

**MINUTES of a MEETING of ST AUSTELL TOWN COUNCIL held on TUESDAY 9<sup>th</sup> AUGUST 2022 in the Council Chamber, 39 Penwinnick Road, St Austell, Cornwall, PL25 5DR at 6pm.**

**Present:** Councillors: Brown, Bull, Double, Fox, French, George, Guest, Hamilton, Lanxon, Pearce, Rowse, Stephens, Styles, Thompson and Young.

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

**Also in attendance:** Kevin Reader, Jonathan French, Laura Gardner (Cornwall Council – Property Team) and Dominic O’Neill (Treveth).

**C/22/36) Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: Clemo, Cohen, McDonagh, Nott and Pears.

**C/22/37) Declarations of interests and gifts or hospitality received**

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

**C/22/38) Dispensations**

There were no requests for a dispensation.

**C/22/39) Minutes of Meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> July 2022**

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on the 26<sup>th</sup> July 2022 be approved and signed as a correct record.

**C/22/40) Matters to Note**

The Clerk advised that he had nothing to add.

**C/22/41) Mayor’s announcements**

The Mayor read a list of engagements attended since the last Council meeting which included a fund raising event for the Mayor’s charity at the Fire Station.

**C/22/42) Public Participation**

The two members of the public present did not wish to speak.

**C/22/43) Members’ Questions**

It was agreed that agenda item 8 would be considered after agenda item 10 to allow the Cornwall Council and Treveth representatives to leave the meeting at a reasonable time.

*\*\*Councillor Stephens arrived during the next item\*\**

## **C/22/44) Cornwall Council – Penwinnick Road Offices and Civic Suite**

The Town Clerk advised that the three Cornwall Council officers in attendance are charged with the delivery of the Estate Transformation Programme and that their presentation would focus on the closure of the Penwinnick Road offices, the short term proposals for staff and democratic meeting space and the creation of an Integrated Service Hub in White River Place. He added that under Agenda Item 10, Mr Dominic O'Neill will talk about Treveth's early thoughts with regard to the future of the Penwinnick Road site and that Members will be given the opportunity under both agenda items to ask questions. The Clerk further advised that under Agenda Item 10, he would like to ask Members a set of questions to hopefully provide a democratic steer for the drafting of a suitable letter to Cornwall Council.

The Mayor welcomed Kevin Reader, Jonathan French and Laura Gardner from Cornwall Council to the meeting.

Mr Reader advised that the Property Team has been asked to accelerate the closure of the Penwinnick Road building due to fiscal pressures and the significant savings that this will bring. He outlined the cost of the backlog maintenance and the considerable running costs of the building. During July and continuing into August Carlyon House will receive some refurbishment with staff transferring from the Penwinnick Road offices during September. Once the staff are transferred, the Penwinnick Road offices and site will close and be transferred to Treveth. He advised that temporary democratic meeting space is being made available at the Registrars' Office at Polkyth until new meeting rooms in White River Place are available. The space proposed in the Registrars' office has a capacity of 74 people and will have Wifi and a hearing loop installed. No charge will be made to the Town Council for its use. It is anticipated that the Town Council's first meeting at the Registrars' Office will be at the end of September. The Integrated Service Hub at White River Place is due to be completed in 2025 and it is hoped that this will increase the footfall in the town centre. It is anticipated that a range of services will be in the Integrated Service Hub including Parking Enforcement, Registrars and Children and Adult Social Services.

During discussion, Members raised the following concerns and observations:

- The lack of consultation with the public or Town Council with regard to the proposals;
- Whether or not there is a need for additional housing in St Austell;
- The shortage of green open space in St Austell;
- The need to consider other development sites such as Carlyon Road, Blantyre and Karenza in conjunction with the Penwinnick Road site;
- Disappointment that the Civic Suite will be de-commissioned;
- The importance of keeping the significant trees within any development.

Mr Reader advised that the Town Council and public will be consulted when a planning application comes forward for the demolition of the offices at Penwinnick Road and that out of 19 buildings owned by Cornwall Council in St Austell only 7 will be retained. He explained that he was not in a position to talk about other sites at the present time or comment on housing matters. He confirmed that Treveth would be responsible for considering the trees in any plans developed.

## **C/22/45) Cornwall Council - Penwinnick Road Offices and Civic Suite**

The Mayor invited Mr Dominic O'Neil from Treveth to speak.

Mr O'Neil advised that he is fully aware of the sensitivities of the site and that Treveth is still in the very early stages of negotiations with Cornwall Council and that it will be at least 12 months before the negotiations are finalised and a planning application is submitted. He added that the Penwinnick Road site is a prime site with three clear areas for development and that the Town Council will be fully consulted along the way.

Mr O'Neil explained that Treveth is a wholly owned subsidiary of Cornwall Council with all profits returned back to Cornwall Council. Their aim is to assist with the delivery of the Local Plan and that their business model is largely homes for rent for people who cannot afford to buy although some other tenure types are considered and they try to delivery a target of 25% affordable housing and make their developments tenure blind. He advised that the Planning Statement produced by Cornwall Council is a starting point for consideration and stressed that Treveth is not bound by it. Surveys and valuations are currently taking place and once negotiations are complete and draft ideas are produced the Town Council will be consulted at an early stage. The process will be long and complex but fully transparent. Mr O'Neil advised Members that the site is in a good natural setting in a central location which lends itself to a high quality sustainable development. He added that whatever is proposed will reflect local demand.

The Mayor thanked Mr O'Neil for his presentation.

*\*\*The representatives of Cornwall Council and Treveth left the meeting\*\**

The Clerk advised Members that he would like their current views based upon the information received to date on a number of matters relating to the Penwinnick Road site but stressed the need to keep an open mind and consider any future planning applications on their merits.

Members agreed to undertake a democratic voting process based upon current thinking to assist with the drafting of a letter to Treveth to influence development proposals for the site.

*\*\* Councillor Double advised that she would listen to the debate but not take part in any voting due to being the Cornwall Councillor for this area\*\**

The Clerk asked the following questions:

Cornwall Council is committed to rationalising and reducing the office space that it manages and making savings in the running costs of its office portfolio.

1. Do you support this aim?

12 votes for  
1 abstention

2. Do you support the creation of the Cornwall Council office in the town centre?

11 votes for  
1 vote against  
2 abstentions

3. Do you support the principle of good quality homes on the site if key trees and open spaces are preserved?

10 votes for  
3 votes against

4. Would you support the principle of affordable housing on this site?

9 votes for  
3 votes against

5. Would you support commercial/industrial uses on this site?

6 votes for  
5 votes against  
2 abstentions

### **Area 1 – Pondhu House**

1. Cornwall Council has a responsibility for the maintenance of Pondhu House a Grade II listed building. Which of the following uses would be acceptable?

- a. A hostel

10 votes against

- b. A hotel or guesthouse

6 votes for  
4 votes against

- c. A community centre

7 votes for  
3 votes against

- d. An adult education centre

6 votes for  
5 votes against

- e. A museum

5 votes for  
6 votes against

- f. A wedding venue

11 votes for

g. A private house

4 votes for  
6 votes against

h. Town Council Offices

2 votes for  
6 votes against

2. Should housing be permitted on the area behind the Stable Block (Area 1b)

2 votes for  
7 votes against

### **Area 2 – Pondhu School**

Teachers, staff and parents currently park in the office car park, apple tree car park and adjacent to Pondhu House.

1. Should additional parking be provided for Pondhu School?

10 votes for  
3 votes against

2. Should more open space be allocated to the school?

11 votes for  
1 votes against

3. Should the development provide for pick up and drop off points close to the school?

8 votes for  
5 votes against

4. Should provision be made for expansion of the school?

12 votes for

### **Area 3 – Childrens' Centre and adjacent open space**

1. Should the Childrens' Centre be retained as a Community Centre?

12 votes for  
1 against

2. Should housing be permitted on any of the remaining area in Area 3?  
2 votes for  
11 votes against
3. Should there be a park or public open space on this site?  
  
11 votes for

#### **Section 4 – Penwinnick Road Office, Civic Suite and Parking**

1. Should the area containing the Mayors' trees to the west of the office block be retained as open space?  
  
10 votes for  
2 votes against
2. Should the Civic Suite be retained?  
  
8 votes for  
5 against
3. Should the office block and nuclear bunker be retained  
  
1 vote yes  
11 votes against
4. In principle would you accept some housing on Area 4 provided sufficient parking and public open space is made available for the facilities that are retained?  
  
9 votes for  
5 votes against

#### **Area 5 - Penwinnick House and former workshop area**

1. Would you be in favour of the demolition of Penwinnick House and the development of this area for high quality housing?  
  
11 votes for  
2 votes against
2. If YES, would you be in favour of:
  - a) development of blocks of flats on this site with blocks of 4-5 storeys?  
  
1 vote for  
9 votes against

b) A mixture of flats and houses with a maximum height of 3 storeys?

8 votes for

3 votes against

3. Would you be in favour of a development which involves fewer apartments and more conventional housing than in the current planning statement?

11 votes for

2 votes against

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Clerk writes a letter to Treveth with a copy to Cornwall Council, in consultation with the Committee Chairs, outlining the Town Council's initial views with regard to the Penwinnick Road site based upon the democratic answers to the questions posed above.

Councillor Double assured Members that she would take into account the Town Council's views when discussing the site with Cornwall Council Officers and Treveth.

Concern was expressed during the debate that the Town Framework did not envisage housing on the Penwinnick Road site.

*\*\* Councillor Double left the meeting \*\**

### **C/22/46) Members' Questions**

The Clerk advised that he had received a question from Councillor Thompson about the maintenance of the roundabouts on the A391 and that after expressing his own concerns to Cornwall Council, he had received assurance from the Highways Manager that a maintenance programme is being put in place for their upkeep. The Clerk suggested that the maintenance of the roundabouts is placed on a future Community Committee agenda to monitor the position and chase if necessary.

### **C/22/47) Members appointed to outside bodies update reports**

Councillor Brown advised that due to a lack of business to report, the last two SABEF meetings have been cancelled. It is hoped that a final meeting will take place at the end of the year at which time the future role of SABEF may be clearer.

Arising from the above, Councillor Rowse suggested that SABEF could identify a project and bid for a share of the Shared Prosperity Fund which was now open for bids.

Councillor Thompson advised that the Rural Services Network have recently been focussing on buses, the South East Local Action Group are in the process of being re-absorbed into Cornwall Council and that the Safer St Austell Partnership have got a drop in session in White River Place tomorrow (10<sup>th</sup> August 2022).

Councillor Hamilton advised that he had met with Climate Action St Austell (CASA) and St Austell BID recently where it was agreed that there is sufficient support for the Garden Festival proposed for the 3<sup>rd</sup> September.

Councillor Fox updated the recent activities of Young People Cornwall at The House which included, a successful bid to the Youth Investment Fund, the creation of a Mental Health Support Hub and victim of crime group, non-contact boxing activity and involvement in a research project in association with Oxford University.

### **C/22/48) Cornwall Councillor update reports**

Members noted the written update reports from Councillors Double and Guest and Councillor Guest advised that he had nothing to add.

*\*\*Councillors Styles and Young left the meeting\*\**

Councillor Rowse advised that he is working with the Town Council to submit a bid for CIL funding for Bethel Park and that ASB is down 36% on the previous year. He highlighted the sale of seagull sacks in the library and that Cornwall Council are inviting expressions of interest for the Shared Prosperity Fund. He highlighted to Members that talks with regard to the Penwinnick Road site had started in 2020, prior to the 2021 elections.

In answer to a question, Councillor Rowse advised that the lowering of the road under the Holmbush Bridge is on hold due to a lack of funding at the present time. He added that the project is "shovel ready" and that as soon as funding is identified the project can be submitted for consideration.

Councillor Guest added that the proposed traffic enhancement measures associated with the A30 link road are on hold until the end of the project in 2025 when it is hoped more funding will be available.

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

Councillor Brown asked three questions with regard to the Stadium for Cornwall, the Royal Cornwall Museum and the Community Governance Review (CGR).

In response to Councillor Brown's questions, Councillor Rowse advised that:

- Private sector funding is being sought for the Stadium for Cornwall and that Cornwall Council funding is still available;
- Cornwall Council is re-considering their position with regard to funding the Royal Cornwall Museum and it is now likely that they will be offering their support;
- He was unaware of the new dates set for the CGR and that he would obtain an update for St Austell and report back.

### **C/22/49) Planning and Regeneration Committee**

It was **RESOLVED** to note the minutes of the Planning and Regeneration Committee meetings held on the 16<sup>th</sup> May 2022, 20<sup>th</sup> June 2022 and 18<sup>th</sup> July 2022.



### **C/22/50) Finance and General Purposes Committee**

The Clerk advised that the recommendations contained in the minutes had been dealt with at the July Council meeting.

It was **RESOLVED** to note the minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> June 2022.

### **C/22/51) Community Committee**

It was **RESOLVED** to note the minutes of the Community Committee meeting held on the 6<sup>th</sup> June 2022.

### **C/22/52) Climate and Environment Committee**

It was **RESOLVED** to note the minutes of the Climate and Environment Committee meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> July 2022 and approve the **RECOMMENDATION** contained therein.

### **C/22/53) Schedule of Payments**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Schedule of Payments for the period 30<sup>th</sup> April 2022 to 31<sup>st</sup> July 2022 totalling £300,545.16 be approved.

### **C/22/54) Dates of Meetings**

It was noted that the next Town Council meeting is due to take place on the 5<sup>th</sup> September 2022.

The meeting closed at 8.04pm.