

MINUTES of a MEETING of ST AUSTELL TOWN COUNCIL held on MONDAY 4th SEPTEMBER 2023 in The Registrar's Office, Carlyon Road, St Austell, Cornwall, PL25 4LD at 6pm.

Present: Councillors: Brown, Double, Fox, French, Guest, Hamilton, Lanxon, Pearce, Pears, Rowse, Stephens, Styles and Thompson

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

C/23/44) Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bull, Clemo, Cohen and Young.

C/23/45) Councillor Deborah George

A minute's silence was held to reflect upon the passing of Councillor Deborah George.

C/23/46) Declarations of interests and gifts or hospitality received

None.

C/23/47) Dispensations

There were no requests for a dispensation.

C/23/48) Minutes of Meeting held on 10th July 2023

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 10th July 2023 be approved and signed as a correct record.

C/23/49) Matters to Note

The Clerk advised that he had nothing to add.

***Councillor Lanxon arrived ***

C/23/50) Mayor's announcements

The Mayor advised that the holiday period had been quiet with only her weekly meetings with the Town Clerk and one official engagement in Lostwithiel to report since the last Council meeting. She added that Reverend Howard Flint is retiring and moving away from the Parish and suggested that a letter is sent to thank him for his good work including improvements to Holy Trinity Church, the Trinity Centre project, his role on the Revitalisation Partnership, support for the Town Council and his tremendous community work.

It was **RESOLVED** that a letter of thanks be sent to Reverend Howard Flint to thank him for his pastoral work in St Austell and to wish him a happy retirement.

C/23/51) Public Participation

The member of the public present advised that she did not wish to speak.

C/23/52) Members' questions

There were no questions from Members.

Councillor Stephens arrived during the next item

C/23/53) St Austell Town Centre Revitalisation Partnership

The Town Clerk introduced Jonathan Nicholls of Hayhurst & Co Architects and Warren Thorne of AECOM who would be leading the consortium working on the Vicarage Place Rooftop Garden project following a successful bidding process. He explained that the feasibility and design work was only just about to commence but that he was optimistic that the appointed consultants were very able to undertake the work required to a high standard.

Jonathan Nicholls introduced himself, outlined the team and resources available for the project and explained that they had offices in London and Devon. The Company specialises in bespoke work, has experience of rooftop garden projects within their team and has undertaken work in Cornwall and the South-West so has a knowledge of the area.

He explained that he had met with key individuals and would prioritise due diligence and technical appraisals to ensure that the limitations and constraints of the site are fully understood before design work commences. There would be extensive engagement with stakeholders to determine a vision for the project as part of the design stage.

Warren Thorne explained that he would lead on the project planning for the works and that he had experience of a number of town centre projects in market towns with similar issues to St Austell.

Members asked a number of questions exploring the experience and understanding of the consultants, the need for structural tests and the timing of the work.

The Mayor thanked the consultants for their attendance and for the explanations given.

It was noted that there were two vacancies on the Town Centre Revitalisation Partnership for Town Councillor representatives.

It was **RESOLVED** to appoint Councillors French and Pearce to the Town Centre Revitalisation Partnership.

Councillor Brown arrived during the next item

C/23/54) South Cornwall Community Area Partnership

The Mayor welcomed Sarah Scoltock, Cornwall Council Community Link Officer, to the meeting.

Sarah advised that she had recently been appointed as the Community Link Officer for the South Cornwall Community Area Partnership covering St Austell, Mevagissey, St Blazey, Fowey and Lostwithiel and that the second meeting of the partnership is due to take place on the 2nd October 2023 at St Ewe. At the next meeting it is hoped to agree common priorities and draft an action plan accordingly. She explained the two

funding streams which would be administered through the Partnership; the community capacity fund and the community levelling up fund. Sarah advised that there would be a drop-in session on these funding streams at Mevagissey tomorrow.

Arising from the above, Members expressed concern with regard to the differing needs of the towns and parishes within the Partnership, how the funding would be shared out and the location of future meetings.

The Clerk advised that Councillor Brown had been nominated at the inaugural meeting to sit on a funding panel and that in order to regularise this nomination, it would be appropriate for the Town Council to approve Councillor Brown's attendance at future Community Area Partnership and funding panel meetings. The Clerk added that Councillor Lanxon is currently the Town Council's representative at Partnership meetings.

Sarah clarified that the Town Council would have one vote only at the Partnership meetings.

It was **RESOLVED** to note the update and to approve Councillor Brown's attendance at future meetings of the partnership and his appointment to the grant funding panel.

Councillor Brown took the opportunity to apologise for his lateness to the meeting which he advised was due to his bus being delayed.

C/23/55) Councillor Vacancies

The Clerk advised that a Councillor vacancy has arisen in each of the three wards and outlined the process required to fill the vacant positions.

During discussion, Members noted the anticipated costs of an election, and a general view was expressed that co-option would be the preferable way forward. It was noted that a formal process of declaring the vacancies had to commence and that the co-option route could only take place if there was not a valid request from 10 electors for an election in any of the Wards.

It was agreed that Polling Cards should be utilised if there is an election and that the Town Clerk be given delegated authority to proceed with a co-option process if an election is not requested.

It was also agreed that the Town Clerk be given authority to declare any future vacancy under Section 86 of the Local Government Act 1972 should the need arise.

It was **RESOLVED** to:

1. Note and formally declare the vacancies created in the Central & Gover, Bethel & Holmbush and Poltair & Mount Charles Wards;
2. Instruct the Town Clerk to advise Cornwall Council's Electoral Services of the vacancies in order to start the process for filling the positions;
3. In the event of an election(s), advise Cornwall Council that Polling Cards should be used;

4. Delegate authority to the Town Clerk to commence the co-option process should there be no valid requests for an election;
5. Delegate authority to the Town Clerk to declare any future vacancy under Section 86 of the Local Government Act 1972.

Councillor Pears arrived

C/23/56) Cornwall Council – Carlyon Road Steering Group

Councillor Brown submitted apologies for Councillor Bull and took the opportunity to nominate her, in her absence, as one of the Poltair and Mount Charles Ward Members to sit on the Carlyon Road Steering Group. He cited her knowledge of public health and the previous history of the site which he felt would be of value to the group.

Councillor Lanxon advised that she would be happy to sit on the group.

It was **RESOLVED** to nominate Councillors Bull and Lanxon to sit on the Cornwall Council Carlyon Road Steering Group.

C/23/57) CALC Executive Board

It was **RESOLVED** not to nominate a Councillor to the CALC Executive Board.

C/23/58) Local Area Energy Plan

It was **RESOLVED** that the attendance of Councillor Hamilton at the Local Area Energy Plan engagement session in Bodmin on the 25th September 2023 should be made an approved duty.

C/23/59) Safer St Austell – Statistical Information

The Clerk explained that in 2021 after a lot of work and campaigning senior officers at Cornwall Council accepted that St Austell had more than its fair share of complex needs individuals in supported hostels and high numbers of people in temporary/emergency accommodation and that there was an over-concentration of these facilities in or close to the town centre. At that time an action plan was agreed to achieve a “significant reduction” in individuals placed in temporary/emergency accommodation.

In July 2023, Cornwall Council provided an update on the numbers in temporary/emergency accommodation but were unable to provide statistics for placements in supported hostels etc. This report rather than showing a reduction indicated an increase in people in temporary/emergency accommodation. The Clerk felt that this correlates to anecdotal evidence that ASB and gatherings in the town centre appear to be increasing. Unfortunately problems with the systems for reporting and recording ASB issues mean that reliable statistical information on ASB and crime in the town centre is not currently available.

Councillors expressed their concern with regard to the apparent lack of a joined up approach to this issue. The causes of homelessness and the role of Safer St Austell were discussed. Councillor Double advised that the MP was also very concerned and had raised his concerns with Cornwall Council.

It was RESOLVED that the Town Clerk should write to Cornwall Council to:

1. Express the town council's disappointment at the increase in the temporary accommodation placements in or near the town centre despite the undertaking given in August 2021 to significantly reduce the number of such placements;
2. Request timely quarterly reports detailing the number of commissioned places in St Austell parish for:
 - a. Supported accommodation
 - b. Temporary accommodation
3. Produce a strategy or action plan for St Austell detailing how a sustained reduction in the Cornwall Council commissioned temporary/emergency accommodation placements in or near the town centre can be achieved;
4. Request that the Town Council be advised, as far as possible, when any additional or new temporary or emergency accommodation is opened in or near the town centre.

C/23/60) Members appointed to outside bodies update reports

Councillor Fox provided an update on a recent House Steering Group meeting and Councillor Hamilton advised that CASA are hosting a Green Fair at the Holy Trinity Church on the 21st October 2023. Councillor Thompson advised that he had persuaded Network Rail to re-paint the green bridge and clear the vegetation on Clifden Road Bridge. Councillor Lanxon advised that the St Austell Football Working Group are currently looking at funding options with Cornwall Council to replace the pitch at St Austell Football Club.

C/23/61) Cornwall Councillor update reports

Members noted the reports from Councillors Double and Rowse.

Councillor Pears advised that due to his recent marriage he had been away for a few weeks but outlined to Councillors some measures undertaken to control speeding in Slades Road, Porthpean Road and Eliot Road.

Arising from a question, Councillor Pears undertook to find out from Cornwall Council what their position is with regard to the closure of Rail Ticket Offices and the roll out of the 20 mph speed areas.

Councillor Rowse advised that St Austell is in the second tranche of the 20 mph speed area roll out which is anticipated to be in 2024. He also undertook to ascertain what the stance is at Cornwall Council with regard to the Ticket Office Closures.

Councillor Double advised that the MP met with the Rail Minister who was surprised at the high percentage of ticket office users at St Austell railway station and has committed to re-visiting the issue.

Members congratulated Councillor Pears on his marriage.

C/23/62) Planning and Regeneration Committee

It was **RESOLVED** to note the minutes of the Planning and Regeneration Committee meetings held on 17th July 2023 and 21st August 2023.

Arising from the above, Councillor Brown asked Councillor Rowse why he had decided not to call Planning Application PA23/01424 to committee after supporting the Town Council's strong objection to the application.

Councillor Rowse advised that after expressing his strong objection to the application, he had talked the drainage, access and mining concerns through with the Planning Officer and she had convinced him that there were no strong planning reasons to call the application to Cornwall Council's Central Sub Area Planning Committee.

Councillor Brown expressed a view that the Town Council should have been kept informed of these developments.

Councillor French left the meeting

C/23/63) Schedule of Payments

It was **RESOLVED** that the Schedule of Payments for the period 1st July 2023 to 23rd August 2023 totalling £326,275.25 be approved.

C/23/64) Dates of Meetings

It was noted that the next Town Council meeting is due to take place on 16th October 2023.

The meeting closed at 7.44pm