regarding the turnout for the Christmas lights event. Some reported the best late night shopping for years. Next event could be May Day. Currently building revenue streams.

## 3. **James Gilgrist (JG), Guest Speaker, Somerset Council Economic Development**

JG updated the group on the new Somerset Economic Growth Board. This was set up as a government requirement following the end of the Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs). The aim of the Board is to work with businesses to ensure business voice, growth, ensure they are serving business needs. Also developing an Economic Business Strategy which will be evidence-led. Stakeholder meetings are coming up. Strategy will be adopted in May. Business survey is live until 24<sup>th</sup> Jan. Presentation slides, engagement session and survey links will be shared. *Action now complete.*

AH queried whether tourism would feature on the Growth Board's agenda, as it's such a crucial part of the economy in Somerset. JG confirmed it is definitely in the strategy but there is more focus on the large growth sectors such as the Gravitas development, as these have more impact. JG reassured the group that they are working with Visit Somerset and Visit Exmoor on the Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) applications. Once accredited with Visit England, one of the first priorities will be to develop a Tourism Growth Strategy.

FT queried how the Board will ensure tourism and hospitality are represented on the board. JG suggested making this point in the stakeholder meetings to ensure it's flagged as a priority. FT encouraged the group to ensure they share the link to the survey with their networks so that Minehead's voice can be heard.

MS raised concerns around the lack of skills development and queried whether this would feature as part of the strategy. JG confirmed it is a key priority and fundamental to the strategy. JG advised that in the Somerset Council restructuring process, a new job role has been created around future skills.

MK questioned whether basics such as regeneration, social mobility and schools would be part of the strategy, rather than only high level strategies. JG advised his colleague Lara Bell is working on a regeneration strategy, and that these areas sit separately from business strategy.

Action: FT to invite Lara to a future MPaPP meeting.

FT advised that JG has agreed to attend meetings on a termly basis in January, May and September to provide updates to the group.