

MINUTES of a MEETING of ST AUSTELL TOWN COUNCIL held on TUESDAY 26th JULY 2022 in the Council Chamber, 39 Penwinnick Road, St Austell, Cornwall, PL25 5DR at 6.05pm.

Present: Councillors: Brown, Bull, Clemo, Fox, George, Hamilton, Lanxon, Pearce, Pears, Rowse, Stephens, Styles, Thompson and Young.

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

C/22/24) Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Cohen, Double, French, Guest, McDonagh, Nott and Stephens.

Councillor Styles advised that he needed to leave the meeting at 7.15pm

C/22/25) Declarations of interests and gifts or hospitality received

There were no declarations of interest or gifts or hospitality received.

C/22/26) Dispensations

There were no requests for a dispensation.

C/22/27) Minutes of Meeting held on 9th May 2022

Councillor Brown expressed the view that the meeting referred to in minute C/22/21 should have a wider participation than indicated. The Clerk advised that he was trying to arrange for Cornwall Council property officers to attend the Planning and Regeneration Committee on the 26th September 2022 to provide an update on various property matters. All members would be entitled to attend this meeting.

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on the 9th May 2022 be approved and signed as a correct record.

C/22/28) Matters to Note

The Clerk advised that he had nothing to add.

C/22/29) Mayor's announcements

The Mayor read a list of engagements attended since the last Council meeting which included the Jubilee events attended.

C/22/30) Public Participation

Ms Oxenham spoke on a number of matters including:

- Town centre improvements
- Members allowances
- Highways grass cutting standards near her dwelling
- Local government service levels generally
- Funding approved by SELAG for an accommodation provider
- Anti-social behaviour in St Austell

Mr Palmer expressed concern about Cornwall Council proposals to redevelop the Penwinnick Road site and made a plea in particular for the retention of the Council Chamber and meeting rooms. He expressed concern about Pondhu House, the use of Trewiddle Road to access any element of the development and the need for a low density development. He thanked the Town Council for campaigning for an improved quality development and asked that the Town Council lobbies strongly to safeguard the civic suite.

C/22/31) St Austell Town Centre Revitalisation Project

The Mayor welcomed Mike Hawes of Mei Loci Ltd to the meeting. He provided a presentation setting out ideas for improving the town centre which included:

- Improvements to the General Wolfe corner area
- Improvements to Priory Car Park and access to Biddicks Court
- The old Fire Station site
- Biddicks Court changes and access to Fore Street
- Changes in Fore Street
- Trinity Street
- Entrances to White River Place
- Vicarage Place roof car park
- Road network around Holy Trinity Church
- East Hill area
- Railway Station public realm

Members thanked Mr Hawes for his presentation and the Mayor invited comments.

Members were generally supportive and impressed with the improvement projects being developed. There was some discussion around things which might activate more footfall such as the umbrellas in Bath, big screens, water features and the need to soften and improve entrance ways and facades. Members identified the advantages of projects such as the car park roof garden that would cause limited disruption and the difficulties associated with property demolition/reconfiguration in the town centre.

It was **RESOLVED** that Members should send comments either to Mike Hawes or to officers within the next 7 days to allow work to continue.

C/22/32) Friends of Truro Road Park

The Clerk introduced a grant application for funding towards a fun day in Truro Road Park on the 29th August 2022.

It was **RESOLVED** to provide a grant of £500 to the Friends of Truro Road Park for the planned fun day.

C/22/33) Members' questions

The Clerk advised that questions had been received from Councillors Thompson and Fox. The questions and answers given were as follows:

Councillor Thompson

Question 1. Please could the Clerk provide an update on the temporary fencing in Woodland Road Park, and what actions the Town Council has had to take to get it removed?

The Clerk advised that the School had been asked to remove the fence before the summer holidays and if it is not removed later this week the Town Council would move it.

Question 2. Please could the Clerk advise when the full Council will be able to agree to the Community Network Panel's Highways Scheme as an agenda item?

The Clerk advised that he would be guided by Members as to whether the full Council or a committee should consider this matter.

It was **AGREED** to refer this matter to the Planning and Regeneration Committee.

Councillor Fox

Question 1. With regards to Cornwall Council's Estates Transformation Programme, where is the money going from the sale of Council buildings/assets and what will the money be used for?

The Clerk stated that he had been advised that "All proceeds from the disposal of assets are put into the Council's central capital funding pot and utilised based upon corporate priority".

C/22/34) Members' Allowances

The Clerk outlined the recommendations of the working group convened to review Members Allowances and explained the budgetary implications of the options proposed. He explained that many Cornish Town Councils pay a Mayor or Chairman's allowance to reflect the expenses incurred in those roles, most pay for travel outside of their parish and a few pay basic allowances to all councillors. He advised that basic allowances could not apply to co-opted members and that lump sum allowances are generally taxable.

Members discussed the benefits and disbenefits of allowances, the costs associated with being a councillor and Mayor and the relevance of the 2004 independent review of allowances for Town and Parish Councils. Views varied considerably, with a few Councillors advising that if a Members' Allowance was approved they would forego it.

A proposal to approve a Mayor's allowance of £900 per annum, to provide computers on a loan basis for those councillors who need them and a car parking permit for Priory Car Park combined with a request to Cornwall Council to review the basic allowance amount failed to attract a majority vote.

At the request of Councillor Thompson voting on this matter was recorded and was as follows:

Councillor Brown - against
Councillor Bull - for
Councillor Clemo - against

Councillor Fox – against
Councillor George – for
Councillor Hamilton – for
Councillor Lanxon – for
Councillor Pearce – for
Councillor Pears – for
Councillor Rowse – against
Councillor Thompson – against
Councillor Young - against

An alternative proposal that the Council should acquire up to 3 computers to hold and lend to councillors who need them for council business was approved by 8 votes for, 1 against and 2 abstentions.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Council should acquire up to 3 computers to lend to councillors for use on council business.

A proposal to defer making a decision on all other allowances and to request that Cornwall Council undertake a new independent review of members' allowances was received.

An amendment to approve a Mayor's Allowance of £900 per annum and defer all other allowances was received.

The Mayor left the meeting and the Deputy Mayor assumed the Chair

Members voted on the amendment which was lost by 4 votes for and 6 votes against.

The Mayor returned to the meeting and re-assumed the Chair

Members voted on the proposal to defer making a decision on all other allowances and to request that Cornwall Council undertake a new independent review of Members' Allowances. This was approved by 10 votes for, 1 vote against and 1 abstention.

It was **RESOLVED** to ask Cornwall Council to undertake an independent review of members' allowances for Parish and Town Councils and in the meantime to reiterate the existing members' allowance scheme and defer making a decision on any changes to all other forms of members' allowance pending completion of the review.

C/22/35) Penwinnick Road Planning Statement

The Clerk introduced a draft letter which had been reviewed by the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Chair of the Planning and Regeneration Committee and Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee. Members expressed concern that not all of their views were reflected in the letter and that the Council did not have an official policy on key aspects of the potential redevelopment of the Penwinnick Road site. It was also suggested that a meeting should be arranged in early September with Cornwall Council Property Officers to receive an update on their plans for the site and the timescales involved.

It was **RESOLVED** to adjourn the meeting and reconvene as soon as possible to allow more time to determine the Town Council's response to this issue.

The Mayor concluded the meeting and presented Councillor Pears with a past Mayor's badge

The meeting closed at 8.35pm.