

**St Austell Town Centre Revitalisation Partnership  
Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> March 2024 at 9.45am – Stable Block/TEAMS**

**Attendees:**

Democratic: Councillor Anne Double (AD) (Cornwall Councillor), (TEAMS), Councillor Tom French (TF), Councillor Crystal Pearce (CP) (TEAMS)

Voluntary/Community: Heather Batho (HB), Chris Sampson (CS), Sandra Heyward (SH).

Business: Peter Moody (PM) (St Austell Print), (TEAMS), Dale Lovatt (DL) (St Austell BID), Neil Woodward (NW) (South West Financial Services).

Advisors: Sara Gwilliams (TC), David Pooley (TC), Annette Miller (AM) (St Austell BID), Mark Ellis (ME) (CC) (TEAMS), Bill McCardle (B Mc) (TC).

Also in attendance: Jon Nicholls (JH), Director, Hayhurst and Co Architects, and Claire Taggart, (CT) Hayhurst and Co Architects (TEAMS), M Hawes (MH) (Mei Loci).

**Welcome**

In the absence of Councillor Brown Sandra Heyward assumed the Chair and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**Apologies for absence**

**Democratic:** Steve Double (MP), Councillor Malcolm Brown (MB), Councillor Richard Williams-Pears (RWP)

**Voluntary/Community:** Dr Stewart Smith (NHS), Alan Lawler (NHS).

**Business:** Miles Lovegrove (Fluid Branding) – expects to be late.

**Advisors:** Louise Wood (CC), Sarah Scoltock (CC),

**Minutes of the meeting dated 16th January 2024**

The minutes of the meeting dated 16<sup>th</sup> January 2024 were approved.

The Town Clerk (DP) provided an overview of the current situation and the stage that the Town Centre Revitalisation Partnership has reached. He explained that the funding arrangements have changed since the town centre planning process started and that there is now unlikely to be any large scale funding streams such as the Town Deal or Levelling Up Funds before the next election.

He stressed the importance of continuing to prepare for future funding streams and that in the next 12-18 months the following should be in place:

- An approved masterplan
- A High Street Taskforce report

- A new Cornwall Council office in White River Place and associated public realm improvements
- Small projects completed – Banners and church piazza/grounds
- Rooftop Garden designed and plans developed
- Highways feasibility work completed
- General Wolfe refurbishment complete with improvements to Bodmin Road corner
- Bodmin Road made safer in conjunction with A30 link road
- Student/key worker accommodation feasibility/design work
- Duke Street public realm design
- Old Fire Station site – design/works
- Major housing developments to the south-west of St Austell which should boost the local economy.

The Clerk stressed that no one measure will revitalise the town centre but with all of the above in place, St Austell should be in a strong position to apply for significant funding.

### **Rooftop Garden Project**

The Chair 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 proviso that the impact on the existing tenants would be considered throughout the project and minimised as far as possible.

Mr Nichols advised that the stage costings were coming in around the £5.2m indicative budget established by the Revitalisation Masterplan.

This cost, in the light of ongoing uncertainty around funding and 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 designed to be within the 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 is due to take place later today.

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 the following points were raised:

- Confirmation that the designs are currently based on calculated load bearing assumptions;
- The timing and extent of structural survey work;
- 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 Town Council's support for the proposals;
- ASB and security arrangements;
- Why the structural testing was not carried out at the start of the project.

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

The Chair thanked Mr Nicholls for his presentation.

### **Vacancy on the Partnership (Voluntary/Community Sector)**

CS advised that he and SH had an individual in mind who might be interested in the vacancy.

**Action: CS to approach the individual and let SG know if he is interested.**

### **Carlyon Road Working Group**

ME advised that the Working Group would meet in April/May to consider the draft report setting out a range of options for the Carlyon Road site. Once approved by the stakeholder group, presentations would be made to Town Council and the Partnership.

### **High Street Task Force**

The Clerk advised that the report has been received and circulated. The report highlights the negative impact of ASB in the town centre, praises the unity and ambition of local stakeholders and makes some interesting suggestions including:

- Up-lighting the church and viaduct
- Opening access to the rear of the Market House
- Improving street furniture, signage and lighting
- Introduction of artists areas
- Town centre housing
- Utilisation of the Old Fire Station site
- Safety measures on Bodmin Road

The Town Clerk advised that, whether individuals agreed with all of the recommendations or not, having had the visit and the report will help future bids for funding.

## **Town Vitality Funding**

The Town Clerk advised that a paper containing proposals for funding had been submitted to Cornwall Council officers and outlined the three pots of money within the Town Vitality Fund which are only available to the non-Town Deal Fund Towns. The three funding streams are:

- Town Accelerator Fund
- Strategic Fund
- Delivery Fund

The Clerk outlined 7 potential projects which were in the paper and the funding pot from which he believed funding could be sought:

1. Student accommodation feasibility funding (Town Accelerator Fund/Strategic Fund)
2. Highways feasibility funding (Town Accelerator Fund)
3. Banner replacement and community engagement (Delivery Fund)
4. Old fire station site improvements (Strategic Fund)
5. Church Piazza improvements (Delivery Fund)
6. Duke Street design funding (Strategic Fund)
7. CCTV cameras (Strategic Fund)

The Clerk added that the Town Council had approved £35,000 of contributions to help match Town Vitality Fund monies. Further meetings with Cornwall Council officers were anticipated before the allocations would be finalised.

## **Town Council update**

The Clerk advised that the bid submitted to the Community Capacity Fund for funding for design works/improvements to the church grounds and piazza had been successful. A working group of stakeholders would be formed shortly to oversee the design work and a consultant would be appointed to undertake the design work.

The Town Council remains supportive of the town centre as demonstrated by the recent approval of relatively large contributions to the BID and to match fund the TVF monies.

## **Cornwall Council update (Mark Ellis)**

ME advised that work on Cornwall Council's new offices in White River Place is due to start in May. The landlord will manage the fit out with a projected opening early in 2025.

There have been some issues with the funding for the General Wolfe scheme. Cormac has started the review of the highways on Bodmin Road and discussions are due to take place with Transport officers about highways around the Church area.

ME advised that the demolition of the offices at Penwinnick Road is progressing well and it is hoped that a planning application will be submitted at the end of the summer with start on site towards the end of 2025.

SG advised that Treveth is hoping to set up a working group to help steer the development of the Penwinnick Road site and are looking for 2 representatives from the Town Centre Revitalisation Partnership.

Chris Sampson and Sandra Heyward volunteered to sit on the group.

It was **RESOLVED** that Chris Sampson and Sandra Heyward should sit on the Treveth Working Group to help steer the development of the Penwinnick Road site.

**Action: SG to advise Treveth that CS and SH have been nominated from the partnership to sit on the Treveth Penwinnick Road Working Group.**

SH highlighted an increase in large lorries using Bodmin Road.

### **Financial Update**

The Clerk advised that a comprehensive financial statement for the Town Centre Revitalisation Partnership projects will be produced as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 (year end) for consideration at the next meeting.

### **Any Other Business**

None

### **Date of Next Meeting**

- Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> May 2024 (AGM)

The meeting closed at 11.20am.