

MINUTES of the ANNUAL MEETING of ST AUSTELL TOWN COUNCIL held on WEDNESDAY 15th MAY 2024 in The Registrar's Office, Carlyon Road, St Austell, Cornwall, PL25 4LD at 6pm.

Present: Councillors: Brown, Cohen, Double, Fox, Gray, Guest, Hamilton, Kimber, Lanxon, Pearce, Pears, Preece, Stephens, Thompson and Young.

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

C/24/01) Election of Mayor

The Mayor, Councillor Crystal Pearce, invited nominations for Mayor for the 2024/25 civic year.

It was **RESOLVED** that Councillor Julian Young be elected Mayor of St Austell for the 2024/25 civic year.

Councillor Young signed a declaration of acceptance of office in the presence of the Town Clerk and took the Chair.

C/24/02) Election of Deputy Mayor

The Mayor, Councillor Julian Young, invited nominations for Deputy Mayor for the 2024/25 civic year.

It was **RESOLVED** that Councillor Hamilton be elected Deputy Mayor of St Austell for the 2024/25 civic year.

C/24/03) Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: Bull, Clemo, French, Rowse and Styles.

Councillor Pears advised that he needed to leave the meeting early

The Mayor advised that he would bring agenda item 19 forward to agenda item 11 to allow Councillor Pears to speak on this item if he wished

C/24/04) Declarations of interests and gifts or hospitality received

None.

C/24/05) Dispensations

There were no requests for a dispensation.

C/24/06) Minutes of Meeting held on 18th March 2024

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on the 18th March 2024 be approved and signed as a correct record.

C/24/07) Matters to Note

The Clerk advised that he had nothing to add.

C/24/08) Mayor's/Retiring Mayor's announcements

Councillor Pearce (Retiring Mayor) advised that since the last meeting she had attended an air cadet open evening at their premises in South Street which was very enjoyable. She added that they were unaware of the Town Council's Small Grants Scheme and that they may submit a grant application, possibly for the improvement of their premises, for the Town Council to consider. Councillor Pearce advised that she had also attended a 50th Golden Wedding Event and unveiled a plaque at the library commemorating the coronation of King Charles III along with Councillors Young and French.

Councillor Young advised that he had several engagements coming up including St Austell Pride, Bodmin Town Council Sunday service, Fowey Town Council Sunday service, Mid Cornwall Scouts Camp and Truro City Council Sunday service.

C/24/09) Public Participation

There were no members of the public present.

C/24/10) Members' questions

There were no questions from Members.

C/24/11) St Austell – Buses

Councillor Pears referred to an e-mail from Cornwall Council's Highways Team outlining the bus timetable changes affecting St Austell and invited members to advise him of specific areas of concern for him to investigate further.

Councillor Brown advised that he had been mistaken with regard to the timing of the last bus from Truro to St Austell but felt that there is enough concern within the community about the timetable changes for the matter to be considered further by the Town Council. He expressed particular concern with regard to the reduction in bus services east of Slades Road, the town centre bus and the bus to Truro. Councillor Brown suggested that a working group should be set up to consider the matter further and report their findings to the Town Council meeting in July. Councillors Brown, Gray and Kimber volunteered to sit on the Working Group.

It was **RESOLVED** that a Bus Working Group should be set up comprising of Councillors Brown, Gray and Kimber to review the bus timetable changes affecting St Austell and report any specific areas of concern to the Town Council meeting in July.

C/24/12) Internal Audit Report for year ending 31st March 2024

The Clerk referred Members to the report of the Internal Auditor and explained that as the Auditors' findings were relevant to the Annual Return which the Council had to submit for the 2023/24 financial year, the details were reported to the full Council for consideration prior to agreeing the Annual Governance Statement.

He explained that at the time of the audit, the Internal Auditor had identified that the annual return to the Charity Commission for the Poltair Park Charity (W J Adams Charity) was overdue. The Clerk advised that this return has since been completed. As in previous years, this was a zero return.

The Clerk concluded that although the Auditor has suggested that the reserves are on the lower side of accepted parameters, he is comfortable with their levels.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report of the Internal Auditor be noted.

C/24/13) Annual Governance Statement

The Town Clerk introduced a report setting out the details of the Annual Return and Governance Statement which is required to be completed and sent to BDO LLP, the Council's External Auditors, by the 1st July 2024.

The Clerk asked Members if any Member had an interest in BDO LLP and no interests were declared.

Members considered each of the questions in Section 1 of the Annual Governance Statement in detail before agreeing the following responses.

It was **RESOLVED** that the answer to each question should be as follows:

Question 1 Yes
Question 2 Yes
Question 3 Yes
Question 4 Yes
Question 5 Yes
Question 6 Yes
Question 7 Yes
Question 8 Yes
Question 9 No

It was **RESOLVED** that:

1. the Mayor and the Clerk should be authorised to sign the Annual Governance Statement in the Annual Return on behalf of the Town Council;
2. The annual meetings of the trustees for Truro Road and Poltair Parks should be held prior to the next Council meeting in July.

C/24/14) Annual Return and Accounting Statements 2023/24

The Clerk advised that the Town Council's turnover for the 2023/24 financial year was £1.6 million. The main sources of income were the Council Tax precept and car park income and the biggest expenditure items were staff costs and the purchase/maintenance of play equipment. The surplus for the year was £13,000 which will accrue to the General Fund balance.

The Clerk explained the balance sheet and the Council's three earmarked reserves; Elections Reserve, Repairs and Renewals Reserve and the Projects Reserve. The Clerk stressed the need to keep a healthy Repairs and Renewals Reserve to help smooth out the expenditure on aging play equipment. He added that the Town Council is very lucky to have a qualified playground inspector and repair technician within the grounds maintenance team which has prevented, so far, a lot of large scale expenditure. Many of the items are nearing their end of life and will need to be replaced within the next few years, including the Poltair Park helter-skelter which could cost in the order of £100,000/£200,000 to replace.

The Clerk added that within the projects reserve he had set aside some funding for additional CCTV cameras to assist with some of the blind spots in the town centre.

In answer to a question, the Clerk confirmed that the Town Heritage Scheme commitment (£13,835.57) is no longer in the Projects Reserve as the project has been completed and should not have been included within the list of Project Reserve commitments outlined on page 25.

It was **RESOLVED** to:

- i. Approve the detailed accounting statements and transfers to and from reserves as shown;
- ii. Approve the accounting statement in Section 2 of the Annual Return for 2023/24;
- iii. Authorise the Clerk and Mayor to sign the Accounting Statement on the Annual Return on behalf of the Town Council; and
- iv. Instruct the Town Clerk to advertise the electors' rights in accordance with the External Audit guidance.

C/24/15) Standing Committees

The Deputy Town Clerk advised that the Terms of Reference for each Committee had been discussed at a recent Chair and Vice-Chairs meeting and the amendments suggested had been incorporated into the Terms of Reference put forward for approval.

The composition of each Committee was discussed, and it was agreed that the Standing Committees should be approved as outlined with the addition of Councillor Preece to the Climate and Environment Committee and Councillor Pearce added to the Staffing Committee.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

1. The Terms of Reference of each committee as set out be approved;
2. The Committee Membership list as set out be approved subject to:
 - o Councillor Preece being added to the Climate and Environment Committee and Councillor Pearce being added to the Staffing Committee.

C/24/16) Election of Representatives to outside bodies

It was **RESOLVED** that the following appointments to outside bodies be made for the 2024/25 civic year:

CALC - Larger Councils Liaison Group

Councillor M Brown

Climate Action St Austell (CASA)

Defer

Carlyon Road Masterplanning Group

Currently Councillors Bull and Lanxon and the Chair of the Planning Committee

Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Flood Forum

Currently Councillor A Cohen

Cornwall Council Planning Partnership

Councillor M Thompson

Holy Trinity Church Grounds Steering Group

Councillor C Hamilton

Rural Services Network

Councillor M Thompson

Rural Service Network – Young Person’s Panel

Councillor E Stephens

Rural Service Network – Older Person’s Panel

Councillor P Guest

Safer St Austell

Councillor T French

St Austell Business Improvement District (BID)

Councillor T French

St Austell Bay Economic Forum (SABEF)

Councillor M Brown

St Austell Bay Chamber of Commerce

Councillor Kimber

St Austell Revitalisation Partnership

Councillors French, Pearce and the Chair of the Planning & Regeneration Committee

Dispensation

In response to concerns with regard to perceived conflicts of interest for Councillors appointed to the St Austell Town Centre Revitalisation Partnership, it was **RESOLVED** to grant a dispensation to Councillors on the St Austell Town Centre Revitalisation Partnership to speak and vote on town centre revitalisation matters for the current civic year as this is in the interest of local taxpayers.

**St Austell, Mevagissey, St Blazey, Fowey and Lostwithiel
Community Area Partnership**

Councillor Lanxon

It was noted that all Councillors are permitted to attend the Community Area Partnership meetings.

Councillors Double and Guest proposed and seconded Councillor Kimber to represent the Town Council on The House Steering Group.

Councillors Stephens and Brown proposed and seconded Councillor Gray to represent the Town Council on The House Steering Group.

It was **RESOLVED** by a show of hands, 7 votes to 5 votes that Councillor Gray should represent the Town Council on The House Steering Group.

The House Steering Group

Councillors Fox and Gray

Treveth – Penwinnick Road Steering Group

Councillors Gray and Hamilton

St Austell Football Working Group

Councillor Lanxon

C/24/17) Grass Cutting Policy

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the Grass Cutting Policy.

It was **FURTHER RESOLVED** to pass on the Town Council's gratitude to the Grounds Maintenance Team for their excellent work.

C/24/18) Schedule of Payments

It was **RESOLVED** that the Schedule of Payments for the period 9th March 2024 to 3rd May 2024 totalling £562,498.92 be approved.

C/24/19) Planning Application

PA24/02280: Land South Of 67 Ledrah Road Ledrah Road St Austell Cornwall. Outline application with all matters reserved for the subdivision of existing residential curtilage to create plot for detached dwelling with shared access from Ledrah Road.
Ward: Central & Gover.

It was **RESOLVED** to make no objection to this application.

C/24/20) Schedule of meetings

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the Schedule of Meetings for the 2024/25 Civic Year as outlined.

C/24/21) Community Committee

It was **RESOLVED** to note the minutes of the Community Committee meeting held on the 25th March 2024.

C/24/22) Finance and General Purposes Committee

It was **RESOLVED** to note the minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting held on the 2nd April 2024.

C/24/23) Planning and Regeneration Committee

Councillor Double advised that she had submitted her apologies for the Planning and Regeneration Committee meeting on the 8th April 2024 and asked that this be added to the minutes.

It was **RESOLVED**, subject to the above amendment, to note the minutes of the Planning and Regeneration Committee meeting held on the 8th April 2024.

Councillor Pears left the meeting during the next item

C/24/24) 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/24/25) Town Centre Revitalisation Partnership

The Clerk updated Members on the latest position with regard to the rooftop garden and the successful funding bid for the replacement of the Poundland banner.

Members referred to the presentation by the consultants the previous day and concern was expressed with regard to the use of wood planking in the roof top garden and the proposed security of the site to ensure that it is not blighted with vandalism or bad behaviour.

Arising from concerns expressed with regard to the banner project, the Clerk outlined the reasons why a replacement banner is proposed as opposed to a mural or a blank wall with images projected on to it. Members expressed health and safety concerns with regard to the current banner and disappointment that the owners of the building are not maintaining it properly.

It was **RESOLVED** to:

1. Accept the grant in the sum of £25,000 from the Town Delivery Fund for the replacement of the two Poundland banners;
2. Enter into a suitable contract with Mr Paul Williams for access to his back catalogue of photographs and proceed with a public exhibition of photographs to allow the public to choose the images to be inserted onto the two new banners;
3. Negotiate and enter into a contract with Parc Signs for the taking down of the existing banners and production and erection of two new banners onto the Poundland building.

It was **RESOLVED** to return to public session.

C/24/26) Dates of Meetings

It was noted that the next Town Council meeting is due to take place on Monday 8th July 2024.

The meeting closed at 7.24pm.