

**MINUTES of a MEETING of the FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE held on MONDAY 12<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2018 in the Stable Block, Pondhu House, Penwinnick Road, St Austell, PL25 5DP at 6pm.**

**Present:** Councillors: Brown, Bishop, Cohen, French, Jones (Chair), Lanxon, Oxenham, Palmer, Styles and Walker.

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

**F/18/36) Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors King and Rees.

**F/18/37) Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**F/18/38) Dispensations**

There were no requests for dispensations.

**F/18/39) Minutes of meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> September 2018**

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on the 24<sup>th</sup> September 2018 be approved and signed as a correct record.

**F/18/40) Matters to Note**

The Clerk advised that he had nothing to add.

In response to a question, the Clerk advised that he had not yet been advised of the outcome of a test case which may necessitate individual Councillors being registered as Data Controllers.

**F/18/41) Public participation**

There were no members of the public present.

*\*\*Councillor Brown arrived during the next item\*\**

**F/18/42) Budgets 2018/19 and 2019/20**

The Clerk circulated revised budget projections following receipt of actual figures from Cornwall Council for the Council Tax Base and Council Tax Grant. He explained that the figures showed the actual 2017/18 outturn figures, the original 2018/19 budget, the revised 2018/19 budget and a draft 2019/20 budget plus a further two year projection.

The Town Clerk explained that the draft budget which had been prepared reflected the recent informal discussions with Councillors and allowed for no growth. He advised that the items included within the budget are:

- The nationally agreed 2019/20 pay award;
- Reduced running costs for CCTV (if upgrade is approved);

- Running costs for The House;
- £8,000 budget for Small Grants, £14,000 budget for other grants.

Items that are not included are:

- Additional staff resource
- Additional library opening hours
- A maintenance budget for SABEF greening/ceramics projects
- Any further devolution
- Toilets for Truro Road Park

The Clerk further advised that the Council Tax base is significantly lower than anticipated but the Council Tax grant is slightly higher. He reiterated that a 12.31% Council Tax increase would result in a Band D Council Tax of £109.78 per annum which is still lower than the 2018/19 Cornwall average of £115.51 per annum. He added that a 12.31% increase would keep the Town Council on a sound footing and allow continued gradual improvement of existing services.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues/concerns:

- Whether a cheaper CCTV solution can be found;
- What savings would be required to set the Council Tax below 10%;
- Whether the grants budget could be reduced to assist with savings;
- The number of households in St Austell with a very limited income and who are struggling to pay Council Tax;
- The potential to take on traffic, dog and litter enforcement in due course;
- The need to introduce new technology, particularly with regard to CCTV and car parking arrangements;
- The need to carry on being an aspirational Town Council.

The Town Clerk reassured Members that the Town Council is currently financially sound and that it is providing a number of excellent services on a very limited budget, particularly in comparison with other Town Councils in Cornwall.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that the following 3 options are brought forward to full Council for consideration:

1. A budget for a 12.31% Council Tax increase;
2. A budget for a 10.9% Council Tax increase identifying the budget heads that need to be cut;
3. A budget for a 9.9% Council Tax increase identifying the budget heads that need to be cut.

It was **AGREED** that the Town Clerk would produce a revised grants criteria in order to limit the type of organisations eligible for a grant.

*\*\*Councillor Lanxon left during the next item\*\**

### **F/18/43) Car Park Charges for the 2019/20 financial year**

The Clerk advised that the Working Group has met and has made the following recommendations:

- A reduction in the 4 hour charge from £4.80 to £3.00;

- A reduction in the season ticket from £135 per quarter to £107 per quarter and £400 per annum.

He advised that if approved, the changes could reduce income by approximately £5,000 to £10,000 if demand does not increase. The group also suggested that suitable signage could be erected to encourage the use of the car park to support the Town Council's efforts to improve St Austell.

The Clerk outlined a proposal suggested by the Chamber of Commerce as follows:

Up to 3 hours	£1.60
Up to 5 hours	£4.80
All day	£9.00

Members agreed that the solution might encourage longer visits to the town and generate more car park revenue if there were no reduction in throughput, but that it was a high risk strategy which could lead to a large transfer of loyalty to cheaper car parks, especially as 60% of users stay for less than 1 hour.

The Clerk advised that Cornwall Council is trialling a pay on exit system in 10 of its car parks and suggested that if successful, the Town Council could explore a similar arrangement.

A request has been received from the BID for free car parking, after 4pm on the four pre-Christmas late night shopping days. It was suggested that a similar arrangement should be put in place for the Torchlight Carnival on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> November.

Members raised the following issues/concerns:

- Which car parks had been identified by Cornwall Council for the trials;
- The need to reduce the car park season tickets which might lead to less parking in residential areas;
- The need to explore new technology, particularly an ANPR system which could ultimately lead to an increase in income;
- The potential to turn some of the coach parking spaces in to season ticket holder designated spaces;
- The high risk of losing throughput if the 1 hour car park charge was increased from £1.00 to £1.60 as suggested by the Chamber of Commerce.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that:

1. The 3 hour charge band be removed and the 4 hour charge be reduced to £3;
2. The season ticket charges be reduced to £107 per quarter, £214 per half year and £400 per annum;
3. The Clerk be authorised to explore the viability of ANPR based car park systems within 9 months;
4. The Clerk be authorised to improve signage encouraging local residents to use Priory Car Park to support the other Town Council improvements across the town.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

1. Free parking be granted after 4pm for the Torchlight Carnival and for each of the four Christmas late night shopping events.

### **F/18/44) CCTV Monitoring**

It was **RESOLVED** to note the CCTV Manager's report.

*\*\*Councillor Lanxon returned to the meeting\*\**

### **F/18/45) CCTV**

The Clerk provided a brief history of the Town Council's involvement with CCTV and the progress made to date. He advised that the analogue cameras are now showing signs of age, rely on hardwiring which makes them more susceptible to lightening damage and are beginning to fail with poor picture quality. Following an invitation from the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) to apply for grant funding for CCTV improvements, a bid was submitted in the sum of £56,600.

As a result of the bid submitted, the PCC has approved a grant of £15,000 to the Town Council. £6,600 has been expended to deal with emergency upgrades due to camera failures which leaves a balance of £35,000 to fund the scheme proposed. This includes:

- Replacement of 10 analogue cameras with digital high definition cameras
- Improved radio links
- 5 new cameras (Truro Road, High Cross Street, Fore Street, Trinity Street and Poltair Park)

The Clerk advised Members that the funding required could be found from an underspend on this year's budget and would not impact on the 2019/20 budget.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues/concerns:

- Whether or not the existing cameras could be re-arranged to increase CCTV coverage across the town;
- Whether there is a cheaper solution on the market;
- The need to explore new technology;
- The need to ensure that each camera installed has a clear vision particularly where there are trees nearby;
- The need to supplement Police resource with CCTV;
- The need to consider the public's privacy;
- Whether or not it is the role of the Town Council to fund Police cut backs

It was **RECOMMENDED** that:

1. The existing 10 analogue cameras are upgraded to digital high definition cameras;
2. 5 new cameras are installed as follows:
  - Park House Flats (overlooking Truro Road Park);
  - Top of High Cross Street/Cemetery Park
  - Centre of Fore Street
  - Poltair Park (opposite the library)
  - Trinity Street (lower end)

3. Radio links are improved to ensure a more robust system.

*\*\*Councillor Jones voted against this item\*\**

### **F/18/46) Insurance Renewal**

The Clerk advised that the five year agreement with Zurich ends on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019 and that 1, 3 and 5 year quotations are being sought from a number of potential insurance providers.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman be authorised to accept the most economically advantageous quotation received for the Town Council's general insurance.

### **F/18/47) Approved Direct Debits**

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the list of Direct Debits as at October 2018.

### **F/18/48) Cornwall Council – Positive Parking Framework**

The Deputy Town Clerk advised that Cornwall Council, under their Positive Parking Framework, is offering Town and Parish Councils the opportunity to select a day over the festive period when Cornwall Council will provide free car parking within their pay and display car parks in their town. The Deputy Clerk suggested that although short notice, the Torchlight Carnival day might be suitable or possibly the last Saturday before Christmas.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

1. The Town Clerk should respond to Cornwall Council requesting that Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> November (Torchlight Carnival day) be designated as a free parking day in Polkyth Car Park;
2. Should the 17<sup>th</sup> November be too short notice, a request for free parking in Polkyth Car Park on the last Saturday before Christmas be submitted;
3. Cornwall Council be advised that the Torchlight Carnival Day is the preferred free parking day for future years.

### **F/18/49) Budget Monitoring Report**

The Clerk drew Members' attention to some variances but advised that overall, the Town Council remains within budget for the period April to September 2018.

### **F/18/50) St Austell Library**

The Deputy Town Clerk drew Members' attention to the Library Manager's report and expressed her delight with the continuing success of the library and drew particular attention to the WW1 events over the weekend. She advised that the October footfall in to the library was 9,137 and that 660 people went in to the library on Saturday, the day of the statue unveiling. She advised that the staff consultation is due to take place within the next couple of weeks (on their terms and conditions) and that she had offered to sit on a newly formed library partnership forum.

Members expressed their gratitude to all of the library staff and SALSA for putting on the excellent WW1 events over the last few days and asked that the Clerk send a suitable letter of thanks on behalf of the Town Council.

**F/18/51) Dates of next meeting**

It was noted that the next meetings of the Finance and General Purposes Committee are due to take place on Monday 25<sup>th</sup> February 2019 and 8<sup>th</sup> April 2019.

The meeting closed at 8pm.