

MINUTES of a MEETING of ST AUSTELL TOWN COUNCIL held on MONDAY 30th JANUARY 2023 in The Registrar's Office, Carlyon Road, St Austell, Cornwall, PL25 4LD at 6.05pm.

Present: Councillors Brown, Bull, Clemo, Cohen, Double, Fox, French, George, Guest, Hamilton, Lanxon, Nott, Pearce, Pears, Rowse, Stephens, Styles and Thompson.

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

C/22/110) Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Young.

C/22/111) Declarations of interests and gifts or hospitality received

Councillor Bull declared an interest in agenda item 15 by virtue of being a Trustee of St Austell Arts Centre.

C/22/112) Dispensations

There were no requests for a dispensation.

C/22/113) Minutes of Meeting held on 19th December 2022

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on the 19th December 2022 be approved and signed as a correct record.

C/22/114) Matters to Note

The Clerk advised that he had written to Cornwall Council regarding the Community Governance Review and had received a response from Councillor Barry Jordan, Chair of Cornwall Council's Constitution and Governance Committee. He read the response and advised that Cornwall Council would consider the recommendations of the Committee at a meeting on the 31st January 2023.

C/22/115) Mayor's announcements

The Mayor highlighted the engagements undertaken since the last meeting as set out in her report.

The Town Clerk advised that earlier today Cornwall Council had announced approval of a funding application for the improvement of Bethel Park and that once the terms and conditions of the grant have been received, he would bring a report to the Finance and General Purposes Committee to discuss further.

C/22/116) Public Participation

Mrs Earl highlighted outstanding issues at the station and sought the Council's support for opening an old footpath through St Austell Brewery land south of Menacuddle Well.

Councillor Double offered to liaise with the station about the outstanding works for which Mrs Earl was very grateful. Councillor Double added that the Brewery made it very clear a few years ago that they would not support the re-opening of the path through their land due to security issues.

C/22/117) Members' Questions

There were no questions from Members.

C/22/118) Cornwall Devolution Deal

The Clerk explained that Cornwall Council has in the past negotiated devolution deals with Central Government but the deal on offer now offers additional powers and funding on the condition that a Mayor is elected. He explained the details as follows:

The deal is worth £390 million with £30 million up front which includes funding for:

- Transport £500,000
- Affordable Housing £238,000 revenue and £7 million capital
- Homes on brown field sites £8.7 million
- £10 million for a 3 year innovation programme
- £3 million for heritage schemes
- £500,000 for Cornish distinctiveness

The remaining £360 million will be released as £12 million per annum for 30 years and will have a 65% revenue and 35% capital split. To date, no details have been given on how this sum will be spent. The revenue element could be used to fund borrowing which would significantly increase the amount available.

The deal is dependent on a change of governance at Cornwall Council from a Leader and Cabinet system (with the leader elected annually by Councillors) to a Mayoral system. Under the current system the Leader and the Cabinet have executive powers and propose the budget to full Council. A simple majority vote approves Cornwall Council's budget and any amendments to it.

The proposed deal requires a Mayor instead of a Leader.

The Mayor is elected every four years by the public. The Mayor then chooses his or her Cabinet from the elected Councillors. Under this system the Mayor and the Cabinet have executive powers and propose a budget for Cornwall Council. The budget is approved unless 2/3rd of the Members vote for an amendment to it.

The first Election of Mayor will take place in May 2024 and will be for a term of 5 years to bring things in line with Council elections.

Under the new arrangements there will be 87 Councillors plus a Mayor instead of 87 Councillors including a Leader.

Cornwall Council will have a meeting on the 18th April to decide whether or not they will hold a referendum to let the public have a say on whether to approve the deal or not.

The deal and the governance arrangements are a package. The funding is not available unless a Mayoral system is adopted.

The Clerk referred Members to the questionnaire which Cornwall Council is encouraging people to fill in but advised that it would be very difficult for the Town Council to agree an answer to the questions posed and suggested the following as a way forward:

1. Members complete the Cornwall Council questionnaire as individuals;
2. A formal response from the Town Council is submitted by way of a letter based upon Town Councillors' views on the following questions:
 - a) Do you agree with the principle of devolving powers and funding from Central Government to Cornwall Council?
 - b) Do you think that Cornwall Council should accept the proposed deal including the change to an elected Mayor which is a requirement of the deal?
 - c) Having made those decisions, are there any other points of clarification that you would like detailed in your letter to Cornwall Council?

Councillor Bull queried the need for a response from the Town Council and suggested that it might be better for all Councillors to respond as individuals which she believed has been the stance of other local Town and Parish Councils.

Councillor Brown advised that around 70 to 80 Town and Parish Councils have already written to Cornwall Council requesting that a referendum is held and felt that St Austell Town Council should come to a view and respond accordingly. He expressed disappointment with the previous deals, particularly with regard to health and social care. He also expressed concern with regard to the budget approval process with a Mayor in situ.

Councillor Fox read out a statement expressing concern with regard to the survey, the transfer of powers, the need for Cornwall to have its own parliament, Mayoral Development Areas, the level of funding associated with the deal and the lack of detail with regard to the deal.

Councillor Styles expressed his support for the views of Councillors Brown and Fox.

Councillor Guest felt that individual responses would be his preferred option and clarified that the 70 to 80 Town and Parish Council requests were sent before the detail of the deal was announced and expressed his support for the deal. He added that once the public consultation has closed, the full Cornwall Council will debate whether or not there should be a referendum. Councillor Double supported Councillor Guest's views and added that this would be the starting point for future deals which would give the Mayor a seat at the table with important decision makers and that she has spoken to other Mayors who have levered in millions of pounds for their areas. Councillor Pears added his support and referred to the cross party support nationally and that the public will vote for the Mayor which they are unable to do under the current governance arrangements. He expressed concern with regard to the expense of a referendum and the historical low turnout.

The Mayor expressed concern that the proposal is not enough money and not a good deal for Cornwall.

Councillor Bull expressed a view that there have been a lot of broken promises with regard to devolution and funding deals in the past and that too much power and budget would be given to one person.

Councillors agreed that a vote on this matter should be recorded.

A proposal was put forward not to respond to Cornwall Council's consultation and the following votes were received:

| Councillor Name | For | Against |
|-------------------|-----|---------|
| | | |
| Brown | | X |
| Bull | | X |
| Clemo | X | |
| Cohen | | X |
| Double | X | |
| Fox | | X |
| French | X | |
| George | | X |
| Guest | X | |
| Hamilton | X | |
| Lanxon | | X |
| McDonagh (Absent) | | |
| Nott | X | |
| Pearce | X | |
| Pears | X | |
| Rowse | X | |
| Stephens | X | |
| Styles | | X |
| Thompson | | X |
| Young (Absent) | | |

It was **RESOLVED** by 10 votes for, 8 against, that St Austell Town Council should not respond to the consultation as a collective body, instead all Town Councillors who wished to, should respond to the consultation on an individual basis.

C/22/119) Town Centre Revitalisation Project

The Town Clerk advised that he is seeking funding streams to take the project forward and is hoping that the project will be in a good position to apply for Levelling Up Funding – Round 3 which is anticipated to be announced in the summer. He added that Cornwall Council has set up a Working Group to try to identify a large Levelling Up project that would benefit Newquay as well as St Austell and they have asked for a Town Councillor to sit on that group.

It was **RESOLVED** that Councillor French should be the Town Council representative to sit on the Cornwall Council Levelling Up Fund Working Group for Newquay and St Austell.

C/22/120) Members appointed to outside bodies update reports

Councillor Brown advised that St Austell Bay Economic Forum (SABEF) met at the end of last year and has had a change of Chair following the resignation of James Staughton. The group agreed that SABEF should continue. They will await the outcome of funding bids and will decide in due course how they might be able to help with the regeneration of the town.

Councillor Brown added that he had attended a recent meeting of Citizens Advice Cornwall who are actively looking for premises where they can hold face to face meetings/interviews.

C/22/121) Cornwall Councillor update reports

Councillor Rowse referred to his report tabled at the meeting and Councillor Guest advised that his report referred mainly to the Devolution Deal.

Councillor Pears advised that he is hopeful that a speed visor will be in Slades Road shortly, that he had negotiated the provision of salt bins at the Tregorrick Estate and pressed for some urgent pot hole repairs/re-surfacing at Porthpean Road. He updated Councillors on the Cornwall Council digital project that he is leading on and mentioned the success of Casework Assyst and One Customer Record.

Councillor Double referred to her report published in this week's St Austell Voice and added that the Bodmin Road/Carthew Road is due to re-open on 6th February 2023 under four way traffic lights. She added that she had attended the St Johns Awards ceremony in Truro and was very impressed with the number of awards that the St Austell District had achieved. Councillor Double advised that the Cornwall Councillors have been briefed on the integrated service hub plans at White River Place and expressed her pleasure with progress so far and the number of services that are planned to go in there.

C/22/122) Schedule of Payments

It was **RESOLVED** that the Schedule of Payments for the period 6th December 2022 to 22nd January 2023 totalling £146,888.69 be approved.

C/22/123) Planning and Regeneration Committee

Councillor Brown advised that Elliot Road was spelt incorrectly in one place on page 4 and on page 5 asked if the paragraph referring to Trenowah Road could be amended to read as follows:

A view was expressed that the proposal for yellow lines on the north side of Trenowah Road will cause problems for the residents who do not have a garage to park their cars and the Accountants who rely on the availability of on-street parking for their clients **and users and staff of the pharmacy and surgery.**

It was **RESOLVED** that subject to the above amendment the minutes of the Planning and Regeneration Committee meeting held on the 9th January 2023 should be noted.

Councillor Bull reiterated her interest and left the meeting

C/22/124) Motion

The Clerk invited Councillors Brown and Styles, the proposer and seconder of the motion for their comments.

Councillor Brown clarified that the motion reflects his own thoughts and has not been submitted on behalf of St Austell Arts Centre.

He expressed disappointment that Cornwall Council has chosen not to purchase the property attached to the arts centre and expressed a view that it is a missed opportunity to bring the whole site into Cornwall Council's ownership.

Before general discussion, the Clerk counselled caution about adopting the motion.

During discussion, Councillors expressed their concern with regard to the wording of the motion, the action taken by Cornwall Council on the potential purchase of the property, the budgetary constraints at Cornwall Council, the financial implications of previous property purchases by Cornwall Council and the impact the motion could have on the Arts Centre.

The motion was lost by 2 votes for, 13 against.

It was **RESOLVED** not to support the motion.

Councillor Bull returned to the meeting

C/22/125) Schedule of Meetings – May 2023 to May 2024

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the Schedule of Meetings for the period May 2023 to May 2024.

C/22/126) 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.

C/22/127) Work Vehicles

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Clerk be authorised to acquire a second-hand tipper truck in the most economically advantageous way within the parameters set out in the report.

C/22/128) Dates of Meetings

It was noted that the next Town Council meetings are due to take place on Monday 20th March 2023 and Monday 24th April 2023 (Annual Parish Meeting).

The meeting closed at: 7.54pm.