

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

Present: Councillors: Brown, Clemo, Cohen, Double, Fox, French, Guest, Hamilton, Lanxon, Pearce, Rowse, Stephens, Thompson and Young.

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

C/23/89) Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bull, Pears, Stephens and Styles. Councillor Guest had advised that he would be a little late due to another commitment.

C/23/90) Declarations of interests and gifts or hospitality received

There were no declarations of interest.

C/23/91) Dispensations

There were no requests for a dispensation.

C/23/92) Minutes of Meeting held on 16th October 2023

It was noted that the word Morley in minute C/23/80 should read Morleigh.

It was **RESOLVED** that, subject to the above correction, the minutes of the meeting held on 16th October 2023 be approved and signed as a correct record.

Councillor Lanxon arrived

C/23/93) Matters to Note

The Clerk advised that he had no matters to add.

C/23/94) Mayor's announcements

The Mayor welcomed Mr Preece and Mr Kimber to the meeting and thanked them for their interest in joining the Town Council. She advised that she had attended the Green Fest event organised by Climate Action St Austell (CASA) in the Holy Trinity Church with the Deputy Mayor and represented the Town Council at the funeral of Councillor Styles' wife who had sadly passed away after a long period of illness.

C/23/95) Public Participation

None.

**** Councillor Cohen arrived during the following item ****

C/23/96) Members' questions

There were no questions from Members.

C/23/97) Budget 2023/24 and 2024/25

The Town Clerk explained that it would be normal practice to bring a report to the Finance and General Purposes Committee at this time of year to explain the assumptions made with regard to the budget and progress made with calculations. He advised that the budget workings circulated were a work in progress and would be updated as information became available before the next Council meeting in December. The budgets were intended to reflect the priorities of the Council including addressing ASB and crime, pride in place, the town centre revitalisation project, continued development of the library and playground improvements/maintenance.

The Clerk advised that he expected a council tax rise near to RPI. Members were generally supportive of the strategy adopted but sought clarification on the following points:

- The general fund and earmarked reserves
- The adequacy of reserves
- Future liabilities with regard to play equipment
- The cost of elections
- The need for a Regeneration Officer
- The Council's inability to raise significant pump priming funds
- Council Tax Base movements

Arising from the above, Councillor Double expressed her disappointment that an election has been requested for the Central and Gover Ward vacancy which will incur a significant expense for the Town Council. Councillor French added that he had hoped for a co-option in this Ward rather than an election. Councillor Brown disagreed with Councillor Double and expressed a view that most vacancies are filled by an election process.

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

Councillor Guest arrived during the next item

C/23/98) Budget Monitoring Report

The Clerk introduced a budget monitoring report for the half year period from 1st April 2023 to 30th September 2023. Members welcomed the inclusion of explanations of significant variances in the report format.

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

C/23/99) Conclusion of Audit – 2022/23 Financial Year

The Clerk advised that the high level independent external audit for the 2022/23 financial year had been completed and the Council had received a clear audit report.

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

C/23/100) Internal Audit Report – 2023/24

Members considered a report from the Council's appointed internal auditor.

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

Councillor French thanked the Town Clerk for the quality of the Council's financial management.

C/23/101) Polling Districts and Polling Places Review - Cornwall Council – 2023.

Members considered a consultation paper received from Cornwall Council setting out details of a review of polling stations. Members were generally happy with the proposals and conclusions relating to the Bethel and Holmbush and Poltair and Mount Charles Divisions.

There were some concerns about the proposals for the Central and Gover Division. Members noted that two polling stations were outside of the division but understood the reasons for this suggestion following the recent boundary changes. Members expressed concern that the Co-op at West Hill might not be available in the future and suggested that the Elections Team should make further enquiries. It was felt that the topography of the town centre from Gover Valley made it difficult for some Gover Valley residents to go to a polling station in the town centre and that the Co-op is a very accessible option for those residents. The Pondhu Children's Centre was suggested as a possible venue if the nearby construction works would permit its use.

It was **RESOLVED** to:

1. Respond to the consultation to advise that the Town Council is broadly happy with the proposals for the Bethel and Holmbush and Poltair and Mount Charles divisions but has concerns with the proposals for Central and Gover.
2. Ask Cornwall Council to enter into further negotiations with the Co-op at West Hill to try and secure it as a Polling Station venue and investigate the potential for the Pondhu Childrens Centre to be used as a venue.

C/23/102) Schedule of Payments

It was **RESOLVED** that the schedule of payments for the period 6th October 2023 to 27th October 2023 totalling £369,645.39 be approved.

C/23/103) Planning & Regeneration Committee

The Chair of the Planning & Regeneration Committee proposed that the minutes of the Committee meeting on the 30th October 2023 be noted subject to:

- The insertion of the word "Plymouth" before Argyle on page 2
- The addition of the words "The Committee welcomed the fact that this approach is being taken" at the end of Minute P/23/82.

It was **RESOLVED** to note the minutes of the Planning and Regeneration Committee meeting held on the 30th October 2023 with the above amendments.

C/23/104) Rooftop Garden Project

The Town Clerk advised that the Rooftop Garden Project was being delivered in stages and was progressing well. The first stage relating to feasibility and access was nearing completion.

The Town Centre Revitalisation Partnership would receive an explanation of access proposals and early feasibility work tomorrow (7th November 2023) and a similar presentation for members would be provided by Zoom in the evening. He advised that in order to maintain momentum authority was sought to sign off the first stage and approve commencement of the second stage which would include further work on loadings and commercial feasibility. The Clerk added that the owner and agent for the building have been briefed and are supportive of the work and strategies put forward by the consultants for the conclusion of Stage 1.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Clerk be authorised to sign off Stage 1 and authorise the commencement of Stage 2 of the Rooftop Garden Project in consultation with the Chair of the Planning and Regeneration Committee.

C/23/105) Co-option of Councillors to Bethel & Holmbush and Poltair & Mount Charles Wards

The Mayor welcomed Mr Preece and Mr Kimber to the meeting once again and invited each to introduce themselves to the Members present. Each confirmed that they were willing to stand for co-option to the Council and briefly outlined the reasons why they would like to become a Councillor. The Mayor asked the candidates to leave the room.

In their absence it was **RESOLVED** to co-opt Mr Preece to the vacancy in the Bethel and Holmbush Ward and Mr Kimber to the vacancy in the Poltair and Mount Charles Ward.

Mr Preece and Mr Kimber returned to the room and the Mayor congratulated both on their co-option to the Town Council.

C/23/106) Dates of Meetings

It was noted that the next Town Council meeting is due to take place on 11th December 2023.

The meeting closed at 6.57pm.