

MINUTES of a MEETING of the FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE held on MONDAY 3rd OCTOBER 2022 in the Council Chamber, 39 Penwinnick Road, St Austell, PL25 5DR (Cornwall Council Offices) at 6pm.

Present: Councillors: Brown, French (Chair), George, Lanxon, Nott, Pearce and Rowse,

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

F/22/16) Apologies for absence

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

F/22/17) Declarations of Interest

Councillor French declared an interest in Agenda Item 8 (St Austell BID) by virtue of being a BID Director.

F/22/18) Dispensations

None.

F/22/19) Minutes of meeting held on 27th June 2022

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on the 27th June 2022 be approved and signed as a correct record.

F/22/20) Matters to Note

The Clerk advised that at the last Community Network Panel meeting it was reported that ASB in the St Austell area has decreased over the last year by 30.7% whilst other towns in Cornwall have seen an increase. He added that the Truro BID is impressed with St Austell's town centre security guards and are due to meet with Annette Miller shortly to see if they can do something similar in Truro.

The Clerk advised that Edible St Austell has been provided with a draft lease for approval.

Arising from a question, the Clerk agreed to speak to Simon Mould about attending a future Town Council meeting to update members on the cuts made earlier in the year to the localism service and the ongoing review of the Community Network Panels.

F/22/21) Public participation

There were no members of the public present.

F/22/22) Scheme of Members' Allowances

Members noted the response from Cornwall Council advising that an independent review of the Members Allowances Scheme is unlikely to take place in the near future.

The Clerk suggested that in the light of this response, Members should defer making any decisions with regard to Members' Allowances for the time being, except perhaps for a small allowance for the Mayor to cover unreceipted expenditure.

During discussion Members on balance felt that it would be prudent not to make any decision without an independent review but that the Mayor should be provided with an allowance to cover ad hoc expenditure that cannot be receipted.

It was **RESOLVED** to note the correspondence and for the Clerk to liaise with the Mayor to assess the level of unreceipted expenditure incurred during the year and bring back a recommendation for a suitable allowance to a future meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

Councillor French reiterated his interest in the next item

The Vice-Chair took the Chair and Councillor French took no part in the ensuing discussion

F/22/23) St Austell BID

The Clerk advised that the BID is in the process of organising events in the town centre for each of the four Saturday's leading up to Christmas and has asked if the Town Council would be prepared to make the car park free on each of these Saturdays to encourage people into the town centre.

It was **RESOLVED** that Priory Car Park should be made free all day on Saturday 26th November 2022, Saturday 3rd December 2022, Saturday 10th December 2022 and Saturday 17th December 2022 to coincide with the Christmas lights switch on and town centre Christmas events.

Councillor French re-assumed the Chair

F/22/24) Budget process 2023/24

The Clerk advised that he would like to talk to Members informally about priorities and budgets during October and two informal meeting dates of Monday 10th October 2022 and Tuesday 25th October 2022 have been identified. He added that the impending pay award, fuel/energy price increases, significant insurance increases and the upward cost of materials will all have an impact on next year's budgets. He added that once priorities have been identified he would produce a report and budget for the Finance and General Purposes Committee to consider and make a recommendation to full Council in December.

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the budget timetable as set out in the report.

F/22/25) Budget Monitoring Report

The Clerk provided the background to the variances highlighted in the budget monitoring report and assured the Committee that the Town Council remains in a healthy financial position.

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

F/22/26) External Audit report

The Clerk referred to the External Audit report and advised that the External Auditor had given the Town Council a clean bill of health for the 2021/22 financial year.

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

F/22/27) Members Internal Audit

It was **RESOLVED** to note the internal audit report undertaken by the Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee.

F/22/28) Car Park Fees

The Clerk advised that if Members would like to review the car park charges, he would be happy to facilitate a working group, to include representatives of the BID and Chamber of Commerce, to undertake a review and make a recommendation to full Council.

During discussion, there was some appetite to review the one hour charge and Sunday free parking, but overall Members felt that in the light of the economic crisis it would be prudent to keep the car park charges at the same level for the time being.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Car Park Fees for the 2023/24 financial year should remain as per the 2022/23 charges.

Councillor Lanxon abstained from voting on this item

F/22/29) St Austell Library

Members expressed their gratitude to the Library Manager and staff for their continued good work and excellent performance of St Austell Library. Particular thanks was made to the Library Manager for her excellent report and to the Deputy Clerk for her contribution towards the overall management of the library.

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

F/22/30) 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 commercially sensitive nature of the business to be transacted.

F/22/31) Safety Surfacing – The Meadows

It was **RESOLVED** to authorise:

1. The Town Clerk to waive the financial regulations to appoint the Town Council's preferred contractor, TK Play, to undertake works to replace and repair the safety surfacing at The Meadows on the basis of the quotation received and;

2. The Operations Manager be asked to obtain quotations for two additional pieces of play equipment for installation on the two areas at the Meadows that currently have no play equipment.

F/22/32) Dates of next meeting

It was noted that the next meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee is due to take place on 7th November 2022.

The meeting closed at 6.54pm.