

**MINUTES of a MEETING of ST AUSTELL TOWN COUNCIL held on MONDAY 18<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2024 in The Registrar's Office, Carlyon Road, St Austell, Cornwall, PL25 4LD at 6pm.**

**Present:** Councillors: Brown, Bull, Cohen, Fox, French, Gray, Hamilton, Kimber, Lanxon, Pearce, Pears, Preece, Rowse, Stephens, Styles, Thompson and Young.

**In attendance:** David Pooley (Town Clerk) and Sara Gwilliams (Deputy Town Clerk).

**C/23/152) Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Clemo, Double and Guest. Councillor Rowse had advised that he would be late.

**C/23/153) Declarations of interests and gifts or hospitality received**

There were no declarations of interest.

**C/23/154) Dispensations**

There were no requests for a dispensation.

**C/23/155) Minutes of Meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> January 2024**

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> January 2024 be approved and signed as a correct record.

**C/23/156) Matters to Note**

In answer to questions, the Clerk confirmed that the works at Edgcumbe Road have started and a letter has been sent to Cornwall Council regarding the Mid Cornwall Metro Project but a response has not been received. Councillor Brown commented that the Mid Cornwall Metro "virtual balloon ride" recently exhibited in Newquay is reported to have cost £165,000. Councillor Pears, Portfolio Holder at Cornwall Council advised that he did not know the cost of initiative, but the publicity included exhibitions in Penryn as well as Newquay.

Arising from a question, Councillor Pears undertook to make enquiries with regard to the parking bays and congestion at Clifden Road.

**C/23/157) Mayor's announcements**

The Mayor advised that she had attended the King Scout Awards in Scredda, the Soroptimist Charter Lunch at Tywardreath, weekly briefings with the Clerk and a meeting with Cornwall Council and surrounding Parish Councils with regard to the proposed pedestrian crossing at Trehiddle. She added that she has also been involved in the preliminary interviews for the new Bishop of Truro.

*\*\*Councillor Rowse arrived to the meeting\*\**

**C/23/158) Public Participation**

None

## **C/23/159) Members' questions**

There were no questions from Members.

## **C/23/160) Emma Rodgers, Senior Development Manager – Treveth Holdings LLP**

The Mayor welcomed Emma Rodgers, Dominic O'Neill and Jacob Newman of Treveth Holdings to the meeting. They provided an update on their work and proposals for the former Cornwall Council office site at Penwinnick Road. Issues covered included:

- Time scales for demolition and site clearance
- Security of the site – options for improving security
- Bats on the site
- Trees on the site – including trees with ash dieback
- Trough (timescales for its removal to Truro Road Park)
- Timescales for the production of a planning brief and planning application
- Stakeholder consultation proposals
- Public consultation proposals
- The Town Council's tenancy at The Stable Block (current lease expires 2025).

Mr O'Neill advised that the Cornwall Council Planning Brief for the site will be used as guidance only as there are concerns about the density proposed. The business model adopted by Treveth is open market rental properties over a 3 year tenancy period with only a small proportion of properties for the open market. There will also be a proportion of affordable housing.

It is hoped that Treveth will be in a position to submit a planning application late summer/early autumn after a thorough consultation process. A stakeholder group is in the process of being formed with representatives from the community, Town Council, Revitalisation Partnership and the school. It is anticipated to have three public meetings:

1. April – meet Treveth
2. May/early June to discuss concepts, layout and use classes
3. Detailed consultation prior to planning application submission

A website will be produced for people who cannot attend the consultation events in person. There will also be regular updates on social media.

In addition, Ms Rodgers advised that once the demolition and levelling of the site has taken place, they are mindful to take the hoardings down, install good lighting across the site and allow pedestrian access. It is hoped that by allowing access to the site there will be less anti-social behaviour and the public will be able to better visualise the proposals as they develop through the consultation process.

Mr O'Neill advised that there is ash dieback on the site and two diseased trees have been removed. A further three trees within the Tree Preservation Order area on the site are also showing signs of ash dieback and will be managed accordingly.

The Listed Horse Trough is still in situ and once Listed Building Consent has been obtained from Cornwall Council it will be re-located to Truro Road Park.

Mr O'Neill advised that the Town Council's lease of The Stable Block terminates in December 2025 and that the current terms of the lease are linked to the Town Council's devolution project. Mr O'Neill confirmed they will contact the Town Council in good time to start discussing the options available to the Town Council. Mr O'Neill re-assured Members that no rash decisions will be made.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues/concerns:

- The need for an open and transparent consultation process
- The potential for a consultation event in the town centre
- The future of Pondhu House
- Concern with regard to high density housing on the site in the light of the severe traffic congestion on the A390 and the Mevagissey roundabouts
- Why the site has been allocated for housing as it contradicts the Town Framework
- The future of the Childrens' Centre

The Clerk asked for nominations to sit on the Stakeholder Group. Councillors Gray and Hamilton expressed an interest.

It was **RESOLVED** that Councillors Gray and Hamilton be nominated as the Town Council's representatives to sit on the Stakeholder Group.

The Mayor thanked the representatives from Treveth for their interesting presentation.

### **C/23/161) St Austell Town Centre Revitalisation Partnership**

*\*\* Mr Jonathan Nicholls, Hayhurst, Director, Hayhurst and Co Architects and Claire Taggart, Associate joined the meeting by TEAMS\*\**

By way of an introduction, the Town Clerk advised that there is a lack of large scale funding at the present time and uncertainty as to what will be available in the future. He stressed that it is imperative for the town to be "ready to go" as and when the next round of large scale funding is announced. He stressed the need for smaller scale priority projects to be either in progress or completed when the large scale funding is available to demonstrate that St Austell is a town that can deliver. The Clerk advised that the Government's "High Streets Task Force" report is a helpful document and complements the Masterplan.

The Clerk added that funding has been secured for the design of the church piazza, Cornwall Council's White River Place offices are scheduled to start within the next few months, Cornwall Council's Highways Department are looking at traffic flows/one way systems around the town and feasibility studies are being worked on for student accommodation in the town centre. He is also hopeful that Cornwall Council will make funding available for a refurbishment design of Duke Street and the old Fire Station site.

The Clerk advised that although important, the roof top garden on its own will not revitalise the town centre and that it has to be progressed alongside other smaller scale projects.

The Clerk welcomed Mr Jon Nicholls and his team to the meeting.

Mr Nicholls advised that he would like to update members on:

1. Design
2. Structural Surveys
3. Next Steps

Mr Nicholls provided a recap on the Vision and four concept roof strategies:

1. Secret Garden
2. Pop Up Park
3. Market Garden
4. Clayscape

He advised that following feedback on the strategies, the preferred approach from the Town Council and Partnership was based around:

1. Café bar
2. Town Square
3. Pop up studios
4. Seating
5. Covered Market
6. Hall
7. Greening

Support for this strategy was provided on the basis that the impact on the existing tenants would be considered throughout the project and minimised as far as possible.

Mr Nichols advised that whilst developing the preferred strategy the final costings were coming in around £5m to £6m which was in excess of the indicative budget of £3.6m. This cost, in the light of ongoing uncertainty around the changing economic and political environment, required an urgent review of the project and key representatives of the Town Council and Partnership met to make recommendations on how to proceed.

The key representatives met and reviewed the position and agreed the following:

- The project needed to be completed within the £3.6m indicative budget as outlined in the Revitalisation Plan and project specification;
- To focus the project outcome on Option 2 "Green Space" with potential for pop up/ad hoc activity
- To expedite structural testing

Mr Nichols confirmed that the two original access points remain within the latest design.

1. Side ramp access (by the butchers)
2. Vicarage Hill Square stair access

It was noted that the Vicarage Hill Square access includes the provision of a "Heritage Square" which includes a seated area, open space and greening.

It was further agreed that the scaling back would probably result in the loss of a large meeting hall and covered market.

Mr Nichols outlined the progress so far with regard to the commissioning of surveys, engineer visits and associated costs. He explained that there are only a few people who can carry out the survey works required and due to a number of RAAC projects (crumbling concrete) the timescales have become protracted.

Mr Nichols stressed that the designs developed to date have been made on structural assumptions based on a measured survey and the design code for the period of the building. He advised that with the landlords consent, more invasive testing will be carried out during April.

### **Next Steps**

The pre-application advice is still ongoing, but initial talks with Cornwall Council have been very positive. Once a more detailed design is worked up, the Planning and Heritage Officers will be able to provide further feedback, particularly with regard to the views to the Grade II listed Holy Trinity Church, proposed uses and any impact on the neighbouring properties.

Consultation with the leaseholder and Partnership is due to take place tomorrow.

In late April (dependent on agreement with the leaseholder) more in depth site surveys and testing will be carried out, the results of which will be used to formulate an integrated structural design.

During discussion, Members raised the following:

- Confirmation that the designs are currently based on calculated load bearing assumptions;
- The current proposals do not include a hall (to reduce costs), but they do include an enclosed café space and a small meeting space;
- The process adopted to reach this latest design proposal;
- The parallel process of the Town Council and Partnership receiving the same information within a few days of each other.

Overall, the Town Council expressed their support for the proposal and the progress so far.

The Mayor thanked Mr Nicholls for his presentation.

### **C/23/162) Nominations for Mayor and Deputy Mayor**

The Clerk explained that, although legally the Mayor and Deputy Mayor are elected at the Town Council's Annual Meeting in May each year, it was the Council's usual practice to choose a Mayor elect and a Deputy Mayor elect in March to ensure continuity.

The Clerk further advised that Councillor Double had withdrawn her nomination form for Deputy Mayor.

Members considered the nominations received for Mayor and Deputy Mayor for the 2024/25 Civic Year.

There was one nomination for Mayor. Councillor Young was proposed by Councillor Hamilton and seconded by Councillor Pearce.

It was **RESOLVED** to appoint Councillor Young as Mayor elect for the 2024/25 civic year.

There was one nomination for Deputy Mayor. Councillor Hamilton was proposed by Councillor Young and seconded by Councillor Pearce.

It was **RESOLVED** to appoint Councillor Hamilton as Deputy Mayor elect for the 2024/25 civic year.

### **C/23/163) Members appointed to outside bodies update reports**

Councillor Lanxon advised that the football club are hoping to have a public exhibition detailing their refurbishment plans within the next few weeks. She added that the Community Area Partnership has recently approved the Trenowah Road crossing highways scheme and the purchase of a mobile speed camera. The Town Council's preferred Highways Scheme for a pedestrian crossing at Tregonissey Road between Poltair School and Cornwall College was not approved for formal consideration by the Partnership.

### **C/23/164) Cornwall Councillor update reports**

Members noted the written reports of Councillors Double and Rowse.

Councillor Pears advised that he is due to meet with transport colleagues shortly with regard to the congestion issue at Clifden Road and that the bus service timetable is due to change at Easter.

*\*\*Councillor Rowse left the meeting\*\**

### **C/23/165) Schedule of Payments**

It was **RESOLVED** that the schedule of payments for the period 20<sup>th</sup> January 2024 to 8<sup>th</sup> March 2024 totalling £178,256.55 be approved.

### **C/23/166) Planning and Regeneration Committee**

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Planning and Regeneration Committee meetings dated 5<sup>th</sup> February 2024 and 4<sup>th</sup> March 2024 be noted.

### **C/23/167) Finance and General Purposes Committee**

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting dated 19<sup>th</sup> February 2024 be noted.

### **C/23/168) Community Committee**

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Community Committee Meeting dated 26<sup>th</sup> February 2024 be noted.

### **C/23/169) Staffing Committee**

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Staffing Committee Meeting dated 11<sup>th</sup> March 2024 be noted.

### **C/23/170) To consider excluding the press and public.**

It was **RESOLVED** that under Section 1 (ii) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following items in view of the commercially sensitive nature of the business to be transacted.

### **C/23/171) Piazza and Green Open Space**

The Clerk outlined the funding position with regard to the proposed piazza and green open space project and the next steps for design and delivery.

It was **RESOLVED** to:

1. Approve the project in principle;
2. Waive the Town Council's Standing Orders and appoint the Town Council's preferred contractor, Mei Loci, to carry out the design and, if funding is available, delivery of the project;
3. Contribute up to £2,000 from the Town Council's reserves towards the design project;
4. Set up a working group of key stakeholders to design and oversee the delivery of the design project.

### **C/23/172) Town Vitality Fund**

The Clerk outlined the proposed projects for Cornwall Council's Town Accelerator Fund, Strategic Fund and Delivery Fund and the Town Council's contribution towards each project.

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the projects in principle and the Town Council's contributions outlined in the table circulated.

### **C/23/173) Dates of Meetings**

It was noted that the next Town Council meetings are due to take place on 29<sup>th</sup> April 2024 (Annual Parish Meeting) and 15<sup>th</sup> May 2024 (Annual Town Council Meeting).

The meeting closed at 7.53pm.