

**MINUTES of a MEETING of the FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE held on MONDAY 27<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2022 in the Council Chamber, 39 Penwinnick Road, St Austell, PL25 5DR (Cornwall Council Offices) at 6pm.**

**Present:** Councillors: Brown, Clemo, French, George, Lanxon, Nott, Pearce and Rowse.

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

**Also present:** Councillor Pears.

**F/22/01) Election of Chair**

It was **RESOLVED** that Councillor French be elected as Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee for the 2022/23 civic year.

**F/22/02) Election of Vice-Chair**

It was **RESOLVED** that Councillor Pearce be elected as Vice-Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee for the 2022/23 civic year.

**F/22/03) Apologies for absence**

Apologies of absence were received from Councillors: Bull and Young.

**F/22/04) Declarations of Interest**

Councillor French declared an interest in agenda item 9 (security personnel) by virtue of being a BID director.

**F/22/05) Dispensations**

None.

*\*\*Councillor Brown arrived at the meeting\*\**

**F/22/06) Minutes of meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> April 2022**

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on the 4<sup>th</sup> April 2022 be approved and signed as a correct record.

**F/22/07) Matters to Note**

The Deputy Town Clerk advised that she would chase Simon Mould about attending a Council meeting to update Members on the Localism Service. An expression of interest for CIL funding for Bethel Park has been submitted to Cornwall Council and a grant request will be submitted to Cornwall Council over the coming weeks for a bus shelter on Holmbush Road.

**F/22/08) Public participation**

Mr Dale Lovatt and Inspector Ian Joliffe advised that they were present to speak under agenda item 9 (Security Personnel).

## **F/22/09) Security Personnel**

*\*\*Councillor French expressed his support for the request, reiterated his interest and left the meeting\*\**

*\*\*Councillor Pearce, Deputy Chair assumed the Chair\*\**

Mr Lovatt advised that he is Chair of St Austell BID and provided some background information on the work of the security guards. He advised that the BID and St Austell Town Council currently pay for 2 security guards (25 hours per week each) and that their patrolling hours vary from week to week and include one day at the weekend. Mr Lovatt advised that their presence in the town has been very well received and as well as tackling town centre ASB issues they provide a welfare and advice service for the public. He stressed that they are a proactive service and try to engage with the vulnerable at an early stage to prevent complex needs escalating into serious issues or bad behaviour. He advised that the BID have committed £17,000 towards the costs of continuing the security guards and asked Members if they would consider match funding that amount.

Inspector Joliffe expressed his appreciation for the work of the security guards and praised their visibility in the town centre, their work and knowledge of people with complex needs and the support available to them and the intelligence that they provide to the Police. He stressed that if the security guards were not there, an extra strain would be put on the Police and Ambulance Services. Inspector Joliffe advised that ASB is down 31% on the previous 12 months which he felt is due to a combination of proactive policing, Covid constraints in 2021, the difficulties in reporting and the support that the security staff provide. He concluded with his support for the security staff and the additional benefits that they bring.

During discussion, Members raised the following:

- The excellent CCTV monitoring in the town centre compared to many other Cornish towns;
- The need to continue to have security patrols in other areas of the town;
- The value for money that the security patrols provide;
- The impressive figures on reduction of ASB across the town;
- The positive image that the security guards provide for the town.

The Deputy Clerk advised that the Town Council currently has £10,000 built into the budget and that the additional £7,000 requested can be found from contingencies. She added that the security guards currently patrol other areas of the town and that they would continue to do so.

It was **RESOLVED** that an additional grant of £7,000 be provided to St Austell BID for the 2022/23 financial year on the condition that security patrols are still carried out regularly in other parts of the town.

*\*\*Councillor French returned to the meeting and re-assumed the Chair\*\**

## **F/22/10) Landrew Road Community Garden**

The Deputy Clerk advised that approximately 2 years ago the Town Council agreed that the Landrew Road allotments could be turned into a community garden.

Edible St Austell undertook to do this work and the project has been extremely successful with a core team of approximately 10 members of the community helping with the garden. Edible St Austell has recently become a CIC and they have asked if they can lease the site from the Town Council and the Town Clerk has drafted a Heads of Terms to guide a formal lease being drawn up in consultation with Duana Pearson. She added that in order for the community garden to remain sustainable, grants will need to be obtained to help continue with the improvements and having CIC status will enable Edible St Austell to bid for grant funding. The Deputy Town Clerk advised that it would be reasonable for the Town Council to bear the cost of drafting the lease.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Council should enter into a lease with Edible St Austell CIC for the Landrew Road Community Garden on the terms outlined in the Heads of Terms.

### **F/22/11) CCTV – upgrade of recording unit**

The Deputy Town Clerk advised that Newquay Town Council has been approached by the maintenance contractor about the need to upgrade the recording units for Newquay and St Austell as they are coming to the end of their life. She added that the cameras were upgraded from analogue to digital a few years ago and that it would be prudent to ensure that the recording software remains fit for purpose. A price of replacing the St Austell recording unit has been quoted in the sum of £5,605.90 which could be found from within budget and a small sum from contingency.

During discussion concern was expressed with regard to the price quoted but Members felt that the upgrade should be authorised to enable the excellent CCTV service to continue.

It was **RESOLVED** that the St Austell CCTV recording unit should be upgraded to the standard recommended by the maintenance contractor.

*\*\*Councillor Rowse left the meeting during the next item\*\**

### **F/22/12) Scheme of Members' Allowances**

The Deputy Town Clerk advised that the Town Clerk has been approached by a few Members and the Staffing Committee to review the Scheme of Members' Allowances particularly with regard to the feasibility of making provision for a Mayor's allowance, a Members' allowance, IT equipment and a car park pass for Priory Car Park for all Members. She advised that there is no provision within the regulations to pay a higher allowance to a Deputy Mayor or Chair of a Committee and that the Town Council does not have to follow the recommendations of the remuneration panel. She added that any allowance paid to a Member, unless a direct reimbursement of expenses, is likely to be subject to Tax and National Insurance.

Councillor French circulated a paper which suggested an inflationary increase on the independent remuneration panel summary recommendations in 2004.

During discussion Members raised the following issues/concerns:

- The need to keep the cost of processing any expenses or allowances to Members to a minimum;

- The expenses incurred in being a Mayor/Councillor to carry out duties;
- The need to attract younger Councillors;
- The potential for all Councillors to have a car park pass for Priory Car Park for use when on Council business;
- The rate of payment of Council business mileage to staff;
- The custom and practice of the Mayor paying for alcohol at civic events
- The need for suitable budget provision for interpretation.

A variety of views were expressed with regard to the payment of an annual allowance for Members and the Deputy Clerk suggested that a Working Group should be set up to produce a formal recommendation to a future Council meeting. There was general agreement that all Members should be issued with a car parking pass for Priory Car Park and be provided with IT equipment if they wished.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that:

- All Members be offered a Car Parking Pass for Priory Car Park for use when on Town Council business;
- All Members be offered IT equipment subject to further research on the standard of equipment to be provided and the costs involved to the Town Council in doing so.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- A Members' Allowances Working Group be formed consisting of Councillors French, Pearce, George, Nott, Lanxon and Pears to formulate a realistic and affordable recommendation to full Council with regard to Members' Allowances.

### **F/22/13) Budget Monitoring Report**

The Deputy Clerk outlined the reasons for the variances shown relating to car park income, grant income, salaries and wages, repairs/maintenance, insurances and subscriptions. She advised that there are no concerns at the present time, but that spending will be carefully monitored throughout the year as inflationary costs increase.

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

### **F/22/14) St Austell Library**

The Deputy Town Clerk advised that the lease for the library expires in September 2022 and that at a recent meeting with Cornwall Council officers it was proposed that the library building is devolved to St Austell Town Council in line with a service contract to deliver the library service for a term of 25 years. It was further suggested that if this proposal is not acceptable to the Town Council, they would agree to a further 5 year lease and service agreement as per the current arrangement.

The Deputy Clerk advised that if Members were mindful to accept the devolution of the building, it would be prudent to ask Cornwall Council to bring the building up to a good standard of repair prior to transfer to lessen the burden of maintenance costs to the Town Council in the future.

During discussion, Members felt that they would be mindful to accept the devolution offer on the proviso that the backlog of maintenance works are carried out to lessen the burden on the Town Council.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Clerk should:

- (i) Obtain a professional assessment of the backlog of maintenance works at the library;
- (ii) Advise Cornwall Council that the Town Council would only consider taking on the freehold of the library building if the required maintenance works are carried out prior to the transfer of the building to the Town Council;
- (iii) Obtain the annual costs for maintaining the building after the maintenance works have been carried out;
- (iv) Report back to the Town Council on the outcome of discussions.

**F/22/15) Dates of next meeting**

It was noted that the next meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee is due to take place on 19<sup>th</sup> September 2022.

The meeting closed at 7.48pm.