

# sSt Austell Town Council



## Finance and General Purposes Committee

**To: All Members of the Finance and General Purposes Committee**

(Councillors: Brown, Bull, Clemo, French, Gray, Lanxon, Pearce, Rowse and Young).

Dear Councillor

You are summoned to attend a **Meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee** to be held in **The Stable Block, Pondhu House, Penwinnick Road, St Austell, Cornwall, PL25 5DP** on **Monday 17<sup>th</sup> February 2025 at 6pm.**

***\*\*Please note the change of venue\*\****



David Pooley  
**Town Clerk**

12<sup>th</sup> February 2025

Tel: 01726 829859

E.mail: [david.pooley@staustell-tc.gov.uk](mailto:david.pooley@staustell-tc.gov.uk)

Website: [www.staustell-tc.gov.uk](http://www.staustell-tc.gov.uk)

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### AGENDA

<b>1.</b>	<b>Apologies for absence</b>	
	(Purpose: To note the apologies for absence).	

This meeting has been advertised as a public meeting and as such could be filmed or recorded by broadcasters, the media or members of the public.

Please be aware that whilst every effort is taken to ensure that members of the public are not filmed, we cannot guarantee this, especially if you are speaking or taking an active role.

<b>2.</b>	<b>Declarations of Interest</b>  (Purpose: To receive declarations of disclosable pecuniary and other non-registerable interests in respect of items on this agenda).	
<b>3.</b>	<b>Dispensations</b>  (Purpose: To receive requests for dispensations under the Code of Conduct).	
<b>4.</b>	<b>Minutes of meeting held on the 4<sup>th</sup> November 2024</b>  (Purpose: To agree that the minutes of the above meeting be signed as a correct record). (Attached).	<b>Pages 1 to 6</b>
<b>5.</b>	<b>Matters to Note</b>  A verbal update from the Town Clerk on the actions taken since the last meeting. Note: No decision may be made under this agenda item.	
<b>6.</b>	<b>Public participation (15 minutes maximum)</b>  The Chairman will invite members of the public to address the meeting in relation to the business to be carried out at the meeting.  15 minutes will be allocated for public participation (this can be extended at the Chairman's discretion). Each person addressing the Council will be allocated a maximum of two minutes.	
<b>7.</b>	<b>Budget Monitoring Report</b>  (Purpose: To review the Town Council's budget monitoring report for the period 1st April 2024 to 31 <sup>st</sup> January 2025). (Report attached).	<b>Pages 7 to 12</b>
<b>8.</b>	<b>Consultation paper – Strengthening the standards and conduct framework for local authorities in England</b>  (Purpose: To consider a Government consultation paper). (Paper attached).	<b>Pages 13 to 44</b>
<b>9.</b>	<b>Risk Management</b>  (Purpose: To review and update the Council's Risk Management Strategy and Register). (Report attached).	<b>Pages 45 to 54</b>

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<b>10.</b>	<b>St Austell Library</b>  (Purpose: To provide Members with an update on the operational activities of St Austell Library). (Report attached).	<b>Pages 55 to 56</b>
<b>11.</b>	<b>To consider excluding the press and public.</b>  <i>Under Section 1 (2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, it is proposed that, because of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the business specified for the following items:</i>  Items 12 and 13 are confidential because they contain sensitive commercial information.	
<b>12.</b>	<b>Stable Block</b>  (Purpose: To receive an update on discussions with Treveth Holdings Limited with regard to the Town Council's lease of the Stable Block. (Verbal update).	
<b>13.</b>	<b>General Wolfe Building</b>  (Purpose: To receive an update on discussions with the Strategic Director and Chair of the Town Centre Revitalisation Partnership on the future of the General Wolfe Building). (Verbal update).	
<b>15.</b>	<b>Dates of Next Meeting</b>  (Purpose: To note the date of the next meeting – 7 <sup>th</sup> April 2025)	

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**MINUTES of a MEETING of the FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE held on MONDAY 4<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2024 in The Stable Block, Pondhu House, Penwinnick Road, St Austell, Cornwall, PL25 5DP at 6pm.**

**Present:** Councillors: Brown, Clemo, French, Gray and Lanxon.

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

**Also in attendance:** Councillor Hamilton.

**F/24/32) Apologies for absence**

Apologies of absence were received from Councillors Pearce, Rowse and Young.

**F/24/33) Declarations of Interest**

None.

**F/24/34) Dispensations**

None.

**F/24/35) Minutes of meeting held on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2024**

Arising from a question, the Clerk advised that the robes are about to be despatched and should arrive in time for Remembrance Day.

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on the 30<sup>th</sup> September 2024 be approved and signed as a correct record.

**F/24/36) Matters to Note**

The Clerk advised that the Procurement Policy was approved by full Council but if the recommendations outlined in the Contract Standing Orders report due to be considered later on the agenda are approved, the Policy will need amending and re-approving.

**F/24/37) Public participation**

There were no members of the public present.

**F/24/38) Statement on Devolution**

The Clerk advised that the Mayor of Penzance recently invited all Cornish Mayors to a meeting to discuss Devolution to Cornwall and the geographical area that this could encompass.

The Clerk advised that the Town Council's Mayor, Councillor Young, was unable to attend the meeting but the notes circulated afterwards indicated that the consensus of the Mayors' present was that the principle of devolution to Cornwall is supported but only if it is devolution to Cornwall alone, or subject to the consent of the Isles of Scilly, a Cornwall/Isles of Scilly combined authority.

The Clerk referred Councillors to the draft statement and asked Members for their views.

Councillor Brown outlined discussions at the recent CALC Larger Councils meeting making reference to the concerns expressed about the governance arrangements for the Mayoral Meetings and a request from Ben McGuire MP to the Prime Minister to meet the six Cornish MP's to discuss affordable housing and a Cornish Assembly. He added that following the CALC meeting the Mayor of Penzance had amended the statement and is now seeking approval from other Town and Parish Councils before submitting it to the Deputy Prime Minister, Linda Taylor (Leader of Cornwall Council) and Kate Kennally (Chief Executive, Cornwall Council).

Councillor Brown welcomed the statement and requested that the following paragraphs be considered by the full Council by way of support for the statement.

The Town Council:

1. Welcomes the establishment of a Mayors/Clerks group for Cornwall and agrees to participate actively;
2. Resolves that any draft statements arising from the group be considered by the Council or the Finance and General Purposes Committee as appropriate;
3. Supports the draft statement as representative of the views of the Cornish Councils;
4. States that its preferred devolution solution for Cornwall is a Cornish Assembly with powers as close as possible to those of the Welsh Parliament.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that the devolution statement as outlined be supported and the paragraphs outlined above be adopted as the Town Council's policy.

### **F/24/39) Budget 2024/25 and 2025/26**

The Clerk advised that the rise in Employers' National Insurance contributions has resulted in an additional £20,000 of expenditure for the Town Council which has been taken into consideration in the latest budget calculations. The Clerk referred Members to the latest draft budget for the 2025/26 financial year (as tabled at the meeting) and highlighted the following:

- The new Library and Community Projects Officer post
- £30,000 for events
- £35,000 for the Election in May 2025
- £50,000 towards play equipment
- £10,000 for car park resurfacing
- £25,000 for pump priming for town centre projects

It is assumed that the car park income will stay the same and a slight increase in the office/depot rent after the current lease ends in autumn 2025. The budget for the security staff is assumed to stay the same and the Regeneration Officer post to terminate as at 31<sup>st</sup> May 2025.

There is still uncertainty with regard to the Council Tax base which should be announced by Cornwall Council later in November and the future of the Shared Prosperity Fund.

The Clerk recommended to Members the proposed draft budget and a Council Tax increase for the 2025/26 financial year of 9.2% on a Band D property which would maintain all existing services with no budget cuts.

During discussion, the following was raised:

- The potential to re-allocate the elections budget if there is an underspend;
- The future funding arrangements for the town centre security guards;
- The budget implications if there is a further round of Shared Prosperity Funding.

A proposal to increase the Council Tax by 9.88% did not receive a seconder.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that subject to any reasonable adjustments required following announcements with regard to the Council Tax Base and Shared Prosperity Fund, the Council:

1. Approves the revised draft budget for the 2025/26 financial year;
2. Approves a Council Tax increase of 9.2% for a Band D property paying the full Council Tax charge.

#### **F/24/40) Budget Monitoring Report**

It was **RESOLVED** to note the report.

#### **F/24/41) Interim Internal Audit Report**

It was **RESOLVED** to note the report.

#### **F/24/42) Ride on Mower Replacement**

The Clerk advised that one of the ride-on mowers is 7 years old and has recently suffered a number of age related break downs. He added that the purchase of a new mower can be found within existing budgets and that a trade in value of £7,000 against a new mower has been quoted.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Clerk be authorised to purchase a replacement mower and part exchange the old mower with a budget of up to £22,000.

#### **F/24/43) Prince Charles Park Safety Surfacing**

The Clerk advised that the play equipment at Prince Charles Park was installed in 2007/08 and has been maintained by the Town Council since 2017. Recent inspections have revealed a need to repair some areas of safety surfacing and some fittings on the activity trail which are nearing their end of life. The Clerk advised that a quotation to complete this work has been received in the sum of £21,000 from a reputable playground equipment specialist which can be met from the Town Council's playground budget.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Clerk be authorised to arrange for the repair of the safety surfacing and activity trail play equipment within a budget of up to £21,000.

#### **F/24/44) Contract Standing Orders**

The Clerk advised that to improve future tender processes, the Town Council's Procurement consultant has recommended some changes to the Town Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations. The key changes being:

1. A proposed contract for the supply of goods, materials, services and the execution of works with an estimated value in excess of £100,000 (previously £60,000) shall be procured on the basis of a formal tender.
2. All contracts with a value of £25,000 or more be advertised on contract finder unless the responsible committee deems there to be a good reason to seek direct tenders from a least 3 identified suppliers justified on one or more of four grounds (as set out in the report).

It was **RECOMMENDED** that Members approve the changes to the Standing Orders and Financial Regulations as set out in the report.

#### **F/24/45) Holy Trinity Church Piazza Scheme**

The Clerk advised that in order to keep the completion of the Holy Trinity Church piazza scheme on track, he had, on the advice of the Town Council's procurement specialist invited 5 experienced contractors to tender for the delivery of the church piazza works. The advice received has re-assured the Clerk that the specialist nature of the works allows this approach to obtaining a suitable contractor.

The Clerk advised that the Clerk in conjunction with the Mayor and Deputy Mayor have been authorised to open and accept the most economically advantageous tender by the Planning and Regeneration Committee and that when a preferred contractor is identified a JCT minor works contract will be drafted to help control and deliver the works.

It was **RESOLVED** to:

1. endorse the approach taken by the Town Clerk with regard to the tender process for the Holy Trinity Church Piazza Scheme;
2. invite at least 3 local experienced contractors to quote for delivery of the church piazza scheme and the tender not be advertised on Contract Finder;
3. The contract be subject to a Joint Contracts Tribunal Ltd (JCT) minor works contract;
4. A budget envelope of £75,000 be included within the tender documentation;
5. Authorise the Clerk to arrange to open and accept the most economically advantageous tender in conjunction with the Mayor and Deputy Mayor.



## **F/24/46) St Austell Library**

The Deputy Town Clerk advised that the library's staffing establishment remains at 2 full time, 6 part time staff and a vacant post of 16 hours per week which is due to be filled before the New Year combined with a community projects role. The library also has Home Library Service volunteers, 2-3 casual volunteers for general library duties and during the summer up to 3 work experience students. The hours remain 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday and 10am to 1pm on a Saturday.

Regular activities include Sing and Shake, Story Time, Reading and Writing Groups and whole school visits. SALSA continue to hold regular events which, on the whole, are well supported. The craft fayres are well supported with the next one on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> November. The Freshers' Fair at the college was successful with an increase in library membership for the 16-21 age range. Since the Freshers' Fair, the on-line driving theory test is proving very popular.

There are a number of home educated children and people working from home who regularly use the library. This has resulted in the need to create more space on the mezzanine which is the preferred area of space for these two groups of people.

SALSA has received a South West in Bloom Level 4 "Thriving" award for the library garden. Unfortunately, since the last inspection, the story tree has had to be taken down due to decay which was noticed by the judges! SALSA is considering another feature for the garden.

The Summer Reading challenges went extremely well; 914 sign ups (target 753) and 619 finishers (target 516). The Deputy Mayor and his wife judged the creature clay models that some of the children made which was one of the many craft activities on offer during the challenge period.

The wellbeing kiosk installed by the Health and Wellbeing Team from Cornwall Council was popular with 178 people registered as having used it.

The banner exhibition was extremely well received at the library with 105 voting for their preferred banner option and photographs. The exhibition is moving to White River Place on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> November 2024 until Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> November 2024.

## **F/24/47) Dates of next meeting**

It was noted that the next meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee is due to take place on 17<sup>th</sup> February 2025.

The meeting closed at 7.39pm.



**ST AUSTELL TOWN COUNCIL**  
**FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE**  
**17<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2025**  
**BUDGET MONITORING REPORT**

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To provide Members with an update on income and expenditure to the 31st January 2025 and a copy of the Council's latest bank reconciliation statements.

**2. LEGAL AND RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES**

It is a legal requirement for the Town Council to set a budget annually and it is good practice to monitor that budget at regular intervals. The Town Clerk monitors budgets monthly and provides regular budget monitoring reports to the Finance and General Purposes Committee. It is part of the remit of the Finance and General Purposes Committee to monitor and manage budgets on behalf of the Town Council.

**3. RESOURCE ISSUES**

None outside of existing budgets.

**4. EQUALITIES ISSUES**

None.

**5. ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES**

None.

**6. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Members note the attached budget monitoring reports and bank reconciliation statement.

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The budget variance report for January 2025 and the financial year to the 31<sup>st</sup> January 2025 is attached for information. After allowing

for the Town Centre Revitalisation projects which are to be largely funded from grant monies the income and expenditure are within acceptable limits.

Significant variances are explained below:

- **Car Park income** – more income than anticipated
- **Interest income** – higher interest rates and balances
- **Other grants and contributions** – Shared Prosperity Fund and Town Vitality Fund grants
- **Contract payments** – works at Priory car park not completed.
- **Grounds maintenance supplies** – increased cost of planting and winter maintenance.
- **Miscellaneous expenses** – Town centre projects
- **Other transport/plant expenses** – new mower/brushcutters.
- **Play equipment** – Projects in progress
- **Rates** – successful appeal against rateable value of Priory car park
- **Repairs/Maintenance Premises** – Works at Library and car park not yet commenced.
- **Repairs/Maintenance Vehicles/Plant** – increased cost of repairs due to age of vehicles
- **Salaries and Wages** – reduced staff costs/vacancies

DAVID POOLEY - TOWN CLERK

# Budget Variance

## St Austell Town Council

For the month ended 31 January 2025

	JAN 2025	JAN 2025 OVERALL BUDGET	VARIANCE	VARIANCE %	APR 2024-JAN 2025	APR 2024-JAN 2025 OVERALL BUDGET	VARIANCE	VARIANCE %
<b>Trading Income</b>								
Car Park Income	23,694.09	19,833.00	3,861.09 ↑	19.47% ↑	220,787.42	198,330.00	22,457.42 ↑	11.32% ↑
Interest Income	4,535.15	1,833.00	2,702.15 ↑	147.42% ↑	39,684.02	18,330.00	21,354.02 ↑	116.50% ↑
Library Income	261.43	525.00	(263.57) ↓	-50.20% ↓	4,889.23	5,250.00	(360.77) ↓	-6.87% ↓
Other Grants and Contributions	-	75.00	(75.00) ↓	-100.00% ↓	146,058.54	750.00	145,308.54 ↑	19,374.47% ↑
Other Income	46.56	180.00	(133.44) ↓	-74.13% ↓	5,316.78	1,800.00	3,516.78 ↑	195.38% ↑
Precept Payments	-	-	-	-	1,177,920.00	1,177,920.00	-	-
Public Convenience Charges	-	229.00	(229.00) ↓	-100.00% ↓	1,770.33	2,290.00	(519.67) ↓	-22.69% ↓
Rent Received	-	871.00	(871.00) ↓	-100.00% ↓	7,860.00	8,710.00	(850.00) ↓	-9.76% ↓
<b>Total Trading Income</b>	<b>28,537.23</b>	<b>23,546.00</b>	<b>4,991.23</b>	<b>21.20%</b>	<b>1,604,286.32</b>	<b>1,413,380.00</b>	<b>190,906.32</b>	<b>13.51%</b>
<b>Gross Profit</b>	<b>28,537.23</b>	<b>23,546.00</b>	<b>4,991.23</b>	<b>21.20%</b>	<b>1,604,286.32</b>	<b>1,413,380.00</b>	<b>190,906.32</b>	<b>13.51%</b>
<b>Operating Expenses</b>								
Books and Publications	-	-	-	-	119.05	150.00	(30.95) ↓	-20.63% ↓
Cleaning & Domestic Supplies	1,695.63	1,583.00	112.63 ↑	7.11% ↑	16,435.95	15,830.00	605.95 ↑	3.83% ↑
Contract Hire and Operating Leases	409.50	46.00	363.50 ↑	790.22% ↑	854.69	460.00	394.69 ↑	85.80% ↑
Contract Payments	6,438.44	13,425.00	(6,986.56) ↓	-52.04% ↓	130,461.69	134,250.00	(3,788.31) ↓	-2.82% ↓
Electricity	2,262.07	1,250.00	1,012.07 ↑	80.97% ↑	13,693.56	12,500.00	1,193.56 ↑	9.55% ↑

Budget Variance

	JAN 2025 OVERALL BUDGET	JAN 2025 OVERALL BUDGET	VARIANCE	VARIANCE %	APR 2024-JAN 2025	APR 2024-JAN 2025 OVERALL BUDGET	VARIANCE	VARIANCE %
Fuel	766.18	981.00	(214.82) ↓	-21.90% ↓	9,312.33	9,810.00	(497.67) ↓	-5.07% ↓
Gas	568.13	500.00	68.13 ↑	13.63% ↑	3,076.01	5,000.00	(1,923.99) ↓	-38.48% ↓
Grounds Maintenance Supplies	2,796.20	1,975.00	821.20 ↑	41.58% ↑	23,087.93	19,750.00	3,337.93 ↑	16.90% ↑
Insurances	-	-	-	-	11,518.21	11,340.00	178.21 ↑	1.57% ↑
IT / Communications	1,650.05	2,139.00	(488.95) ↓	-22.86% ↓	19,846.50	21,390.00	(1,543.50) ↓	-7.22% ↓
Mayors Allowances	-	62.00	(62.00) ↓	-100.00% ↓	11.00	620.00	(609.00) ↓	-98.23% ↓
Members Allowance	-	12.00	(12.00) ↓	-100.00% ↓	-	120.00	(120.00) ↓	-100.00% ↓
Miscellaneous Expenses	9,815.82	3,596.00	6,219.82 ↑	172.96% ↑	115,405.66	35,960.00	79,445.66 ↑	220.93% ↑
Miscellaneous Grants	-	5,629.00	(5,629.00) ↓	-100.00% ↓	57,826.50	56,290.00	1,536.50 ↑	2.73% ↑
Office Supplies	50.00	242.00	(192.00) ↓	-79.34% ↓	2,504.60	2,420.00	84.60 ↑	3.50% ↑
Other Transport/plant expenses	(7.27)	1,958.00	(1,965.27) ↓	-100.37% ↓	23,903.36	19,580.00	4,323.36 ↑	22.08% ↑
Play Equipment	1,362.87	4,167.00	(2,804.13) ↓	-67.29% ↓	35,214.96	41,670.00	(6,455.04) ↓	-15.49% ↓
Printing and Stationery	66.83	283.00	(216.17) ↓	-76.39% ↓	2,708.43	2,830.00	(121.57) ↓	-4.30% ↓
Protective Clothing	123.22	229.00	(105.78) ↓	-46.19% ↓	1,864.63	2,290.00	(425.37) ↓	-18.58% ↓
Publicity	-	167.00	(167.00) ↓	-100.00% ↓	351.65	1,670.00	(1,318.35) ↓	-78.94% ↓
Rates	5,333.00	6,301.00	(968.00) ↓	-15.36% ↓	29,343.37	63,010.00	(33,666.63) ↓	-53.43% ↓
Recruitment	-	92.00	(92.00) ↓	-100.00% ↓	160.00	920.00	(760.00) ↓	-82.61% ↓
Rent / Room Hire	-	520.00	(520.00) ↓	-100.00% ↓	4,155.00	5,200.00	(1,045.00) ↓	-20.10% ↓
Repairs / Maintenance Premises	-	3,330.00	(3,330.00) ↓	-100.00% ↓	19,887.94	33,300.00	(13,412.06) ↓	-40.28% ↓
Repairs/ Maintenance-Vehicles/Plant	4,438.17	633.00	3,805.17 ↑	601.13% ↑	13,088.32	6,330.00	6,758.32 ↑	106.77% ↑

Budget Variance

	JAN 2025 OVERALL BUDGET	JAN 2025 OVERALL BUDGET	VARIANCE	VARIANCE %	APR 2024-JAN 2025	APR 2024-JAN 2025 OVERALL BUDGET	VARIANCE	VARIANCE %
Road Fund / Taxes	-	100.00	(100.00)	↓ -100.00%	675.00	1,000.00	(325.00)	↓ -32.50%
Salaries / Wages	61,710.94	63,439.00	(1,728.06)	↓ -2.72%	604,462.07	634,390.00	(29,927.93)	↓ -4.72%
Small Grants Scheme	250.00	667.00	(417.00)	↓ -62.52%	6,458.89	6,670.00	(211.11)	↓ -3.17%
Subscriptions	360.00	704.00	(344.00)	↓ -48.86%	7,955.32	7,040.00	915.32	↑ 13.00%
Training	-	367.00	(367.00)	↓ -100.00%	1,990.50	3,670.00	(1,679.50)	↓ -45.76%
Transport Insurance	-	258.00	(258.00)	↓ -100.00%	4,529.96	2,580.00	1,949.96	↑ 75.58%
Travel and Subsistence	14.40	44.00	(29.60)	↓ -67.27%	664.98	440.00	224.98	↑ 51.13%
Water	90.01	211.00	(120.99)	↓ -57.34%	1,701.25	2,110.00	(408.75)	↓ -19.37%
<b>Total Operating Expenses</b>	<b>100,194.19</b>	<b>114,910.00</b>	<b>(14,715.81)</b>	<b>↓ -12.81%</b>	<b>1,163,269.31</b>	<b>1,160,590.00</b>	<b>2,679.31</b>	<b>↑ 0.23%</b>
<b>Net Profit</b>	<b>(71,656.96)</b>	<b>(91,364.00)</b>	<b>19,707.04</b>	<b>21.57%</b>	<b>441,017.01</b>	<b>252,790.00</b>	<b>188,227.01</b>	<b>74.46%</b>

# ST AUSTELL TOWN COUNCIL

## BANK RECONCILIATION AS AT:

31.1.25

	£	£	
Business Current Account		130,273.61	
Mayor's Charity Account		1,936.92	
Business Direct Reserve Account		223,835.70	
Petty Cash		87.87	
Library Float		100.00	
<b>Total in Bank</b>		<u>356,234.10</u>	
<b>Total Unpresented Cheques</b>		0.00	
		<u>356,234.10</u>	
<b>Outstanding receipts</b>		0.00	
		0.00	
		<u>356,234.10</u>	
<b><u>Accounting System Bank Balance:</u></b>			
<b>Opening Bank Balance</b>		135,145.67	
<b>Expenditure to date</b>		2388428.06	
<b>Income to date</b>		2609516.49	
		<u>356,234.10</u>	
<b>Accounting System Payment Recorded but yet paid</b>			
Direct Debit - invoice awaited		0.00	
<b>Accounting System Bank Balance</b>		<u>356,234.10</u>	0.00
			balanced

### Note:

Attach Accounting Statement and remember to adjust for the Outstanding Accounting System Entries after balancing.

Reconciliation Completed: Date: 3.2.25

Reviewed: Date: 3.2.25



**ST AUSTELL TOWN COUNCIL**

**FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE**

**17<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2025**

**STRENGTHENING THE STANDARDS AND CONDUCT  
FRAMEWORK**

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To formulate a response to the Government's consultation paper on "Strengthening the standards and conduct framework for local authorities in England".

**2. LEGAL AND RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES**

It is a legal requirement for Town Councillors to comply with the Code of Conduct and both officers and Members are expected to follow the seven general principles of public life included within the Code. The Government are reviewing the framework for managing the behaviour of councillors. The Council has delegated responsibility for responding to this consultation paper to the Finance and General purposes Committee.

**3. RESOURCE ISSUES**

None outside of existing budgets.

**4. EQUALITIES ISSUES**

Equalities are an important aspect of the standards regime.

**5. ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES**

None.

**6. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Members agree a response to the consultation paper attached.

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**Background**

The National Association of Local Councils (NALC), Cornwall Association of Local Councils (CALC) and the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) are encouraging individuals and councils to respond to the recently published consultation paper on "Strengthening the standards and conduct framework for local authorities in England". All favour the introduction of stronger sanctions for inappropriate behaviour and breaches of the code of conduct.

The consultation paper is attached. As a member of SLCC I have responded to the questionnaire in a personal capacity. The answers which I provided are as follows. These are provided below to assist. Members are invited to agree their own responses.

Question 1 – Officer – Town Council

Question 2 – Yes

Question 3 – No

Question 4 – Yes

Question 5 – No

Question 6 – Yes

Question 7 – Yes decisions should be heard by Standards Committee

Question 8 – Yes

Question 9 – Unsure

Question 10 – N/A

Question 11 – No

Question 12 – Yes

Question 13 – N/A

Question 14 – Yes. The conflict caused by reporting a matter may make the situation worse and make relationships more difficult. The lack of protection and inadequate sanctions discourage reporting unless the matter is very serious.

Question 15 – N/A

Question 16 – N/A

Question 17 – Anonymity is not always possible in small organisations but where possible would help. Group actions/reports should be permitted.

Question 18 – No

Question 19 – Yes

Question 20 – No. It should be for individual councils to determine their own arrangements.

Question 21 – No. I do not think the government should set a maximum length of suspension.

Question 22 – Unsure

Question 23 – Yes

Question 24 – Yes – premises and facilities bans are an important tool in tackling serious conduct issues.

Question 25 – Yes

Question 26 – Yes, powers to suspend on an interim basis would be necessary  
Question 27 – Yes – the option to institute premises and facilities bans whilst serious misconduct cases are investigated is important  
Question 28 – Yes  
Question 29 – Yes  
Question 30 – No – councils will know the details of individual cases and should be trusted to act responsibly  
Question 31 – Yes – twice within a 5-year period should result in disqualification for 5 years  
Question 32 – Yes  
Question 33 – Yes – it is right that any member issued with a sanction of suspension can appeal the decision  
Question 34 – Yes – within 5 days of the decision is appropriate to ensure an efficient process  
Question 35 – No  
Question 36 – No  
Question 37 – N/A  
Question 38 – Yes – an external appeals body would help to uphold impartiality  
Question 39 – Be limited to hearing elected member appeals  
Question 40 – It would benefit individuals with protected characteristics.

DAVID POOLEY - TOWN CLERK





Ministry of Housing,  
Communities &  
Local Government

Open consultation

# Strengthening the standards and conduct framework for local authorities in England

Published 18 December 2024

**Applies to England**

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Annex A: Personal data



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# 1. Scope of this consultation

## Topic of this consultation

This consultation seeks views on introducing a mandatory minimum code of conduct for local authorities in England, and measures to strengthen the standards and conduct regime in England to ensure consistency of approach amongst councils investigating serious breaches of their member codes of conduct, including the introduction of the power of suspension.

## Scope of this consultation

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) is consulting on introducing strengthened sanctions for local authority code of conduct breaches in England.

This includes all 'relevant authorities' as defined by Section 27(6) of the Localism Act 2011, which includes:

- a county council
- a unitary authority
- London borough councils
- a district council
- the Greater London Authority
- the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority
- the Common Council of the City of London in its capacity as a local authority or police authority
- the Council of the Isles of Scilly
- parish councils
- a fire and rescue authority in England constituted by a scheme under section 2 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 or a scheme to which section 4 of that Act applies,
- a joint authority established by Part 4 of the Local Government Act 1985, an economic prosperity board established under section 88 of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009
- a combined authority established under section 103 of that Act,
- a combined county authority established under section 9(1) of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023
- the Broads Authority

- a National Park authority in England established under section 63 of the Environment Act 1995

It does not cover:

- police and crime commissioners
- internal drainage boards
- any other local authority not otherwise defined as a 'relevant authority' above

All references to 'members' refer to elected members, mayors, co-opted and appointed members of each of the 'relevant authorities' defined above.

## Geographical scope

The questions in this consultation paper apply to all relevant local authorities in England as defined above.

They generally do not apply to authorities in Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland, except in relation to Police and Crime Panels in Wales.

## Impact assessment

We will produce a full Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) assessment, and all necessary impact assessments, as the policy proposals develop further following this consultation.

## Basic information

This is an open consultation. We particularly seek the views of individual members of the public; prospective and current elected members/representatives; all relevant local authorities defined above; and those bodies that represent the interests of local authority members/representatives at all levels.

### Body responsible for the consultation

The Local Government Capacity and Improvement Division of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government is responsible for

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conducting this consultation.

## Duration

This consultation will last for 10 weeks from 18 December 2024. This consultation closes at 11:59pm on 26 February 2025.

## Enquiries

For any enquiries about the consultation please contact:

[LGstandardsreform@communities.gov.uk](mailto:LGstandardsreform@communities.gov.uk)

## How to respond

You can only respond to this call for evidence through our online consultation platform, [Citizen Space \(https://consult.communities.gov.uk/local-government-standards-and-conduct/strengthening-the-standards-and-conduct-framework\)](https://consult.communities.gov.uk/local-government-standards-and-conduct/strengthening-the-standards-and-conduct-framework).

# 2. Ministerial foreword

The government is determined to fix the foundations of local government so councils can sustainably provide decent public services and shape local places, and so elected representatives can be fully accountable to the public they serve. Doing so is critical to national renewal, our missions, and our plans to push power out of Westminster and into the hands of local people with skin in the game.

At the core of this agenda is a plan to make local government across England fit, legal, and decent – so that councils have the backing from central government to deliver the high standards and strong financial management that they strive for, without needless micromanagement of day-to-day local decision-making. This plan includes:

- fixing our broken audit system
- improving oversight and accountability
- giving councils genuine freedoms to work for, and deliver in the best interests of, their communities
- improving the standards and conduct regime

This consultation is focused on the proposed reforms to the standards and conduct regime that will contribute to making sure England is covered by effective local and strategic authorities that are well-governed, with high standards met and maintained.

It is an honour and a privilege to be elected as a member and with it comes an individual and collective responsibility to consistently demonstrate and promote the highest standards of conduct and public service.

Members take decisions affecting critical local services such as social care, education, housing, planning, licensing, and waste collection. With greater devolution, local authorities will increasingly be taking decisions to shape local transport, skills, employment support, and growth. Decisions that are the responsibility of members impact virtually every citizen's life at some level, and the electorate has a right to expect that it can trust its local elected members to uphold the highest ethical standards and act in the best interests of the communities they serve.

I strongly believe that the vast majority of local elected members maintain high standards of conduct and that they are driven by duty and service. I believe that people stand for elected office in their local communities with the best intentions to act in the interests of those communities, bringing an energy and commitment to working collaboratively, creatively, and respectfully.

Members, officers, reporters and members of public are entitled to support and participate in the local democratic process in the confidence that high standards are maintained. This government wants to celebrate the positive power of public service and, in doing so, we want to give individual authorities appropriate and proportionate means to deal with misconduct effectively and decisively when it does occur. We also want to ensure that anyone can rightly feel confident about raising an issue under the code of conduct whether it impacts them personally and/or is a code conduct breach that brings the reputation of the council into disrepute.

With approximately 120,000 councillors in England across all types and tiers of local government, we know there are rare instances of misconduct.

Robust political debate is part of our democratic system, but we know from local councils that there are examples of bullying, harassment or other misconduct, when from even a very small minority of members can have a seriously destabilising effect, potentially bringing a council into disrepute and distracting from the critical business of delivering for residents.

This government is committed to working with local and regional government to establish partnerships built on mutual respect, genuine collaboration and meaningful engagement. Our ambition is to create a rigorous standards and conduct framework that will actively contribute to ensuring that local government throughout the country is fit, legal, and decent. With this in mind, this consultation seeks your views on a range of proposals to give local leaders the tools they need to establish and maintain a strong and ethical public service and democratic culture, and the people they serve the confidence that local democracy works for them.

Jim McMahon OBE MP  
Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution

### 3. Background: Standards and Conduct framework and sanctions arrangements

The [Localism Act 2011](#)

(<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/20/part/1/chapter/7/enacted>)<sup>[footnote 1]</sup>

established the current standards and conduct framework for local authorities.

The current regime requires every local authority to adopt a code of conduct, the contents of which must as a minimum be consistent with the 7 [‘Nolan’ principles of standards in public life](#) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-7-principles-of-public-life>) (selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership), and set out rules on requiring members to register and disclose pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests. Beyond these requirements, it is for individual councils to set their own local code. The Local Government Association (LGA) published an [updated model code of conduct and guidance](#) (<https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/local-government-association-model-councillor-code-conduct-2020>) in 2021, which councils can choose whether to adopt or not.

Every authority must also have in place arrangements under which it can investigate allegations of breaches of its code of conduct and must consult at least one independent person before coming to decisions. These decisions are normally taken in one of two ways depending on an authority’s specific arrangements. The decision can be made by full council following advice from their standards committee (or equivalent). Alternatively, the decision can be made by the standards committee if they have been given the power to do so. Although a standards committee may contain unelected independent members and co-opted members, only principal councils’ elected members may vote in a decision-making standards committee.

There is no provision in current legislation for a sanction to suspend a councillor found to have breached the code of conduct. Sanctions for member code of conduct breaches are currently limited to less robust measures than suspension, such as barring members from Cabinet, Committee, or representative roles, a requirement to issue an apology or undergo code of conduct training, or public criticism. Local authorities are also unable to withhold allowances from members who commit serious breaches of their code of conduct, and there is no explicit provision in

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legislation for councils to impose premises bans or facilities withdrawals where they consider that it might be beneficial to do so.

The government considers that the current local authority standards and conduct regime is in certain key aspects ineffectual, inconsistently applied, and lacking in adequate powers to effectively sanction members found in serious breach of their codes of conduct.

## 4. Who we would like to hear from

Responses are invited from local authority elected members and officers from all types and tiers of authorities, and local authority sector representative organisations. We are also particularly keen to hear from those members of the public who have point of view based on their interest in accessing local democracy in their area or standing as a candidate for local government at any tier to represent their local community at some future point.

Please be assured that all responses to this consultation are anonymous, and no information will be disclosed in any future published response to the consultation, or reporting of the consultation results, that will compromise that anonymity.

### Question 1

Please tick all that apply - are you responding to this consultation as:

a) an elected member – if so please indicate which local authority type(s) you serve on

- Town or Parish Council
- District or Borough Council
- Unitary Authority
- County Council
- Combined Authority / Combined County Authority
- Fire and Rescue Authority
- Police and Crime Panel
- Other local authority type - please state

b) a council officer – if so please indicate which local authority type

- Town or Parish Council
- District or Borough Council

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- Unitary Authority
- County Council
- Combined Authority / Combined County Authority
- Fire and Rescue Authority
- Police and Crime Panel
- Other local authority type - please state

c) a council body – if so please indicate which local authority type

- Town or Parish Council
- District or Borough Council
- Unitary Authority
- County Council
- Combined Authority / Combined County Authority
- Fire and Rescue Authority
- Police and Crime Panel
- Other local authority type - please state

d) a member of the public

e) a local government sector body – please state

## 5. Strengthening the Standards and Conduct framework

### a) Mandatory minimum prescribed code of conduct

The government proposes to legislate for the introduction of a mandatory minimum code of conduct which would seek to ensure a higher minimum standard of consistency in setting out the behaviours expected of elected members. The government will likely set out the mandatory code in regulations to allow flexibility to review and amend in future, this will also provide the opportunity for further consultation on the detail.

Codes of conduct play an important role in prescribing and maintaining high standards of public service, integrity, transparency, and accountability. At their best, they establish clear guidelines for behaviour and expectations that members always act ethically in the public's best interest. Currently,

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there is significant variation between adopted codes, ranging from those who choose to adopt the LGA's full model code to those who simply conform with the minimum requirement of restating the Nolan principles.

A prescribed model code which covers important issues such as discrimination, bullying, and harassment, social media use, public conduct when claiming to represent the council, and use of authority resources could help to uphold consistently high standards of public service in councils across the country and convey the privileged position of public office. It could also provide clarity for the public on the consistent baseline of ethical behaviour they have a right to expect.

We would be interested in understanding whether councils consider there should be flexibility to add to the prescribed code to reflect individual authorities' circumstances. They would not be able to amend the mandatory provisions.

### Question 2

Do you think the government should prescribe a mandatory minimum code of conduct for local authorities in England?

- Yes
- No
- If no, why not? [Free text box]

### Question 3

If yes, do you agree there should be scope for local authorities to add to a mandatory minimum code of conduct to reflect specific local challenges?

- Yes – it is important that local authorities have flexibility to add to a prescribed code
- No – a prescribed code should be uniform across the country
- Unsure

### Question 4

Do you think the government should set out a code of conduct requirement for members to cooperate with investigations into code breaches?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

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## b) Standards Committees

Currently, there is no requirement for local authorities to constitute a formal standards committee. The only legal requirement is for local authorities to have in place 'arrangements' to investigate and make decisions on allegations of misconduct.

The government believes that all principal authorities should be required to convene a standards committee. Formal standards committees would support consistency in the handling of misconduct allegations, applying the same standards and procedures to all cases and providing a formal route to swiftly identify and address vexatious complainants. Furthermore, having a formal standards committee in place could support the development of expertise in handling allegations of misconduct, leading to more informed decision-making. Removing the scope for less formal and more ad hoc arrangements would also enhance transparency and demonstrate to the public that standards and conduct issues will always be dealt with in a structured and consistent way.

This section of the consultation seeks views on two specific proposals to enhance the fairness and objectivity of the standards committee process. Firstly, it considers whether standards committee membership would be required to include at least one Independent Person, as well as (where applicable<sup>[footnote 2](#)</sup>) at least one co-opted member from a parish or town council. Secondly, it seeks views on whether standards committees should be chaired by the Independent Person.

### Question 5

Does your local authority currently maintain a standards committee?

- Yes
- No
- Any further comments [free text box]

### Question 6

Should all principal authorities be required to form a standards committee?

- Yes
- No
- Any further comments [free text box]

### Question 7

In most principal authorities, code of conduct complaints are typically submitted in the first instance to the local authority Monitoring Officer to

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triage, before referring a case for full investigation. Should all alleged code of conduct breaches which are referred for investigation be heard by the relevant principal authority's standards committee?

- Yes, decisions should only be heard by standards committees
- No, local authorities should have discretion to allow decisions to be taken by full council
- Unsure

### Question 8

Do you agree that the Independent Person and co-opted members should be given voting rights?

- Yes – this is important for ensuring objectivity
- No – only elected members of the council in question should have voting rights
- Unsure

### Question 9

Should standards committees be chaired by the Independent Person?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

### Question 10

If you have further views on ensuring fairness and objectivity and reducing incidences of vexatious complaints, please use the free text box below.

[Free text box]

## c) Publishing investigation outcomes

To enhance transparency, local authorities should, subject to data protection obligations, be required to publish a summary of code of conduct allegations, and any investigations and decisions. This will be accompanied with strong mechanisms to protect victims' identity to ensure complainants are not dissuaded from coming forward for fear of being identified,

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There may be a range of views on this, as publishing the outcome of an investigation that proves there is no case to answer could still be considered damaging to the reputation of the individuals concerned, or it could be considered as helpful in exposing instances of petty and vexatious complaints.

### **Question 11**

Should local authorities be required to publish annually a list of allegations of code of conduct breaches, and any investigation outcomes?

- Yes - the public should have full access to all allegations and investigation outcomes
- No - only cases in which a member is found guilty of wrongdoing should be published
- Other views – text box

## **d) Requiring the completion of investigations if a member stands down**

In circumstances where a member stands down during a live code of conduct investigation, councils should be required to conclude that investigation and publish the findings. The government is proposing this measure to ensure that, whilst the member in question will no longer be in office and therefore subject to any council sanction, for the purposes of accountability and transparency there will still be full record of any code of conduct breaches during their term of office.

### **Question 12**

Should investigations into the conduct of members who stand down before a decision continue to their conclusion, and the findings be published?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

## e) Empowering individuals affected by councillor misconduct to come forward

The government appreciates that it can often be difficult for those who experience misconduct on the part of elected members, such as bullying and harassment, to feel that it is safe and worthwhile to come forward and raise their concerns. If individuals believe there is a likelihood that their complaint will not be addressed or handled appropriately, the risk is that victims will not feel empowered to come forward, meaning misconduct continues without action. We recognise that standing up to instances of misconduct takes an emotional toll, particularly in unacceptable situations where the complaints processes are protracted and do not result in meaningful action. We are committed to ensuring that those affected by misconduct are supported in the right way and feel empowered to come forward. This section seeks feedback from local authorities with experience of overseeing council complaints procedures, or sector bodies and individuals with views on how this might be carried out most effectively. We are also keen to hear from those who work, or have worked, in local government, and who have either witnessed, or been the victim of, member misconduct.

### Question 13

If responding as a local authority, what is the average number of complaints against elected members that you receive over a 12-month period?

[Number box]

### Question 13a

For the above, where possible, please provide a breakdown for complaints made by officers, other elected members, the public, or any other source:

- Complaints made by officers [Number box]
- Complaints made by other elected members [Number box]
- Complaints made by the public [Number box]
- Complaints made by any other source [Number box]

### Question 14

If you currently work, or have worked, within a local authority, have you ever been the victim of (or witnessed) an instance of misconduct by an elected member and felt that you could not come forward? Please give reasons if you feel comfortable doing so.

- Yes

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- No
- [Free text box]

### Question 15

If you are an elected member, have you ever been subject to a code of conduct complaint? If so, did you feel you received appropriate support to engage with the investigation?

- Yes
- No
- [Free text box]

### Question 16

If you did come forward as a victim or witness, what support did you receive, and from whom? Is there additional support you would have liked to receive?

[Free text box]

### Question 17

In your view, what measures would help to ensure that people who are victims of, or witness, serious councillor misconduct feel comfortable coming forward and raising a complaint?

[Free text box]

## 6. Introducing the power of suspension with related safeguards

The government believes that local authorities should have the power to suspend councillors for serious code of conduct breaches for a maximum of 6 months, with the option to withhold allowances and institute premises and facilities bans where deemed appropriate. This section of the consultation explores these proposed provisions in greater detail.

While the law disqualifies certain people from being, or standing for election as, a councillor (e.g. on the grounds of bankruptcy, or receipt of a custodial sentence of 3 months or more, or it subject to the notification requirements of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 - meaning on the sex offenders register) councillors cannot currently be suspended or disqualified for breaching their code of conduct.

Feedback from the local government sector in the years since the removal of the power to suspend councillors has indicated that the current lack of meaningful sanctions means local authorities have no effective way of dealing with more serious examples of member misconduct.

The most severe sanctions currently used, such as formally censuring members, removing them from committees or representative roles, and requiring them to undergo training, may prove ineffective in the cases of more serious and disruptive misconduct. This may particularly be the case when it comes to tackling repeat offenders.

The government recognises that it is only a small minority of members who behave badly, but the misconduct of this small minority can have a disproportionately negative impact on the smooth running of councils. We also appreciate the frustration members of the public and councillors can feel both in the inability to deal decisively with cases of misconduct, and the fact that offending members can continue to draw allowances.

### **Question 18**

Do you think local authorities should be given the power to suspend elected members for serious code of conduct breaches?

- Yes – authorities should be given the power to suspend members
- No – authorities should not be given the power to suspend members
- Unsure

### **Question 19**

Do you think that it is appropriate for a standards committee to have the power to suspend members, or should this be the role of an independent body?

- Yes - the decision to suspend for serious code of conduct breaches should be for the standards committee
- No - a decision to suspend should be referred to an independent body
- Unsure
- [Free text box]

### **Question 20**

Where it is deemed that suspension is an appropriate response to a code of conduct breach, should local authorities be required to nominate an alternative point of contact for constituents during their absence?

- Yes – councils should be required to ensure that constituents have an alternative point of contact during a councillor's suspension

- No – it should be for individual councils to determine their own arrangements for managing constituents' representation during a period of councillor suspension
- Unsure

## a) The length of suspension

The Committee on Standards in Public Life recommended in their 2019 Local Government Ethical Standards<sup>[footnote 3]</sup> (CSPL) report that the maximum length of suspension, without allowances, should be 6 months and the government agrees with this approach. The intent of this proposal would be that non-attendance at council meetings during a period of suspension would be disregarded for the purposes of section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972, which states that a councillor ceases to be a member of the local authority if they fail to attend council meetings for 6 consecutive months.

The government believes that suspension for the full 6 months should be reserved for only the most serious breaches of the code of conduct, and considers that there should be no minimum length of suspension to facilitate the proportionate application of this strengthened sanction.

### Question 21

If the government reintroduced the power of suspension do you think there should be a maximum length of suspension?

- Yes – the government should set a maximum length of suspension of 6 months
- Yes – however the government should set a different maximum length (in months) [Number box]
- No – I do not think the government should set a maximum length of suspension
- Unsure

### Question 22

If yes, how frequently do you consider councils would be likely to make use of the maximum length of suspension?

- Infrequently – likely to be applied only to the most egregious code of conduct breaches
- Frequently – likely to be applied in most cases, with some exceptions for less serious breaches

- Almost always – likely to be the default length of suspension for code of conduct breaches
- Unsure

## b) Withholding allowances and premises and facilities bans

Giving councils the discretion to withhold allowances from members who have been suspended for serious code of conduct breaches in cases where they feel it is appropriate to do so could act as a further deterrent against unethical behaviour. Holding councillors financially accountable during suspensions also reflects a commitment to ethical governance, the highest standards of public service, and value for money for local residents.

Granting local authorities the power in legislation to ban suspended councillors from local authority premises and from using council equipment and facilities could be beneficial in cases of behavioural or financial misconduct, ensuring that suspended councillors do not misuse resources or continue egregious behaviour. Additionally, it would demonstrate that allegations of serious misconduct are handled appropriately, preserving trust in public service and responsible stewardship of public assets.

These measures may not always be appropriate and should not be tied to the sanction of suspension by default. The government also recognises that there may be instances in which one or both of these sanctions is appropriate but suspension is not. It is therefore proposed that both the power to withhold allowances and premises and facilities bans represent standalone sanctions in their own right.

### Question 23

Should local authorities have the power to withhold allowances from suspended councillors in cases where they deem it appropriate?

- Yes – councils should have the option to withhold allowances from suspended councillors
- No – suspended councillors should continue to receive allowances
- Unsure

### Question 24

Do you think it should be put beyond doubt that local authorities have the power to ban suspended councillors from council premises and to

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withdraw the use of council facilities in cases where they deem it appropriate?

- Yes – premises and facilities bans are an important tool in tackling serious conduct issues
- No – suspended councillors should still be able to use council premises and facilities
- Unsure

### Question 25

Do you agree that the power to withhold members' allowances and to implement premises and facilities bans should also be standalone sanctions in their own right?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

## c) Interim suspension

Some investigations into serious code of conduct breaches may be complex and take time to conclude, and there may be circumstances when the misconduct that has led to the allegation is subsequently referred to the police to investigate. In such cases, the government proposes that there should be an additional power to impose interim suspensions whilst and until a serious or complex case under investigation is resolved.

A member subject to an interim suspension would not be permitted to participate in any council business or meetings, with an option to include a premises and facilities ban.

We consider that members should continue to receive allowances whilst on interim suspension and until an investigation proves beyond doubt that a serious code of conduct breach has occurred or a criminal investigation concludes. The decision to impose an interim suspension would not represent a pre-judgement of the validity of an allegation.

We suggest that:

- Interim suspensions should initially be for up to a maximum of 3 months. After the expiry of an initial interim suspension period, the relevant council's standards committee should review the case to decide whether it is in the public interest to extend.

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- As appropriate, the period of time spent on interim suspension may be deducted from the period of suspension a standards committee imposes.

**Question 26**

Do you think the power to suspend councillors on an interim basis pending the outcome of an investigation would be an appropriate measure?

- Yes, powers to suspend on an interim basis would be necessary
- No, interim suspension would not be necessary
- Any further comments [free text box]

**Question 27**

Do you agree that local authorities should have the power to impose premises and facilities bans on councillors who are suspended on an interim basis?

- Yes - the option to institute premises and facilities bans whilst serious misconduct cases are investigated is important
- No - members whose investigations are ongoing should retain access to council premises and facilities
- Unsure

**Question 28**

Do you think councils should be able to impose an interim suspension for any period of time they deem fit?

- Yes
- No
- Any further comments [free text box]

**Question 29**

Do you agree that an interim suspension should initially be for up to a maximum of 3 months, and then subject to review?

- Yes
- No
- Any further comments [free text box]

**Question 30**

If following a 3-month review of an interim suspension, a standards committee decided to extend, do you think there should be safeguards

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to ensure a period of interim extension is not allowed to run on unchecked?

- Yes – there should be safeguards
- No – councils will know the details of individual cases and should be trusted to act responsibly

### Question 30a

If you answered yes to above question, what safeguards do you think might be needed to ensure that unlimited suspension is not misused?

[Free text box]

## d) Disqualification for multiple breaches and gross misconduct

When councillors repeatedly breach codes of conduct, it undermines the integrity of the council and erodes public confidence. To curb the risk of repeat offending and continued misconduct once councillors return from a suspension, the government considers that it may be beneficial to introduce disqualification for a period of 5 years for those members for whom the sanction of suspension is invoked on more than one occasion within a 5-year period.

This measure underlines the government's view that the sanction of suspension should only be used in the most serious code of conduct breaches, because in effect a decision to suspend more than once in a 5-year period would be a decision to disqualify an elected member. However, we consider this measure would enable councils to signal in the strongest terms that repeated instances of misconduct will not be tolerated and would act as a strong deterrent against the worst kind of behaviours becoming embedded.

Currently a person is disqualified if they have been convicted of any offence and have received a sentence of imprisonment (suspended or not) for a period of 3 months or more (without the option of a fine) in the 5-year period before the relevant election. Disqualification also covers sexual offences, even if they do not result in a custodial or suspended sentence.

### Question 31

Do you think councillors should be disqualified if subject to suspension more than once?

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- Yes – twice within a 5-year period should result in disqualification for 5 years
- Yes – but for a different length of time and/or within a different timeframe (in years) [Number boxes]
- No - the power to suspend members whenever they breach codes of conduct is sufficient
- Any other comments [free text box]

### Question 32

Is there a case for immediate disqualification for gross misconduct, for example in instances of theft or physical violence impacting the safety of other members and/or officers, provided there has been an investigation of the incident and the member has had a chance to respond before a decision is made?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure
- [Free text box]

## e) Appeals

The government proposes that:

- A right of appeal be introduced for any member subject to a decision to suspend them.
- Members should only be able to appeal any given decision to suspend them once.
- An appeal should be invoked within 5 working days of the notification of suspension; and
- Following receipt of a request for appeal, arrangements should be made to conduct the appeal hearing within 28 working days.

The government believes that were the sanction of suspension to be introduced (and potentially disqualification if a decision to suspend occurs a second time within a 5-year period) it would be essential for such a punitive measure to be underpinned by a fair appeals process.

A right of appeal would allow members to challenge decisions that they believe are unjust or disproportionate and provides a safeguard to ensure that the sanction of suspension is applied fairly and consistently.

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We consider that it would be appropriate to either create a national body, or to vest the appeals function in an existing appropriate national body, and views on the merits of that are sought at questions 38 and 39 below. Firstly, the following questions test opinion on the principle of providing a mechanism for appeal.

**Question 33**

Should members have the right to appeal a decision to suspend them?

- Yes - it is right that any member issued with a sanction of suspension can appeal the decision
- No – a council's decision following consideration of an investigation should be final
- Unsure

**Question 34**

Should suspended members have to make their appeal within a set timeframe?

- Yes – within 5 days of the decision is appropriate to ensure an efficient process
- Yes – but within a different length of time (in days) [Number box]
- No – there should be no time limit for appealing a decision

The government is also keen to explore if a right of appeal should be provided, either in relation to whether a complaint proceeds to full investigation and consideration by the standards committee, or where a claimant is dissatisfied with the determination of the standards committee.

**Question 35**

Do you consider that a complainant should have a right of appeal when a decision is taken not to investigate their complaint?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

**Question 36**

Do you consider that a complainant should have a right of appeal when an allegation of misconduct is not upheld?

- Yes
- No

- Unsure

### Question 37

If you answered yes to either of the previous two questions, please use the free text box below to share views on what you think is the most suitable route of appeal for either or both situations.

[Free text box]

## f) Potential for a national appeals body

There is a need to consider whether appeals panels should be in-house within local authorities, or whether it is right that this responsibility sits with an independent national body. Whereas an in-house appeals process would potentially enable quicker resolutions by virtue of a smaller caseload, empowering a national body to oversee appeals from suspended members and complainants could reinforce transparency and impartiality and help to ensure consistency of decision-making throughout England, setting precedents for the types of cases that are heard.

### Question 38

Do you think there is a need for an external national body to hear appeals?

- Yes – an external appeals body would help to uphold impartiality
- No – appeals cases should be heard by an internal panel
- Any further comments [free text box]

### Question 39

If you think there is a need for an external national appeals body, do you think it should:

- Be limited to hearing elected member appeals
- Be limited to hearing claimant appeals
- Both of the above should be in scope
- Please explain your answer [free text box]

## 7. Public Sector Equality Duty

### Question 40

In your view, would the proposed reforms to the local government standards and conduct framework particularly benefit or disadvantage individuals with protected characteristics, for example those with disabilities or caring responsibilities?

Please tick an option below:

- it would benefit individuals with protected characteristics
- it would disadvantage individuals with protected characteristics
- neither

Please use the text box below to make any further comment on this question.

[Free text box]

## Annex A: Personal data

The following is to explain your rights and give you the information you are be entitled to under the Data Protection Act 2018. Note that this section only refers to your personal data (your name address and anything that could be used to identify you personally) not the content of your response to the consultation.

### 1. The identity of the data controller and contact details of our Data Protection Officer

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) is the data controller. The Data Protection Officer can be contacted at [dataprotection@communities.gov.uk](mailto:dataprotection@communities.gov.uk).

### 2. Why we are collecting your personal data

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Your personal data is being collected as an essential part of the consultation process, so that we can contact you regarding your response and for statistical purposes. We may also use it to contact you about related matters.

### **3. Our legal basis for processing your personal data**

The Data Protection Act 2018 states that, as a government department, MHCLG may process personal data as necessary for the effective performance of a task carried out in the public interest. i.e. a consultation.

### **4. With whom we will be sharing your personal data**

We use a third-party platform, Citizen Space, to collect consultation responses. In the first instance, your personal data will be stored on their secure UK-based servers.

### **5. For how long we will keep your personal data, or criteria used to determine the retention period.**

Your personal data will be held for 2 years from the closure of the consultation.

### **6. Your rights, e.g. access, rectification, erasure**

The data we are collecting is your personal data, and you have considerable say over what happens to it. You have the right:

- a) to see what data we have about you
- b) to ask us to stop using your data, but keep it on record
- c) to ask to have all or some of your data deleted or corrected
- d) to lodge a complaint with the independent Information Commissioner (ICO) if you think we are not handling your data fairly or in accordance with 42

the law. You can contact the ICO at <https://ico.org.uk/> (<https://ico.org.uk/>), or telephone 0303 123 1113.

## 7. Your personal data will not be sent overseas

## 8. Your personal data will not be used for any automated decision making

## 9. Your personal data will be stored on a secure government IT system

Your data will be transferred to our secure government IT system as soon as possible after the consultation has closed, and it will be stored there for the standard 2 years of retention before it is deleted.

- 
1. [Localism Act 2011 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/20/part/1/chapter/7)  
(<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/20/part/1/chapter/7>)
  2. Only around 36% of the population of England is covered by a parish or town council.
  3. [Local government ethical standards: report - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-government-ethical-standards-report)  
(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-government-ethical-standards-report>)

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**ST AUSTELL TOWN COUNCIL  
FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE**

**17<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2025**

**RISK MANAGEMENT**

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To approve an updated Risk Management Strategy and Strategic Risk Register (e-mailed separately) which are required as part of the annual internal audit.

**2. LEGAL AND RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES**

The Council is required as part of its governance arrangements to have suitable risk management processes in place and to review these processes from time to time. The nature and scale of risks experienced by the Town Council is changing as services and assets are devolved from Cornwall Council.

**3. RESOURCE ISSUES**

None outside of existing budgets.

**4. EQUALITIES ISSUES**

Equality Impact Assessments are undertaken as and when appropriate as part of the Council's Risk Management process.

**5. ENVIRONMENT ISSUES**

The Council has declared a Climate Emergency and has committed to improving its environmental impact.

**6. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Committee:

1. Approves the updated Risk Management Strategy (Appendix 1) and Strategic Risk Register (e-mailed separately).

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DAVID POOLEY  
TOWN CLERK





# ST AUSTELL TOWN COUNCIL

## RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

### 1. Introduction

1.1 This document forms the Council's Risk Management Strategy. It sets out:

- What is meant by risk management;
- Why the Council needs a risk management strategy;
- The philosophy of the Council's risk management;
- An overview of the methodology to be adopted and its links with existing processes;
- A summary of the implementation timetable;
- An outline of the associated roles of Elected Members and officers; and
- A summary of future monitoring and reporting lines for risk management.

1.2 The objectives of this strategy are to:

- Further develop risk management and raise its profile across the Council;
- Integrate risk management into the culture of the organisation;
- Embed risk management through the ownership and management of risk as part of all decision-making processes; and
- Manage risk in accordance with best practice.

### 2 What is Risk Management?

**2.1** *'Risk is the threat that an event or action will adversely affect an organisation's ability to achieve its objectives and to successfully execute its strategies. Risk management is the process by which risks are identified, evaluated and controlled. It is a key element of the framework of governance together with community focus, structures and processes, standards of conduct and service delivery arrangements.'* Audit Commission, *Worth the Risk: Improving Risk Management in Local Government*, (2001: 5).

**2.2** Risk management is an essential feature of good governance. An organisation that manages risk well is more likely to achieve its objectives. It is vital to recognise that risk management is not simply about health and safety but applies to all aspects of the Council's work.

**2.3** Risks can be classified into various types but it is important to recognise that for all categories the direct financial losses may have less impact than the indirect costs such as disruption of normal working. The examples below are not exhaustive:

**2.3.1 Strategic Risk** - long-term adverse impacts from poor decision-making or poor implementation. Risks damage to the reputation of the Council, loss of public confidence, in a worse case scenario Government Intervention.

- 2.3.2 Compliance Risk** - failure to comply with legislation, or laid down procedures or the lack of documentation to prove compliance. Risks exposure to prosecution, judicial review, employment tribunals, inability to enforce contracts.
- 2.3.3 Financial Risk** - fraud and corruption, waste, excess demand for services, bad debts. Risk of additional audit investigation, objection to accounts, reduced service delivery, dramatically increased Council tax levels/impact on Council reserves.
- 2.3.4 Operating Risk** - failure to deliver services effectively, malfunctioning equipment, hazards to service users, the general public or staff, damage to property. Risk of insurance claims, higher insurance premiums, lengthy recovery processes.
- 2.3.5 Reputational Risk** – damage to reputation through the actions or inaction of officers and/or members.
- 2.4** Not all of these risks are insurable and for some the premiums may not be cost-effective. Even where insurance is available, money may not be an adequate recompense. The emphasis should always be on eliminating or reducing risk, before costly steps to transfer risk to another party are considered.
- 2.5** Risk is not restricted to potential threats but can be connected with opportunities. Good risk management can facilitate proactive, rather than merely defensive, responses. Measures to manage adverse risks are likely to help with managing positive ones.

### **3. Why does the Council need a Risk Management Strategy?**

- 3.1** Risk management will strengthen the ability of the Council to achieve its objectives and enhance the value of services provided.
- 3.2** The Risk Management Strategy will help to ensure that all Committees across the Council have an understanding of 'risk' and that the Council adopts a uniform approach to identifying and prioritising risks. This should in turn lead to conscious choices as to the most appropriate method of dealing with each risk, be it elimination, reduction, transfer or acceptance.
- 3.3** There is an Audit requirement under the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 (SI 2015/234) to establish and maintain a systematic strategy, framework and process for managing risk. Risks and their control will be collated in a Risk Register. A statement about the system of internal control and the management of risk will be included as part of the Annual Statement of Accounts.

### **4. What is the Council's Philosophy on Risk Management?**

#### **4.1 Risk Management Policy Statement**

St Austell Town Council recognises that, in addition to its statutory duties, there are cogent moral and economic reasons to take all practicable and reasonable measures to safeguard people and the natural and built environments. Whilst it is acknowledged that risk cannot be totally eliminated it is accepted that much can be done to reduce the extent of injury, damage and financial loss. Therefore, St Austell

Town Council is committed to identifying, reducing or eliminating the risks to both people and the natural and built environments.

The Council will carry insurance in such amounts and in respect of such perils as will provide protection against significant losses, where insurance is required by law or contract and in other circumstances where risks are insurable and premiums cost-effective.

The Council will seek to embed effective risk management into its culture, processes and structure to ensure that opportunities are maximised.

## **5. What is the Risk Management Process?**

- 5.1** Implementing the Strategy involves identifying, analysing, prioritising, managing and monitoring risks.
- 5.2** **Risk Identification** – Identifying and understanding the hazards and risks facing the Council is crucial if informed decisions are to be made about policies or service delivery methods. The risks associated with these decisions can then be effectively managed. All risks identified will be recorded in the Council's Risk Register.
- 5.3** **Risk Analysis** – Once risks have been identified they need to be systematically and accurately assessed using proven techniques. Analysis should make full use of any available data on the potential frequency of events and their consequences. If a risk is seen to be unacceptable, then steps need to be taken to control it or respond to it.
- 5.4** **Risk Prioritisation** - An assessment should be undertaken of the impact or consequence and likelihood of risks occurring, with impact and likelihood being scored on a scale from 1 to 5 with 1 being low and 5 high.

The scores for impact and likelihood are multiplied together. Risks scoring 12 and above will be subject to detailed consideration and preparation of a contingency/action plan to appropriately control the risk.

- 5.5** **Risk Control** – Risk control is the process of taking action to minimise the likelihood of the risk event occurring and/or reducing the severity of the consequences should it occur. Typically, risk control requires the identification and implementation of revised operating procedures, but in exceptional cases more drastic action will be required to reduce the risk to an acceptable level.

Options for control include:

- 5.5.1** **Elimination** – the circumstances from which the risk arises are ceased so that the risk no longer exists;
- 5.5.2** **Reduction** – loss control measures are implemented to reduce the impact/likelihood of the risk occurring;
- 5.5.3** **Transfer** – the financial impact is passed to others e.g. by revising contractual terms;

- 5.5.4 Sharing** the risk with another party;
- 5.5.5 Insuring** against some or all of the risk to mitigate financial impact; or
- 5.5.6 Acceptance** – documenting a conscious decision after assessment of areas where the Council accepts or tolerates risk.
- 5.6 Risk Register** – a register of strategic risks will be collated and an additional system of risk assessments will be maintained for all identified operational risks. Each will be reviewed at least annually.
- 5.7 Risk Monitoring** – The risk management process does not finish with putting any risk control procedures in place. Their effectiveness in controlling risk must be monitored and reviewed. It is also important to assess whether the nature of any risk has changed over time.

The information generated from applying the risk management process will help to ensure that risks can be avoided or minimised in the future. It will also inform judgements on the nature and extent of insurance cover and the balance to be reached between self-insurance and external protection.

## **6. How will it feed into the Council’s existing policies?**

- 6.1** All reports to Council or Committees will consider risk management issues. Initial identification of strategic and operational risks will be by officers who will compile lists of strategic and operational risks. Regular reports on risk management will be presented to the Finance and General Purposes Committee for consideration.
- 6.2 Best Practice** – the current economic climate means that risk management is now more important than ever, it is important for the Council to reassess its objectives and the threats to achieving these objectives. The Council will build risk management procedures into the way that it operates as part of a commitment to quality and continuous service improvement
- 6.4 Localism and Partnership Working** – the Council enters into contracts and partnerships with organisations from the public, private, voluntary and community sectors. Some of these organisations may not have the same sensitivities to the risks that the Council sees as important. Part of the process of setting up future partnerships will be to ensure that all relevant risks are identified and that appropriate control mechanisms are built into the management arrangements for the partnership.

## **7. Roles and Responsibilities**

- 7.1** It is important that risk management becomes embedded into the everyday culture and performance management process of the Council. The roles and responsibilities set out below, are designed to ensure that risk is managed effectively right across the Council and its operations, and responsibility for risk is located in the right place. Those who best know the risks to a particular service or function are those responsible for it. The process must be driven by members but must also involve officers.

**7.2 Elected Members** – risk management is seen as a key part of the Elected Member’s stewardship role and there is an expectation that Elected Members will lead and monitor the approach adopted.

This will include:

- Approval of the Risk Management Strategy;
- Analysis of key risks in reports on major projects, ensuring that all future projects and services undertaken are adequately risk managed;
- Consideration, and if appropriate, endorsement of the Annual Statement of Internal Control; and
- Assessment of risks whilst setting the budget, including any bids for resources to tackle specific issues.

**7.3 Town Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer** – will act as the Lead Officer on Risk Management, overseeing the implementation of the detail of the Risk Management Strategy.

The Town Clerk will:

- provide advice as to the legality of policy and service delivery choices;
- provide advice on the implications of potential service actions for the Council’s corporate aims and objectives;
- update Council on the implications of new or revised legislation;
- assess and implement the Council’s insurance requirements;
- assess the financial implications of strategic policy options;
- ensure that the Financial Information System allows effective budgetary control;
- inform investment decisions made by the Council.
- assist in handling any litigation claims;
- provide advice on any human resource issues relating to strategic policy options or the risks associated with operational decisions and assist in handling cases of work-related illness or injury;
- advise on any health and safety implications of the chosen or proposed arrangements for service delivery;
- consider the environmental implications of policy and service delivery choices;
- have due regard to the Equality Act 2010 when dealing with Risk Management issues; and
- report progress to Council via the Finance and General Purposes Committee as detailed in para 8.3 below.

**7.4 The Operations Manager** will act as the Lead officer for Risk Management and Health and Safety matters associated with the operational services of the Council.

**7.5 The Deputy Town Clerk** will act as the Lead Officer for Risk Management in connection with employees’ health and wellbeing and human resources issues.

**7.6 Employees** – will undertake their job within risk management guidelines ensuring that the skills and knowledge passed to them are used effectively. All employees will maintain an awareness of the impact and costs of risks and how to feed data into the formal process. They will work to control risks or threats within their jobs, monitor progress and report on job related risks to the Clerk or their line manager.

- 7.7 Role of Internal Audit** – the Internal Auditor provides an important scrutiny role carrying out audits to provide independent assurance to the Finance and General Purposes Committee and Council that the necessary risk management systems are in place and all significant business risks are being managed effectively.

Internal Audit assists the Council in identifying both its financial and operational risks and seeks to assist the Council in developing and implementing proper arrangements to manage them, including adequate and effective systems of internal control to reduce or eliminate the likelihood of errors or fraud.

The Internal Audit Report, and any recommendations contained within it, will help to shape the Annual Statement of Internal Control.

- 7.8 Training** – Risk Management training will be provided to Elected Members, and key staff. The aim will be to ensure that both Elected Members and staff have the skills necessary to identify, evaluate and control the risks associated with the services they provide.

In addition to the roles and responsibilities set out above, the Council is keen to promote an environment within which individuals/groups are encouraged to report adverse incidents promptly and openly. To assist with this aspect, the Council will develop and maintain an Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy, a Confidential Reporting ('whistleblowing') Policy, Employee Handbooks and Health and Safety Handbooks.

## **8 Future Monitoring**

- 8.1 Review of Risk Management Strategy** - This Strategy will be reviewed on a regular basis as part of the Council's continuing review of its Policy Documents, Standing Orders and Financial Regulations. Recommendations for change will be reported to the Finance and General Purposes Committee.
- 8.2** Once the initial work to establish Risk Registers has been completed, it is crucial that the information is regularly reviewed and updated. New risks will emerge and need to be controlled. Feedback from Internal and External Audit can identify areas for improvement, as can the sharing of best practice via professional bodies such as the National Association of Local Councils.
- 8.3 Reporting on Progress** – The Town Clerk will present an annual report to the Finance and General Purposes Committee detailing progress on risk management over the year and providing a summary of the Risk Register(s) and control assurance statements.

## **9. Conclusion**

- 9.1** The adoption of a sound risk management approach should achieve many benefits for the Council. It will assist in demonstrating that the Council is committed to continuous service improvement and demonstrating effective corporate governance.



## **10. Freedom of Information**

- 10.1.** In accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, this Document will be posted on the Council's Website and copies of this document and the Risk Register will be available for inspection on deposit in the Council Office.



## St Austell Library Newsletter – February 2025

Hello Everyone, I can't really believe it, but it's been a whole year since our last newsletter! Time certainly doesn't stand still, does it? We have had quite a full-on year, with plenty of highs and a few lows, I just hope the ol' grey matter can remember them all! 🤔

Aside from our very busy and customer focused day to day work, we have welcomed numerous schools for class visits to learn all about the Library (already 7 classes this year alone). Penrice drama students enjoyed a morning in our music Library, and we had visits from a Rainbows and Squirrels pack. Our tried and trusty badge maker, which had been in Library service use since before I started here in 1999, finally threw the towel in, but we were saved by the bell and a very quick purchase of a brand-new machine agreed by David, which will save many disappointed faces! Even our deputy Mayor has had a go with it! The class visits are a very useful steppingstone for us spreading the word about the Summer Reading Challenge, which as you all know is extremely popular here. We held onto our stats well, signing up over 900 children through the last summer, but the push this year will be to get our percentage up for children completing the whole of the challenge and keeping up their enthusiasm.....and ours! 😊

Events are always good to arrange, but we wait, holding our breaths to see what our attendance uptake will be. Sometimes our community embraces them with open arms and other times we fall flat on our faces! We have, just this week, had to cancel our murder mystery event, which sold like hot cakes last year, but this year ticket sales fell very silent. To run the event would have cost £375.00 for the theatre group, but with only ticket sales of 12 X £5.00, meant SALSA would have taken a massive hit. It takes a lot of time to find suitable grant funders and a lot of fund-raising to accumulate those amounts.



Always popular though, are our animal events and we welcomed two beautiful heavy horses into the Library garden during a lovely summer's day, well might have been the only one, but it was lovely! Although our poor flowering cherry tree they were tethered to, wasn't quite so impressed! 🤔

Music is always popular here and we hosted ukulele and skiffle bands, a women's shanty acapella harmony style group, Cornish dance display and enjoyed Cornish heritage talks.

We stepped in and offered our building and services to support another organisation when the Daphne, a historic sailing barge which hosts literary events, had to be urgently relocated because of storm damage to the lock gates in Charlestown harbour. A Cosy Night In with Richard Trethewey was very much welcomed here.

Always keen to support the St Austell Festival of Children's Literature, we hosted a quiz of Children V The Authors, unfortunately the children were pipped to the winning post by the authors in a close literary battle devised by our Emma, who sourced all the questions. We hosted early years festival organised workshops here in June followed by another fundraiser for them, a Bingo Night, raising £150.00.

The year ended nicely with wreath making, something we hadn't tried before. A lovely event just a lot of clearing up afterwards and a visit from Santa – we are most definitely on his "nice" list, although I think he muddled up my stocking.....anyone for a bar humbug! 🤪 😊



The Big Guy!



A bit like "Where's Wally", can you spot the Library Manager? 🤪

Salsa continues to be our ever-present rock, their support is tremendous, not only with Salsa arranged events but with Library activities, always happy to lend a hand, support the Library staff and weld a teapot! The focus for the support association this year is to find a new feature for our lovely garden. Sadly, we had to remove our dear old story telling tree last year because of stability issues, which has now left us to think of what we can have to replace it... not an easy feat and which is going to take some doing! 🤪

Before I say my goodbye, I just wanted to introduce you to some new members to the team. We are now back to being fully staffed having welcomed Ruth last October and Jess in early January. They have already made great strides into becoming part of our Library family, along with our very dedicated Library volunteers Phil, Pamela, Caitlin and Jane, who also do so much to support our little Library community.

Wishing you all the very best, with kind regards from Terry and the Library team.