

MINUTES of a REMOTE MEETING of the FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE held on MONDAY 21st SEPTEMBER 2020 at 6pm.

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

Also Present: Councillor Crystal Pearce.

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

F/19/82) Apologies for absence

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Walker.

F/19/83) Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

F/19/84) Dispensations

There were no requests for dispensations.

F/19/85) Minutes of meeting held on 29th June 2020

Arising from a question with regard to minute number **F/19/77**, the Deputy Town Clerk confirmed that the six Cornwall Councillors approached for funding were the St Austell and Mevagissey Community Network Panel Cornwall Councillors. It was agreed to amend the minutes to reflect this clarification.

It was **RESOLVED** that subject to the above amendment, the minutes of the meeting held on the 29th June 2020 be approved and signed as a correct record.

F/19/86) Matters to Note

The Clerk advised that further to minute number **F/19/77**, the trial re-deployable CCTV camera had unfortunately been stolen within 24 hours of it being erected. The company supplying the camera did not charge the Town Council for the loss. The Clerk added that he had submitted a bid to the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) for funding which, together with funding from the Town Council and the Cornwall Councillor Community Chest, should enable the Town Council to purchase a re-deployable camera linked to the CCTV suite at Newquay. The outcome of the bid is still awaited.

Arising from discussions, the Clerk confirmed that if the purchase went ahead, it would be insured by the Town Council and special measures would be put in place to ensure that it is not stolen.

Councillor Brown advised that he would confirm his Cornwall Councillor Community Chest funding once the other sources of funding have been firmed up.

It was agreed to include CCTV as an agenda item at the next Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting.

Arising from a question with regard to minute number **F/19/73**, the Clerk confirmed that due to a lack of footfall, Poltair Café will be closed for the winter months but the tenants have agreed to re-open again in the spring to see if things have improved. The Clerk confirmed that some costs will be incurred by the Town Council whilst the café is closed.

F/19/87) Public participation

There were no members of the public present.

F/19/88) Budget Monitoring Report

The Clerk outlined the variances against budget for the period 1st April to 31st August 2020 as follows:

Car Park income - £84,000 shortfall against budget. It is likely that there will be a year-end shortfall of at least £120,000 against this budget head.

Library income - £4,588 shortfall against budget. Library fees were re-introduced in August and will be reflected in the half year budget monitoring figures.

Other grants/contributions - £48,000. Government funding received to date under the Job Retention Scheme.

Other grants/contributions - £8,000. Section 106 funding for the accessible roundabout in Poltair Park.

Public Conveniences - £1,780 shortfall against budget. Cash received banked in September and will be reflected in the half year budget monitoring figures.

The Clerk advised that savings have been made against the salaries budget head due to the freezing of the Grounds Maintenance (Waste) Operative and Community Project Officer posts.

The slight overspend on play equipment is due to the safety surfacing works approved for last year, being carried out in this year because of adverse weather conditions and an £8,000 accessible wheel chair roundabout at Poltair Park which has been funded from Section 106 funding in the Other grants/contributions budget head.

The contract hire budget head is slightly overspent due to the hire of an extra vehicle in May/June for the grounds maintenance staff so that they could travel in separate vehicles.

The Clerk advised that he has had discussions with Cornwall Council about hardship funding and will be making a half year claim at the end of September.

Arising from a question, the Clerk advised that the small grants scheme budget is probably below budget because not many community organisations are meeting and undertaking on activities that require funding.

It was **RESOLVED** to note the budget monitoring report and Bank reconciliation for the period 1st April 2020 to 31st August 2020.

F/19/89) Budget Process and Timetable

The Clerk advised that he would like an informal discussion with Councillors on the 13th October about the forthcoming budget setting process and the difficult decisions ahead. An application will be made to Cornwall Council for hardship funding at the end of September, but the criteria provided indicates that the Town Council will only be able to re-coup a small proportion of its lost income. The Clerk also expressed concern with regard to the expected reduction in the Council Tax base and the uncertainty with regard to the outcome of the Community Governance Review (CGR). The Clerk advised that some flexibility might be needed with regard to setting this year's budget as key information with regard to the Council Tax Base and CGR might not be available until towards the end of the year. It was noted that if it is not possible to set the budget at the December 2020 meeting, it would probably be acceptable to Cornwall Council to receive the Town Council's precept details in mid-January at the latest.

Arising from the above, Councillors discussed the forthcoming Electoral Review Panel meeting on the 23rd September 2020 and the officer recommendation that Gwallon Keas should remain with Carlyon Parish Council, despite a recommendation at the last Cornwall Council meeting that the development should transfer to St Austell Town Council. Members also noted the recommendation that an area of land close to Sawles Road should transfer from St Austell Town Council to Pentewan Valley Parish Council.

It was **RESOLVED** to note the Budget Process and Timetable Report and to remain flexible with regard to the timetable should key information not be available in time to set the budget at the December 2020 Council meeting.

It was **FURTHER RESOLVED** to make strong representations to the ten Electoral Review Panel Members requesting that the Gwallon Keas development is transferred to St Austell Town Council.

Councillors Brown, French and Oxenham abstained from voting on this item

F/19/90) Car Park Working Group

The Town Clerk advised that he would like to set up a working group to review the car parking charges and management of Priory Car Park for the 2021/22 financial year. Councillors Rees, Palmer and Pearce volunteered to sit on the Car Park Working Group.

It was **RESOLVED** that Councillors Rees, Palmer and Pearce would sit on the car park working group.

F/19/91) St Austell Library – Phased re-opening

The Deputy Town Clerk explained the latest arrangements at St Austell Library. All staff are still on flexible furlough until the end of October when the scheme ends and the "Click and Collect" Service is working well, with very few complaints from people wanting a full browsing service. One public computer is open, but the demand has not been significant, with on average only 1 person a day booking in to use it. If the demand increases, a view will be taken as to whether more can be safely opened up. She advised that consideration was being given to opening up a full browsing service in October, but in the light of the increasing Covid19 infection rates this has been put

on hold for the time being. Monthly meetings have been held with Cornwall Council library staff and other library managers which has proved very useful. The services provided by each library vary from site to site due to logistics and different operating models. The Deputy Clerk advised that she has had some very early discussions with Cornwall Council about the abolition of library fines and assured Members that if Cornwall Council decide to abolish fines in the retained library sites, she will bring a report forward to the Town Council to decide whether or not they should follow suit. It was noted that library fine income amounts to approximately £3,000 per annum for St Austell Library.

F/19/92) External Audit Report 2019/20

Members noted that the External Auditor had not highlighted any issues with regard to the Accounts for the year ended 31st March 2020.

Arising from a question, the Clerk advised that he would give some thought as to how Member Internal Audit Reviews could be carried out whilst face to face meetings are not permitted.

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

F/19/93) Dates of next meeting

It was noted that the next meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee is due to take place on 9th November 2020.

The meeting closed at 7.17pm