



St Austell Town Council Annual Report 2023/24

Message from the Mayor

This past year as your Mayor and Town Council Chair has been a huge privilege and honour. It has given me the opportunity to meet lots of organisations and interesting people. St Austell really has some wonderful people, businesses and community groups. It was a busy and productive year. Some of our achievements are listed below which I hope you find interesting.

Once again, the Town Council has had a good year and being Mayor has given me a real insight into what is involved in running a Town Council. It might look all smooth and serene, but underneath there are a lot of feet paddling to keep up with the day to day intricacies of government legislation, employing staff, running the Town Council's services and managing contractors.

In July we sadly lost Councillor Deborah George. I will always remember Deborah as an excellent Councillor who took the time to read the Town Council's agendas, carry out research on the topics to be discussed and express her views in a considered and passionate manner. Her passing was a huge shock to everyone who knew her.

This year, the Town Council welcomed 3 new Councillors, Councillors Kimber, Gray and Preece to represent Poltair & Mount Charles, Central & Gover and Bethel & Holmbush Wards respectively.

The Town Council continues to be the accountable body for the town centre revitalisation activities and the majority of this year has been taken up with the roof top garden feasibility project which should be completed later this year. The Town Council and Revitalisation Partnership have been receiving update reports throughout the year and it is hoped that once complete, there will be a "shovel ready" project in place for the development of the old multi storey car park into a community space. Running alongside this project, the Town Council has secured funding to design and deliver a church piazza scheme and to design and deliver replacement banners for the Poundland building.

In between these projects, the Town Council has considered 80 planning applications and approved 18 grants for local organisations. The Town Council has also:

- Completed Bethel Park mine capping
- Demolished the old toilet block and erected a bat house in Poltair Park
- Agreed additional funding for the town centre security guards, town centre planting schemes and Christmas Lights;

- Objected to a major Planning Application at Aspen Drive which led to Cornwall Council's Planning Committee refusing the application;
- Provided free parking in Priory Car Park on the last four Saturdays in December for Christmas Shopping;
- Obtained a clean bill of health for health and safety, financial records and governance;
- Taken on the planting at St Austell station;
- Facilitated a number of community events in the Town Council's parks
 - Coronation events
 - Party in the park (Poltair)
 - Charity Dog show (Poltair)
 - Big Butterfly Count (Linear Park)
- Successfully bid for community chest monies to paint the skateboard ramp at the Meadows park;
- Recruited a Grounds Maintenance Apprentice;
- Obtained grant funding and installed a bus shelter at Holmbush;
- Allotments at Alexandra Road cleared and a vacant plot re-let
- Supported a community group working in Truro Road Park to achieve a 4 star South West in Bloom award;
- Provided a grant for the St Austell Festival of Children's Literature

The Town Council is continuing to invest in its assets and secured CIL funding this year to completely refurbish Bethel Park. The project was started at the beginning of June and completed at the end of July in time for the summer holidays. Before we started the park had 3 pieces of play equipment and it now has 9 brand new items, a sensory garden, a wildflower area, more trees and an accessible path. The park is extremely popular which is pleasing to see.

The other parks and open spaces have also received some investment with brand new safety surfacing repairs at Truro Road Park and general parks and play equipment maintenance and repairs across all sites.

We are still doing our bit with regard to climate change. 45 trees have been planted since May 2023 in the Town Council's parks and open spaces and we continue to maintain and enhance a number of wildflower areas. A new wildflower area has been created in Bethel Park and for the D-Day commemorations in June, poppies have been planted at Edgcombe Triangle and Mount Charles Roundabout. The Town Council supported CASA's green fair at the Holy Trinity Church in October and the Town Council's grounds staff assist Edible St Austell at the Landrew Road community garden from time to time with large clearance works or waste disposal.

The Town Council remains in partnership with Newquay Town Council to run a CCTV service for Newquay and St Austell which is the envy of many towns in Cornwall. We are now on summer hours which means that the cameras are monitored almost 24/7 with most parts of the town centre covered by CCTV. The Town Council's mobile CCTV camera has been particularly successful in two areas with one placement resulting in a closure order and the other experiencing a substantial reduction in ASB. My gratitude goes to the team in Newquay for providing such an excellent proactive CCTV monitoring service.

The Town Council agreed to freeze the car park charges in Priory Car Park for the 2024~25 financial year and still managed to set a very reasonable Council Tax increase. Tregonissey Lane End Car Park has also received some attention over the last few months in that it has been cut back to improve visibility lines and car park attendants have been patrolling from time to time to enforce the 3 hours no return rule to prevent people from parking there all day.

New car park payment machines were installed in Priory Car Park at the beginning of the year which after a few teething problems are now working well. People visiting Priory Car Park can now pay by cash, contactless, Mobile App, a QR Code payment system or purchase a season ticket.

The faded white lines have been re-painted in the top section of the car park and the Town Council also facilitated the installation of EV charging points which it is hoped should increase the footfall in the town centre.

A business rates assessment for Priory Car Park was successfully challenged and has achieved a saving of £36,000 for the Town Council.

The library is still performing well with on average 6000 people visiting the library every month. It is still in the top two busiest Libraries in Cornwall and has a wide range of activities every month. The Town Council has taken on the Home Library Service from Cornwall Council and now oversees 7 volunteers delivering books to people who due to mobility issues are unable to visit the library themselves. The library is also actively involved in the St Austell Literacy Festival which this year was held over three days in June.

During my year I attended many events, but I particularly enjoyed switching on the Christmas lights, attending the Garden Festival and being interviewed by CHAOS radio.

I hope that members of the public will recognise how much work has gone into the last year and how far the Town Council has grown while maintaining a below average council tax and a very lean staffing team.

I would like to thank all of our partners and the people of St Austell for their help and support during this busy year and record a special thank you to my deputy, Councillor Julian Young, and the Council staff that supported me throughout my period in office.

Crystal Pearce
Mayor of St Austell

2023/24



*Councillor Crystal Pearce Mayor of St Austell
2023-24*



St Austell Town Council team 2023/24: (Left to right) Steve Skinner (Operations Manager), Kimberley Gay (Finance/Admin Support Officer), Sara Gwilliams (Deputy Town Clerk) and David Pooley (Town Clerk)

St Austell Town Council

St Austell Town Council has the following responsibilities:

- Parks at Bethel, Chapel Fields, Chy Pons, Jubilee Meadow, Landrew Road, Linear Park, Lostwood Road, Manfield Way, Penmere Road, The Polmarth Close, Poltair, Prince Charles, Sandy Bottom, The Meadows, Thornpark Road, Truro Road, Woodland Close and Woodland Road.
- The management of St Austell Library
- Priory and Tregonissey Lane End Car Parks
- Public conveniences, Priory Car Park
- Allotments at Alexandra Road
- Maintenance of footpaths for Cornwall Council
- Weed spraying
- Grass cutting on roadside verges and roundabouts for Cornwall Council
- Flower beds
- Town centre CCTV
- The House Youth Centre

Contact Details

St Austell Town Council
The Stable Block
Pondhu House
Penwinick Road
St Austell
Cornwall PL25 5DP

Telephone: 01726 829859

E-mail: info@staustell-tc.gov.uk

Website: www.staustell-tc.gov.uk

Cornwall Council

Cornwall Council has wide ranging responsibilities, including:

- Education
- Social Services
- Highways and Transportation
- Determining Planning Applications and Development Control.
- Collection of Council Tax and Business Rates
- Benefits Administration
- Housing and homelessness

- Libraries and Arts
- Fire Brigade
- Refuse collection, recycling and waste disposal
- Environmental Health
- Leisure
- Youth Services
- Crime and Disorder/Anti-Social Behaviour
- Cemeteries

Cornwall Council can be contacted at:

Cornwall Council
County Hall
Treyew Road
Truro
Cornwall TR1 3AY

Telephone: 0300 1234 100

E-mail: enquiries@cornwall.gov.uk

Website: www.cornwall.gov.uk

In the 2023/24 civic year Cornwall Council had three Councillors representing St Austell. These were Councillors Double, Rowse and Pears. They are also Town Councillors.



St Austell Town Council has 20 Councillors (7 Councillors representing the Central and Gover Ward, 6 Councillors representing Poltair and Mount Charles Ward and 7 representing Bethel and Holmbush Ward). A list of current Councillors is included later in this report. The next election will be May 2025.

Each year, the Council elects one councillor to be the Mayor who then acts as the civic leader and chairs Council meetings. The Council has adopted a code of conduct and is committed to proper standards and sound governance arrangements.

Meetings are currently held in Cornwall Council's Registrar's Office, Carlyon Road, St Austell or at the Town Council's offices at The Stable Block, Pondhu House, Penwinnick Road, St Austell. The full Council meets approximately every six weeks. In addition to the full Council meetings, the Council has four standing committees to ensure the effective management of its business:

- Finance and General Purposes Committee
- Planning & Regeneration Committee
- Community Committee
- Climate and Environment Committee

There is a public participation session at each of the Council's official meetings to allow members of the public to make comments or raise issues about items on the agenda. From time to time, working groups are formed to address particular issues. A calendar of Council meetings for the forthcoming year can be found on the Council's website at www.staustell-tc.gov.uk. Agendas and minutes are published on the website.

The Council employs thirteen full-time and eight part-time members of staff who are based either at the Stable Block or St Austell Library. Key contacts are:

David Pooley – Town Clerk
Sara Gwilliams – Deputy Town Clerk
Steve Skinner – Operations Manager
Kimberley Gay – Finance/Administrative Support Officer (Part-time)
Terry Shaw – Library Manager

The Town Council serves the town of St Austell which has a population of approximately 22,000. The boundary of St Austell parish is drawn very tightly around the urban area of St Austell and excludes much of the recent expansion of the town.

Services and facilities provided within the town of St Austell are also enjoyed by people living in the surrounding villages and by the many tourists who visit the town each year.

The Town Council has been very keen to enhance the parks and open spaces in St Austell and to improve local pride in the town. It also seeks to ensure that however the town changes in the future the process is managed and that appropriate infrastructure accompanies it. An important role of the Council is to represent and champion local residents and businesses to ensure that their views are taken into account by the larger organisations operating and investing in the area.

The Town Council is consulted on all planning and some licensing applications in its area and in relation to many of the other services provided by Cornwall Council.

The Town Council seeks to work in partnership with Cornwall Council and other agencies to ensure delivery of the highest quality services and facilities to local residents.



2023/24 Activities

Service Devolution

The Town Council is a strong advocate for service devolution and has taken a broad range of services and assets from Cornwall Council including toilets, allotments, parks and open spaces, maintenance of highways grassed areas, car parks, the library and The House Youth Centre. The Town Council's visionary devolution project was praised by the late Secretary for State, James Brokenshire MP, and by Cornwall Council and others as an example of good practice.

The benefits of the local management of services are being demonstrated through better maintenance of parks, the library, public conveniences and play areas and improved floral displays, tree planting and grass cutting.



Climate Change

The Town Council has declared a climate emergency and has a Climate and Environment Committee to oversee environmental issues. It has arranged events at the Library and used the annual town centre garden festival to raise awareness of climate issues. An action plan has been developed and initiatives undertaken include tree planting, creation of wildflower and wildlife areas, rainwater harvesting, plant recycling, seed gathering and the growing of plants and trees.

Safe and natural treatments for weeds have been trialled and initiatives including e-bikes, cycling and walking trails and electric vehicle charging points are being explored with Cornwall Council.



Town Heritage Scheme

The Town Council worked closely with Cornwall Council and others to deliver a Townscape Heritage (TH) scheme for St Austell. Townscape Heritage schemes fund quality traditional repairs to targeted historic buildings in Conservation Areas. The Heritage Lottery Fund provided a grant of £980,000 and this generated significantly more investment in valuable historic buildings. A number of buildings and in particular shopfronts have been improved and a number of public realm works have been completed.

St Austell Business Improvement District (BID)

The Business Improvement District (BID) for St Austell is funded primarily by local business ratepayers in the town centre who determine their priorities for the BID area.

The Town Council is pleased to support and work closely with the BID which plays an important role in the town and organises a number of events and environmental and security initiatives in the town centre. The Town Council and the BID fund security personnel who patrol primarily the town centre but also other areas in St Austell which experience anti-social behaviour. Regular meetings are held with the police, Cornwall Council's ASB officers, security personnel and CCTV staff to ensure that intelligence is shared and appropriate supportive or enforcement action is taken.

CCTV

The CCTV system in St Austell is owned and maintained by the Town Council with monitoring arrangements shared with Newquay Town Council. The Town Council has 20 fixed CCTV cameras and one redeployable or mobile CCTV camera which can be located at sites across the town temporarily as needed. In 2023/24 these cameras have supported a number of convictions for anti-social behaviour, shop lifting and drug related offences. The link to Newquay was upgraded in 2023/24 to ensure the effectiveness of the camera system.

Youth Services

The Town Council has provided annual funding of £20,000 to secure the future of The House youth project. A lease has been granted to Young People Cornwall (YPC) who have re-located their headquarters to the building. This has secured over 40 jobs in St Austell and created a centre of excellence for youth services in the town. Youth workers undertake outreach work on behalf of the Council when issues with young people arise. YPC provide a range of important health and well-being services, training, support, activities and guidance for young people as well as a regular youth club.

Library

The Town Council leases St Austell Library from Cornwall Council. St Austell library is one of the busiest libraries in Cornwall and under the Town Council's management continues to provide benefits way beyond the traditional functions of a library. The Town Council works closely with a voluntary support group known as SALSA. Community events, activities for infants and young children are offered as are classes and social groups for adults. We even offer a home library service locally.

Environmental initiatives

The Town Council undertakes a number of environmental projects each year. In 2023/24 we:

- Planted 45 trees some of which were donated to the Town Council and maintained existing and created new wildflower areas;
- Recruited a grounds maintenance apprentice;
- Capped a mine which opened up on the edge of Bethel Park ;
- Supported Edible St Austell with the development of a community garden at Landrew Road;
- Assumed responsibility for planting on St Austell station;
- Obtained a grant and completed a major improvement project at Bethel Park which included new play equipment, accessible paths, a sensory garden and planting of trees and pollinators;
- A complete upgrade of the safety surface in the play area at Truro Road Park;
- Obtained grant funding and installed a bus shelter at Holmbush.



Other initiatives

The Town Council has:

- Operated a small grants scheme for local community and charitable groups. The Council gave 18 small grants totalling £7,500 in 2023/24 and agreed additional funding for town centre security staff, town centre planting schemes and Christmas lights;
- Worked with the Government's High Street Taskforce to identify potential improvements to the town centre and attracted over £200,000 grant funding from Cornwall Council to enable projects to be planned to help revitalise it;
- Agreed to freeze the car park charges at the Priory Car Park and improved the Tregonissey Lane End Car Park and enforcement arrangements on site;
- Installed new car park machines in Priory Road Car Park to enable contactless card payments and worked with Cornwall Council to install electric vehicle charging points. Faded white lines have been repainted, planting in the car park has been improved and a reduction in the business rate assessment has been negotiated saving over £36,000;
- Undertaken pre-planning consultations with developers, arranged large-scale public meetings to give residents the opportunity to raise concerns or suggest improvements to major planning proposals and responded to 80 planning application consultations.



Mayor Crystal Pearce with the dancing elves
St Austell Christmas Lights switch on November 2023
Photo: Paul Williams

Annual Accounts 2023/24

The Council's Statement of Accounts for 2023/24 has been prepared in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. The Council's Accounts are audited annually by an independent internal auditor and forwarded to BDO LLP, an external auditor, for final appraisal. These accounts are subject to audit.

REVENUE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2024

2022/23	2023/24
£	£
Income	
905,520	1,067,220
260,407	245,954
15,239	0
6,935	5,767
33,165	175,456
2,732	2,319
155,866	136,961
1,379,864	1,633,677
Less Operating Expenses	
628,992	694,016
187,337	118,652
397,007	673,794
74,912	30,536
0	11,652
86,520	92,002
1,374,768	1,620,652
5,096	13,025
Net Surplus (+)/ Deficit (-)	



Balance Sheet **As at 31 March 2024**

31 March 2023 £	31 March 2024 £
Assets	
Current Assets	
Debtors and Prepayments	48,133
Bank and Cash	135,146
Short Term Investments	770,083
Total Current Assets	953,362
Fixed Assets	784,017
Liabilities	
Current Liabilities	
Creditors and accruals	45,260
Total Current Liabilities	45,260
Net Assets	1,692,119
Equity	
Asset Revaluation Reserve	96,652
Capital Financing Reserve	687,365
Earmarked Reserves	528,449
General Reserve	379,653
Total Equity	1,692,119

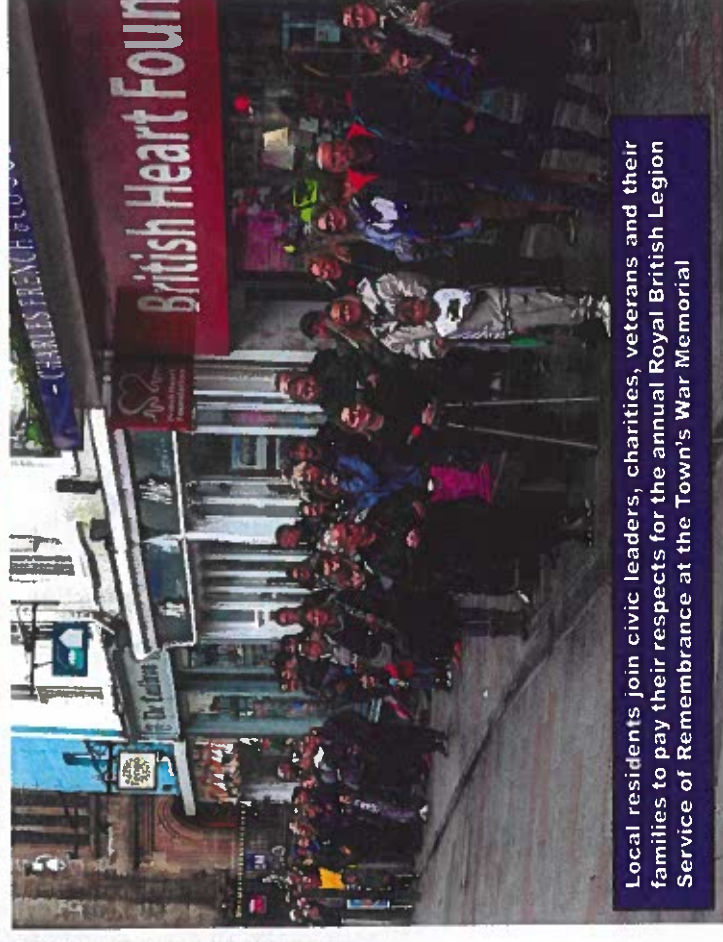
Notes

1. Ceremonial assets have been valued by independent valuers using an insurance methodology as at 31st March 2010. It is not considered necessary to re-value all assets annually. Other fixed assets are included at cost.
2. Debtors and prepayments include an insurance premium and car park income in transit.
3. Accounts payable relate largely to contract and operational expenses paid by direct debit after the year end.



A plaque commemorating the Coronation of King Charles 111 is unveiled at St Austell Library by Mayor Crystal Pearce and Deputy Mayor Julian Young and Councillor Tom French DL





Local residents join civic leaders, charities, veterans and their families to pay their respects for the annual Royal British Legion Service of Remembrance at the Town's War Memorial



Mayor Making takes place at the Holy Trinity Church with Councillor Crystal Pearce taking over from Councillor Andrea Lanxon. Also in attendance were charities and groups including St Austell Soroptimists.