

MINUTES of a MEETING of the FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE held on MONDAY 28th JUNE 2021 in the Council Chamber, 39 Penwinnick Road, St Austell, PL25 5DR (Cornwall Council Offices) at 6pm.

Present: Councillors: Brown, French, George, Lanxon, Nott, Pearce and Young.

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

Also present: Councillor Hamilton.

F/21/01) Election of Chair

It was **RESOLVED** that Councillor French be elected as Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee for the 2021/22 civic year.

F/21/02) Election of Vice-Chair

It was **RESOLVED** that Councillor Pearce be elected as Vice-Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee for the 2021/22 civic year.

F/21/03) Apologies for absence

Apologies of absence were received from Councillors Bull, Double and Rowse.

F/21/04) Declarations of Interest

None.

F/21/05) Dispensations

None.

F/21/06) Minutes of meeting held on 6th April 2021

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on the 6th April 2021 be approved and signed as a correct record.

F/21/07) Matters to Note

Further to minute number **F/19/137**, the Clerk advised that the new contract for the cleaning of the Priory Car Park Toilets started two weeks ago and is, so far, working well.

F/21/08) Public participation

The Chair welcomed Mrs Miller and Mr Holland to the meeting.

F/21/09) Security Officers

The Clerk advised that following the Town Council's Community Committee meeting on the 7th June 2021, he had drafted a scheme of employment for the security guards and that the BID Manager and local Police Inspector are both supportive of the proposals.

He advised that the budget available will fund a minimum of 20 hours of patrols per week for the remainder of the year, but it is hoped that 35 hours of patrols will be reached if an imminent funding bid to Cornwall Council is successful. He added that approximately 10% of the available hours will be allocated to patrols in other "hot spot" areas of the town, on the advice of the Police. The Police are willing to mentor the security officers and investigate the granting of additional powers which would improve their functionality and allow enhanced sharing of Police intelligence.

He confirmed that all partners are determined to make this scheme work and that he was confident that this initiative along with the newly implemented Disc system will have a positive impact on the reduction of anti social behaviour in the town.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- A lack of appetite for a "zero tolerance" campaign as detailed in the report.
- The need for a balanced approach when dealing with anti-social behaviour.
- The sale of alcohol in the town and street drinking.
- The need to ensure that patrols are carried out regularly outside of the town centre.

Mrs Miller and Mr Holland provided a presentation on the newly implemented Disc system which is a portal for the Police and BID Members to report and view known individuals who are known to cause ASB in the town. There is an instant messaging facility on the system which allows shops without shop watch radio to report issues. The BID has funded the system in partnership with Truro and Penzance BIDs. The system has been very successful in Plymouth for a few years. Mrs Miller reassured members that the security guards have a very caring approach and gave an example of the officers assisting a vulnerable person in the previous week.

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the scheme as outlined in the report, subject to the deletion of a "zero tolerance campaign" from the proposal and the Town Clerk be authorised to develop a suitable agreement in conjunction with St Austell BID, the local Police and Safer St Austell Partnership.

F/21/10) St Austell Library

The Deputy Town Clerk provided an update on operational matters at the St Austell library. She explained that a browsing service was now offered on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday mornings and that the click and collect service is still operating throughout the week. Most library users are cautious and prefer the click and collect service. She explained that the RVS volunteers are using the building to run the Restormel Hospital Car Service and support the Home Library Service, that small groups of reception children are visiting the library, four work experience students will be working in the library during July, computers are available for public use and the summer reading challenge is being launched on the 12th July.

Members thanked the Deputy Town Clerk and staff for their hard work and **RESOLVED** to:

- i. note the report and endorse the officers' decision to continue the current hybrid arrangements until July 2021;
- ii. endorse the opening of the library every afternoon, Monday to Friday between 3pm and 5pm (after school hours) to make the Summer Reading Challenge

initiative as accessible as possible for families with effect from 12th July 2021;

- iii. authorise the Town Clerk to review and revise Covid19 measures and operational arrangements in line with Government guidance periodically.

F/21/11) Internal Audit Report

The Clerk advised that in accordance with Recommendation 1, he has asked for a quotation from the Town Council's insurers for Fidelity Guarantee Insurance in the sum of £1.5m.

The Clerk advised that although the Auditor has expressed a minor concern with regard to the level of reserves, he felt that they are acceptable in the circumstances and would remain cautious.

Arising from discussion, the Clerk advised that when Covid19 restrictions fully allow, he would resurrect the Chair and Vice-Chair internal control checking regime (spot checks) which had been put on hold during the pandemic.

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

F/21/12) Budget Monitoring Report

The Clerk advised that car park revenue is slightly below budget, that the underspend on salaries and wages is due to tax and pension payments for May being made in June and that generally expenditure was comfortably within budget. He advised that he had no concerns with regard to the variances reported at this stage.

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

F/21/13) Members Allowances Scheme

The Clerk advised that it is a requirement to have a Members Allowances Scheme in place and good practice to review it from time to time and that the current scheme allows for no payment to Councillors other than mileage/subsistence payments for travel outside of the Parish.

During discussion concern was expressed with regard to the price of taxis within the parish and asked if the provision of laptops to Councillors could be explored to reduce paper usage.

It was **RESOLVED** to re-confirm the Scheme of Allowance subject to the Town Clerk bringing a report to full Council in due course on the feasibility of providing Councillors with laptops.

F/21/14) Communications Protocol

The Clerk advised that the previous Council approved a Communications Protocol in February 2020 and outlined to Members the principles of the document.

During discussion, it was suggested that the following paragraphs be updated as follows:

A (iii)

No individual Councillor or Officer should be the sole custodian of any correspondence or information in the name of the Town Council, a committee, sub-committee or working party. Councillors and Officers shall have the right to obtain confidential information/documentation if they can demonstrate a 'need to know'.

B (iii)

Where the Clerk or a Councillor wishes all fellow Councillors to receive matters for "information only", this information will be circulated via the Clerk.

C (vii)

If Councillors receive a complaint about the Council, a Councillor or its officers from a member of the public, this should be dealt with under the Council's adopted complaints procedure, or via a council agenda item.

D (i)

The Clerk should send the majority of correspondence to external bodies. Should a Councillor send any correspondence to an external body, they should make it clear that they are either writing in a personal capacity or because of their role in that external body and, if appropriate, should ensure that they have the authorisation of the Town Council to do so.

New paragraph D (iii)

Members are free to engage with residents on local issues or make general comments on council business and reply accordingly.

E (iii)

Telephone calls to the office should be appropriate to the work of the Town Council.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that the Communications Protocol be adopted subject to the above amendments.

F/21/15) Boundary Commission – Review of Parliamentary Boundaries

The Clerk advised that the initial proposals for the new parliamentary boundaries have been published and that the public are encouraged to provide feedback by 2nd August 2021.

During discussion Members noted the proposal to put Roche and Bugle Ward in the South East Cornwall constituency and identified two amendments to achieve a reasonable balance if Roche and Bugle were to transfer to the St Austell and Newquay constituency. The two suggestions were:

- transfer the Fowey and Tywardreath Ward from St Austell and Newquay constituency to South East Cornwall

or

- transfer the St Columb Major, St Mawgan and St Wenn Ward from St Austell and Newquay constituency to North Cornwall

It was **RESOLVED** that the Clerk should respond to the consultation strongly suggesting that the Roche and Bugle Ward should remain in the St Austell and Newquay constituency and express the Town Council's pleasure that no constituency spans across the county boundaries.

F/21/16) Poltair Cafe

The Clerk advised that he had met with the current tenants of the café who advised that the café is open flexibly at the present time, usually 11am – 3pm most days of the week but is very weather dependent. They are still keen to run the café and are of the opinion that a few tweaks to the internal layout of the building, the installation of tables and chairs outside and an events programme to coincide with the opening times will make a difference to the footfall. The pandemic has affected the operation of the café tremendously and both tenants have found alternative employment which they undertake in conjunction with the café. There is the potential to obtain some business rate relief and other grants which the tenants are exploring.

During discussion Members suggested that the marketing of the café could be improved and that some signage could be installed that is visible from Carlyon Road.

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

F/21/17) To consider excluding the press and public

It was **RESOLVED** that under Section 1 (ii) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the remainder of the business of the meeting in view of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

F/21/18) Telephone System

It was **RESOLVED** to appoint ITEC to supply, install and maintain a 5 telephone VOIP system for a period of 5 years.

F/19/138) Dates of next meeting

It was noted that the next meetings of the Finance and General Purposes Committee are due to take place on 20th September 2021 and 8th November 2021.

The meeting closed at 8pm.