

MINUTES of the ANNUAL PARISH MEETING (Remote) of ST AUSTELL TOWN COUNCIL held on MONDAY 19th APRIL 2021 at 6.00pm.

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

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

The Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting and outlined the proceedings.

APM/21/01) Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Jones.

APM/21/02) Minutes of the Meeting held on 7th May 2019

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting on the 7th May 2019 be approved and signed as a correct record.

APM/21/03) Dr Anthony Hereward and Mr Jeremy Roberts

The Mayor welcomed Dr Hereward to the meeting.

Mr Hereward introduced himself and provided graphical information on the temperature and CO2 levels over the past 800 years. His presentation demonstrated the 5 coolest years and 5 warmest years since 1884, global temperatures, Californian wildfires, global sea levels and the impact on nature. He advised that since the late 1980's 41% of UK species have declined including weasels, badgers, skylarks, chaffinch and wall butterflies.

Dr Hereward introduced Mr Jeremy Roberts from Three Bays Wildlife and owner of Willow Car Park in Mevagissey.

Mr Roberts stressed the importance of everybody working together to respond to the climate emergency and listed some areas where Town and Parish Councils, businesses and individuals can make a difference:

- Transport
- Waste
- Energy
- Procurement
- Partnership
- Awareness raising

Mr Roberts outlined "Parking 4 Pollinators" in Willow Car Park which was awarded a "Highly Commended" at the Cornwall Sustainability Awards and acknowledged the following initiatives in the car park:

- Planters filled with pollinators (on wheels so they can be moved around);
- An interactive display/mural of a butterfly for people to have their photograph taken with;
- A seed shop selling seed bombs
- Electric charging points

Mr Roberts advised that additional projects in the pipeline include electric car and e-bike hire and asked if the review of the cycle trails could include Mevagissey. He outlined the importance of volunteering and education/awareness to ensure that climate change remains in the forefront of people's minds.

Arising from discussion Members made reference to the balance between economic benefits and climate change (spaceport, A30 link road) and the difficulties in encouraging people to change their lifestyles to benefit climate change when they are struggling to make ends meet. Worldwide changes to the use of fossil fuels and Government legislative changes were also mentioned.

The Mayor thanked Dr Hereward and Mr Roberts for their very interesting and thought provoking presentations and introduced PC William Chesterfield.

APM/21/04) PC William Chesterfield

PC Chesterfield introduced himself as the Neighbourhood Beat Manager for St Austell and advised that overall, there has been a 10% reduction in all crime over the last 12 months. Almost all crime types are down with significant reductions in burglary, vehicle offences and shoplifting. The main increase has been in "violence without injury" which is largely due to changes in crime recording rules. Other increases have been seen in the possession and trafficking of drugs and weapon offences. PC Chesterfield reassured Members that despite the numbers being up in these areas, they are still low by national standards and that the individual crime figures can be found on the Devon and Cornwall Police website.

PC Chesterfield advised that the main priorities over the past 12 months have been the safeguarding of vulnerable people and domestic abuse. Anti-social behaviour has been an issue from time to time and has been tackled with partner agencies and Helen Toms, Cornwall Council ASB caseworker. County lines has been a priority and as a sector, more drugs warrants have been carried out than anywhere else in Devon and Cornwall.

He stressed the need for community intelligence and the importance of reporting issues and incidents by the public, although Covid has put significant pressure on to the police at times. There was a 20/30% increase on the police demand last year and the same is anticipated this year due to more visitors in Cornwall. It is anticipated that the G7 summit will have an impact on local resources but should be minimal. PC Chesterfield concluded that the uplift in neighbourhood officers has been very welcome and that there is a potential for more resource to be added to the team.

During discussion Members raised the crime statistics in St Austell compared with other towns, the opening hours of the Police station in St Austell, current issues in Truro and clarification of the impact that the G7 summit will have on the St Austell Police Sector.

The Mayor thanked PC Chesterfield for his presentation.

APM/21/05) Helen Nicholson – Community Link Officer, Cornwall Council

The Mayor welcomed Helen Nicholson to the meeting.

Mrs Nicholson provided an update to Members on the work of the Community Network Panel (CNP). She explained that they hold open meetings and that their aim is to bring the Town and Parish Councils together by discussing topics of interest to all. She advised that in the last civic year the CNP had discussed issues such as health and wellbeing, highways funding schemes, Covid19 and climate change. She explained the four principles of localism and the localism vision and strategy.

The Mayor thanked Mrs Nicholson for her update.

APM/21/06) David Pooley, Town Clerk – Review/Priorities

The Clerk outlined the achievements and working arrangements that were put in place over the last 12 months due to the pandemic. These were:

- Councillors Styles and Pears remaining in situ as Mayor and Deputy Mayor respectively;
- Grounds Maintenance Staff, Library Staff and Admin Assistant furloughed in March 2020 - Town Clerk, Deputy Town Clerk and Operations Manager working from home;
- 4th May 2020 – first remote meeting took place;
- May 2020/June 2020 – grounds maintenance staff returned to work on a phased basis;
- July 2020 – the library staff brought back to work on flexible furlough to operate a “click and collect” service;
- Coronavirus leaflet produced with Cornwall Council;
- Permission granted to Mount Charles school to erect fencing in Woodland Road Park to assist with social distancing

The Operations Manager ran through some of the achievements over the past 12 months within the grounds maintenance service. These include:

- 2 x Apprentices recruited (1 x funded by SABEF)
- Appointment of a foreman from within the existing team
- New safety surfacing and installation of a wheelchair accessible roundabout at Poltair Park
- Replacement seesaw at Chapel Field
- Refurbishment at Manfield Way
- Creation of a new wildflower meadow at Woodland Close Park
- Trial of environmentally friendly weed treatment at Poltair Park

The Deputy Town Clerk provided an overview of the library’s operation over the last 12 months as follows:

- 8 staff (2 x full time and 6 x part time)
- All staff are on flexible furlough whilst the service is still not fully operating
- Click and collect service started in July 2020 with an average of 4,000 books issued/returned each month
- A reduced browsing service re-commenced on 12th April 2021 with Covid19 safety measures in place (reduced capacity, hand sanitisers, masks, one way system and separate entry and exit to the building)
- St Austell library is one of a handful of local libraries operating a browsing/click and collect service 6 days a week.

A number of grants have been issued over the last 12 months which include:

- St Austell Cricket Club
- Churches Together
- St Austell Revival Together Clothing Bank
- St Austell Old People Welfare Committee
- Merlin Centre
- St Austell Arts Centre
- 4FS Dance Group

The Clerk briefly outlined the draft Accounts and drew particular attention to the income in the form of grants received during the year which has resulted in a surplus position. He advised that the Accounts would be considered in full at the Annual Town Council meeting in May.

The Clerk advised that as well as maintaining services, other activities achieved during 2020/21 were:

- Climate Emergency Action Plan approved
- Parks and Open Spaces Strategy approved
- Support and assistance provided to SABEF for their "greening" and "ceramics" projects
- Support and assistance provided to Cornwall Council for their "Making Spaces for Nature" project
- Community Governance Review
- Creation of a St Austell Revitalisation Partnership

The Clerk thanked all Councillors for their input over the last 4 years and in particular for the past 12 months which have been difficult due to the pandemic. He thanked the Councillors who are standing down in May and wished the Councillors well who are re-standing in the forthcoming elections.

Arising from the above, the following points were made:

- The need to look at the "captions" facility in Zoom for those who are hard of hearing;
- A thank you to the Town Council for all their climate change activities over the last 12 months and a suggestion that this work is publicised better.

Councillors Brown, Palmer and Styles paid tribute to those Councillors who are standing down and wished them well for the future.

Councillor Palmer expressed his joy at being a Town Councillor over the past 12 years and the honour of being Mayor twice during this time. He wished everybody well and advised that he would attend meetings occasionally. He concluded by thanking the Town Clerk, Deputy Town Clerk, Operations Manager and Administrative Assistant for their help and support over the years.

APM/21/07) Open Forum for questions from the public

There were no questions.

APM/21/08) Mayor's closing comments

The Mayor wished everybody well and paid particular thanks to the Town Clerk for maintaining the Town Council's excellent financial position throughout a very difficult and uncertain year.