

MINUTES of the MEETING of ST AUSTELL TOWN COUNCIL held on MONDAY 22nd MARCH 2021 (Remote Meeting) at 6pm.

Present: Councillors: Bishop, Brown, Bull, Cohen, Colwill, French, Hanlon, Heyward, Lanxon, Leonard, Oxenham, Palmer, Pearce, Pears, Rees, Styles (Chair), Thompson and Walker.

In attendance: David Pooley (Town Clerk), Sara Gwilliams (Deputy Town Clerk) and Steve Skinner (Operations Manager).

C/19/287) Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Jones.

C/19/288) Declarations of interests and gifts or hospitality received

None.

C/19/289) Dispensations

There were no requests for a dispensation.

C/19/290) Minutes of Meeting held on 1st February 2021

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on the 1st February 2021 be approved and signed as a correct record.

C/19/291) Matters to Note

The Clerk advised that he had nothing to add.

C/19/292) Mayor's announcements

The Mayor took the opportunity to thank Councillors for the past 2 years and for embracing Zoom technology so well. He thanked all the Town Council's staff for their hard work and wished the Councillors who are standing again well in the forthcoming elections.

C/19/293) Public Participation

Climate Action St Austell (CASA) representatives, Mrs Earl and Mrs McLaren advised that they are still working hard trying to raise public awareness with regard to the climate emergency and are exploring the possibility of implementing a Forest for St Austell. They expressed their support for the reinstatement of the Climate and Environment Committee but felt strongly that it should meet monthly rather than on an ad hoc arrangement. They recognised the Town Council's limited resources and offered their support to the Operations Manager for projects such as tree planting. The work of Pentewan Valley Parish Council and Mevagissey Parish Council were cited as good examples of tackling the climate emergency.

Mr Hamilton thanked the Council for allowing him to attend the meeting and that he was in attendance in an observational capacity with a view to becoming a Councillor and taking part in the future.

C/19/294) Members' questions

None.

C/19/295) St Austell Revitalisation Partnership

The Clerk thanked Mark Ellis and Helen Nicholson for co-ordinating the drafting of the report and for their attendance at the meeting. He outlined the background to the partnership, the funding available and the fantastic opportunity for the Town Council to feed in to a process to shape the future of the town centre. He acknowledged concerns with regard to private/public partnerships and the promises of revitalisation in the past that had not come to fruition but expressed a view that doing nothing is not an option as this opportunity to revitalise the town centre will not come along again.

The Clerk advised that a number of towns have already submitted funding bids to Cornwall Council and that although the partnership will work up the bid, the rules dictate that the bid has to be approved and submitted by the Town Council. He stressed that only towns with "ready to go" projects stand a chance of larger Government funding and that it is important to proceed with this first stage of bidding for funds from Cornwall Council to allow feasibility studies to proceed to identify and develop realistic projects.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues/concerns:

- The lack of accessibility expertise on the partnership
- A desire for the meetings and minutes to be made public
- The connection between SABEF and the partnership
- The need for trust and positivity to enable the partnership to succeed
- The need to review the representation of the Town Council post May elections
- Some suggested minor amendments to the words in the report.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) On the bottom of page 1, the last paragraph should read "The group is called "St Austell Revitalization Partnership", hereafter referred to as "The Partnership", and **one of** its roles is to develop St Austell Town Council's application for funding;
- (ii) On page 3, paragraph 3 it should read "Review previous work undertaken to collate into a single strategy and master plan for the town centre which aligns with the current **and anticipated** needs and demands."

It was **FURTHER RESOLVED** that subject to the above amendments the Town Council:

- (i) Confirms that it is content for the Partnership to proceed with developing a detailed application for Town Centre Vitality Funding (TCRF) in line with the themes set out in the report;
- (ii) Agrees to receive a further report setting out details of the proposed application;
- (iii) Formally requests that the Partnership meetings be made public

C/19/296) Electronic Voting

The Clerk advised that although there is uncertainty about the future of virtual meetings after 6th May 2021, it is expected that the Government will extend the legislation to permit their continuance. He expressed a view that the Town Council will be unable to operate face to face meetings safely for a while and that legislation permitting, the Annual Town Council meeting should be held virtually. He advised that in previous years, the election of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor has been carried out by secret ballot and that Zoom has an anonymous polling facility within it which would allow Members to elect the Mayor and Deputy Mayor in this way should they choose to do so, subject to a change in the Standing Orders to permit it.

During discussion, Members expressed support for a change to the Standing Orders to permit electronic voting by poll as an acceptable method of voting.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- i. If legislation permits, the Town Council continues with virtual meetings for the time being;
- ii. Electronic voting by poll is clarified as an acceptable method of voting within the Town Council's Standing Orders subject to those not being able to use electronic polls being able to vote by roll call.

C/19/297) Climate and Environment Committee

The Clerk advised that in order to assist the officers with workloads and recognising the environmental remit within the Terms of Reference for the Community Committee, the Climate and Environment Committee meetings were suspended in September 2020 for a period of time. He added that over recent months Members have made it clear that they would like the Climate and Environment Committee resurrected as soon as possible and suggested that in order to achieve, this within the resources available, 2 meetings could be pencilled in for the 2021/22 calendar year.

During discussion, Members made the following observations:

- Two meetings should be enough, particularly as environmental issues are considered on all Committee reports;
- The full Council and Community Committee can still consider environmental issues;
- The potential for quarterly meetings;
- The need for the new Council to decide how frequently they would like the Climate and Environment Committee meetings.

It was **RESOLVED** to:

- (i) Reinstate the Climate and Environment Committee with effect from the next civic year and at the first meeting of the Committee, Members to decide how frequently they wish to meet.

- (ii) Nominate a representative of the Council or Climate and Environment Committee to act as the Town Council's Climate Emergency champion and liaison for community groups.

*** Councillor Oxenham abstained from voting on this item***

C/19/298) Parks and Open Spaces Strategy

The Clerk advised that at the recommendation of the Community Committee a public consultation through social media had taken place asking for views on the Town Council's draft Parks and Open Spaces Strategy. He advised that there had been little response to the consultation but, on the whole, the views that had been expressed were supportive which included those of Young People Cornwall who had made a short film for Members to view.

Members during discussion expressed their gratitude to Young People Cornwall for their film and made reference to the accessibility of the toilets at Poltair Café.

It was **RESOLVED** to formally adopt the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy.

C/19/299) Members appointed to outside bodies update reports

Councillor Palmer advised that the Chairman of the BID, Richard Hurst had resigned and that his input and knowledge with regard to the town centre will be missed. He advised that the BID collection rate remains good, the number of vacant premises in the town centre are still low and that the summer planting is still going ahead, albeit slightly reduced.

Councillor Oxenham advised that SELAG are still looking for volunteers and outlined the commitment and knowledge needed for the role.

Councillor Lanxon made reference to the Safer Towns Survey which is due to close on the 29th March 2021. The Deputy Clerk advised that as far as she is aware, the survey is aimed at partner organisations and not individuals but that she would check and if appropriate, place the survey on Facebook.

Arising from a question, the Clerk confirmed that the CALC Larger Councils Group had not met for some time as the Chief Executive, Sarah Mason is heavily involved with the Covid19 recovery work at Cornwall Council. Ms Mason does however hold weekly briefing sessions with the Clerks from the Larger Councils to provide updates on the recovery work and share best practice.

C/19/300) Cornwall Councillor update reports

Councillor Brown advised that he is working with the case officer on a planning application at Retallick Meadows and is supporting the disposal of a piece of land in St Austell by Cornwall Council for a private garden.

Councillor French advised that he was standing down as a Cornwall Councillor and that he had been appointed to a task and finish group for the Town Team.

Councillor Pears referred to his support for the National Day of Reflection on the 23rd March where ribbons will be tied to the trees at Holy Trinity Church.

Arising from a question, Councillor Brown confirmed that the Cornwall Councillor ASB briefing was the same briefing that was provided to the Town Council.

C/19/301) Schedule of Payments

It was **RESOLVED** that the Schedule of Payments for the period from 26th January 2021 to 12th March 2021 totalling £108,025.53 be approved.

Arising from a question, the Clerk advised that the payment to Kent County Council related to a framework agreement for energy between Cornwall Council and Kent County Council that the Town Council had taken advantage of and that this was due to be reviewed in 2022.

Councillor Oxenham left the meeting

C/19/302) Planning Committee

It was **RESOLVED** to note the minutes of the Planning Committee Meetings held on 8th February 2021 and 8th March 2021.

C/19/303) Finance and General Purposes Committee

The Clerk advised that the Finance and General Purposes Committee had considered the updated Risk Management Strategy and Strategic Risk Register in detail and subject to some minor amendments recommended its approval by full Council.

It was **RESOLVED** to:

- (i) Approve the Risk Management Strategy and Strategic Risk Register;
- (ii) Note the minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee Meeting held on 22nd February 2021.

Councillor Thompson abstained from voting on this item

C/19/304) Community Committee

It was **RESOLVED** to note the minutes of the Community Committee Meeting held on 1st March 2021.

C/19/305) Dates of Meetings

It was noted that the date of the next meeting of the Council is Monday 17th May 2021. The Annual Parish Meeting is on Monday 19th April 2021.

The meeting closed at 7.45pm.