

MINUTES of the ANNUAL MEETING of ST AUSTELL TOWN COUNCIL held on MONDAY 17th MAY 2021 in the Council Chamber, 39 Penwinnick Road, St Austell, Cornwall, PL25 5DR at 6.05pm.

Present: Councillors: Brown, Bull, Cohen, Double, Fox French, George, Guest, Hamilton, Lanxon, McDonagh, Nott, Pearce, Pears, Rowse, Styles, Thompson and Young.

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

C/21/01) Election of Mayor

It was **RESOLVED** that Councillor Pears be elected Mayor of St Austell for the 2021/22 civic year.

Councillor Pears signed a declaration of acceptance of office in the presence of the Town Clerk and took the Chair.

C/21/02) Election of Deputy Mayor

It was **RESOLVED** that Councillor Lanxon be elected Deputy Mayor of St Austell for the 2021/22 civic year.

C/21/03) Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

C/21/04) Declarations of interests and gifts or hospitality received

There were no declarations of interest.

C/21/05) Dispensations

There were no requests for a dispensation.

C/21/06) Minutes of Meeting held on 12th April 2021

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on the 12th April 2021 be approved and signed as a correct record.

C/21/07) Matters to Note

The Clerk advised that further to minute number **C/19/314** the Director and Portfolio Holder in post at Cornwall Council in April had been unable to approve the Town Council's bid to the Town Revitalization Fund due to the impending May election. It is hoped that the bid will be approved in due course.

C/21/08) Mayor's/Retiring Mayor's announcements

Councillor Styles thanked Members and wished Councillor Pears well as the new Mayor of St Austell.

The Mayor advised that Cornwall Council has confirmed that it will not be holding Elections for vacant posts arising from the May elections and that Town and Parish

Councils are free to invoke their co-option procedures. The Clerk added that there are two vacant positions for the Bethel & Holmbush Ward and that he would start the co-option process as detailed in the Town Council's Co-option Policy.

The Mayor thanked Councillor Styles for his hard work over the past two years and presented Councillor Styles with a past Mayor's badge.

C/21/09) Public Participation

None.

C/21/10) Members' questions

There were no questions from Members.

C/21/11) Alex Murdin – St Austell Bay Economic Forum

The Clerk advised that Mr Murdin could not make the meeting and referred Members to a proposal from SABEF to instal ceramic benches in 3-4 locations across the town and for the Town Council to take on the maintenance of 2 or 3 of them.

During discussion, some Members expressed concern with regard to the designs and the locations proposed and felt that it might be better for Mr Murdin to attend the next Community Committee meeting to explain the proposals and answer any questions.

It was **RESOLVED** to defer this item to the next Community Committee and invite Mr Murdin to that meeting.

C/21/12) Internal Audit Report for year ending 31st March 2021

The Clerk referred Members to the report of the Internal Auditor and explained that as the Auditors' findings were relevant to the Annual Return which the Council had to submit for the 2020/21 financial year, the details were reported to the full Council for consideration prior to agreeing the Annual Governance Statement. He explained that the Internal Auditor had found no issues but had recommended that the Fidelity Guarantee insurance cover be increased for which quotes would be obtained. The Clerk added that the Town Councillor Internal Audit checks will re-commence when safe to do so.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report of the Internal Auditor be noted.

C/21/13) Annual Governance Statement

The Town Clerk introduced a report setting out the details of the Annual Return and Governance Statement which is required to be completed and sent to PKF Littlejohn LLP, the Council's External Auditors, by the 2nd July 2021.

Members considered each of the questions in Section 1 of the Annual Governance Statement in detail before agreeing the following responses.

It was **RESOLVED** that the answer to each question should be as follows:

Question 1 Yes
Question 2 Yes

- Question 3 Yes
Question 4 Yes
Question 5 Yes
Question 6 Yes
Question 7 Yes
Question 8 Yes
Question 9 Yes

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- the Mayor and the Clerk should be authorised to sign the Annual Governance Statement in the Annual Return on behalf of the Town Council;
- The Town Clerk should advertise the electors' rights after the accounting statements have been approved in accordance with the External Audit guidance (with a period for the exercise of public rights from the 14th June 2021 to the 23rd July 2021);
- The annual meetings of the trustees for Truro Road and Poltair Parks should be held prior to the next Council meeting in July.

C/21/14) Annual Return and Accounting Statements 2020/21

The Clerk advised that it had been a difficult year which had resulted in a loss of car park income of approximately £170,000. He advised that in order to balance the books, staff had been furloughed, 2 posts deleted and hardship funding claimed from Cornwall Council. He added that Cornwall Council was one of only a few principal authorities who had passed on funding to Town and Parish Councils to assist with their finances during the pandemic for which he was very grateful. He advised that as a result of the hardship funding received, he had been able to transfer £90,000 back to the reserves which had been set aside to assist with the anticipated car park income losses. The Clerk explained the need to keep a healthy repairs and renewals reserve as most of the play equipment installed in 2008/09 will need replacing over the next few years. He advised that the General Reserve has increased to £350,000 and, although considered still a little on the low side by the Town Council's Internal Auditor, he is comfortable with this level.

Members thanked the Town Clerk for his excellent financial management over the difficult year and for having the confidence to draw down funding streams during the uncertainty.

It was **RESOLVED** to:

- i. Approve the detailed accounting statements and transfers to and from reserves as shown;
- ii. Approve the accounting statement in Section 2 of the Annual Return for 2020/21; and
- iii. Authorise the Clerk and Mayor to sign the Accounting Statement on the Annual Return on behalf of the Town Council.

C/21/15) Standing Committees

Members considered a previously circulated report setting out the latest terms of reference for the standing committees and a suggested committee membership for

the 2021/22 civic year. The Clerk advised that he would submit the Terms of Reference to each Committee for Members to consider in due course.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

1. The Terms of Reference of each committee as set out be approved;
2. The Committee Membership list as set out be approved subject to:
 - Councillor Bull being deleted from the Community Committee and added to the Finance and General Purposes Committee;
 - Councillor Styles being deleted from the Community Committee.

C/21/16) Election of Representatives to outside bodies

It was **RESOLVED** that the following appointments to outside bodies be made for the 2021/22 civic year:

St Austell Carnival Committee

Councillor Cohen

St Austell Bay Chamber of Commerce

Councillor Styles

CALC - Larger Councils Liaison Group

Councillor Brown

Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Flood Forum

Councillor Cohen

St Austell Bay Economic Forum (SABEF)

Councillor Brown

SABEF Green/Whitegold Working Group (if resurrected)

Councillor Styles

St Austell Business Improvement District (BID)

Councillor French

South East Cornwall Local Action Group (SELAG)

Councillor Young

The House Steering Committee

Councillors Fox and Thompson

St Austell Healthcare Patient Participation Group

Councillor Bull advised that she was appointed to this group as an individual not a Town Council representative but with permission, she would provide feedback on issues of any relevance to the Town Council.

Safer St Austell

Councillor Thompson (substitute - Councillor McDonagh if permitted)

Rural Services Network

Councillor Thompson

Townscape Heritage Scheme

Councillor Patrick McDonagh

St Austell Revitalisation Partnership

Councillors George, Pearce and Chair of the Planning & Regeneration Committee

St Austell and Mevagissey Community Network Panel

Councillors Lanxon and Young.

It was noted that all Councillors are entitled to attend Community Network Panel meetings.

C/21/17) General Power of Competence

The Clerk outlined the background and criteria for a Town Council to adopt the General Power of Competence.

The Council **RESOLVED** that it met the conditions prescribed by the Secretary of State in the Parish Councils (General Power of Competence) (Prescribed Conditions) Order 2012 and that it should adopt the General Power of Competence.

C/21/18) Schedule of Payments

It was **RESOLVED** that the Schedule of Payments for the period 13th March 2021 to 10th May 2021 totalling £155,736.83 be approved.

C/21/19) Dates of Meetings

It was noted that the next Town Council meetings were due to take place on the 12th July 2021 and 6th September 2021.

The meeting closed at 7.32pm.