

MINUTES of a MEETING of ST AUSTELL TOWN COUNCIL PLANNING AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE held on TUESDAY 3rd SEPTEMBER 2024 in The Stable Block, Pondhu House, Penwinnick Road, St Austell, Cornwall, PL25 5DP at 6pm.

Present: Councillors: Brown, Bull, Fox, Hamilton, Kimber, Lanxon, Preece, Stephens, Styles, Thompson and Young.

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

P/24/65) Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Cohen, Gray, Double and Rowse.

P/24/66) Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

P/24/67) Dispensations

There were no dispensations granted.

P/24/68) Minutes from the Meeting dated 19th August 2024

Councillor Kimber advised that he left the meeting on the 19th August 2024 after minute number P/24/63.

It was **RESOLVED** that subject to the above amendment, the minutes of the meeting held on the 19th August 2024 be approved and signed as a correct record.

P/24/69) Matters to note

The Clerk advised that he had nothing to add to the minutes.

P/24/70) Public participation

There were no members of the public present.

P/24/71) Bus Working Group

Members considered correspondence received from the Service Director for Environment and Connectivity at Cornwall Council in response to comments and recommendations made by the bus working group and the Chair circulated a suggested draft response.

It was **RESOLVED** that the draft response be approved and sent to the Director at Cornwall Council.

P/24/72) Old General Wolfe Building

Members considered correspondence received from Cornwall Council in response to representations made by the Town Council regarding the continued neglect of the old General Wolfe building.

The Clerk added that he had also received correspondence from Mark Ellis, Strategic Planning Manager at Cornwall Council, to advise that the building was purchased by Corserv Facilities Limited a few years ago with the intention of refurbishing the existing residential apartments for homeless persons and that after a series of feasibility studies for alternative uses, Corserv Facilities Ltd is now in the process of re-starting their original project to refurbish the apartments for homeless accommodation.

During discussion, Members expressed strong concern that Corserv Facilities Ltd is planning to turn the building into homeless accommodation, particularly as Cornwall Council has recently acknowledged that St Austell already has a large number of complex needs accommodation close to the town centre and that they are actively trying to reduce placements in the town centre. A view was also expressed that there could be extreme public concern if another building in the town centre is turned into homeless accommodation. Members advised that they are receiving regular complaints about anti-social behaviour around the Market House steps and church grounds and expressed concern that more placements of people with chaotic lifestyles could exacerbate this. Members asked that Cornwall Council be reminded that they have promised in recent years to reduce the number of temporary accommodation placements in St Austell and that this extra accommodation would increase numbers significantly.

Strong views were also expressed about why a listed building in the ownership of Corserv Facilities Ltd had been allowed to deteriorate to such an extent that it is regularly broken into and has had squatters, vandalism and severe flooding. It has also been a huge drain on Police and town centre security resource.

Members felt strongly that as the building is in a gateway to the town centre it should be refurbished to a high standard and an appropriate use found that is in keeping with its listed building status and prominent position. A view was also expressed that it could be demolished to make way for public realm/highway improvement works or refurbished for community use. The Clerk added that the adjacent Globe Yard is on the market which could be purchased to assist with any redevelopment of the site.

A proposal to ask Cornwall Council to acquire Globe Yard and demolish the General Wolfe building on health and safety grounds to make way for a public realm area was lost 5 votes for, 6 votes against with the casting vote from the Chairman.

Councillor Fox asked that it be recorded that she voted against this proposal

A proposal to ask Cornwall Council to acquire Globe Yard and re-develop the building into quality town apartments was lost 2 votes for, 7 votes against.

A suggestion to write to Cornwall Council to advise that the Town Council is strongly against homeless accommodation on the site and that a community use for the building should be explored was agreed as a suitable way forward.

It was **RESOLVED** to write to Cornwall Council to advise that the Town Council is strongly against homeless accommodation on this site and that alternative uses, other than housing, should be explored with a view to making the site an attractive gateway to St Austell town centre and in keeping with its listed building status.

P/24/73) National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The Committee considered a Government consultation paper and a Cornwall Council briefing note relating to proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework.

The Clerk advised that he had reviewed the consultation and felt that the following proposed changes should be noted:

- Cornwall's housing target will increase by 68% from 2,707 to 4,545 homes per annum if the proposed formula for housing need is adopted;
- There will be a greater emphasis on social housing;
- Greater density permitted;
- Encouragement of windfarms and solar power;
- Taking a brownfield approach first but the protection of food production land will be lessened;
- A new approach to developer contributions;
- An increase in planning fees so that local authorities can support a sustained increase in development.

During discussion, Members broadly welcomed the affordable housing changes, provision for green spaces, green energy and making it easier for smaller building companies and the public to build properties. Members acknowledged the chronic shortage of affordable and social housing and the need to do something urgently to address this. Members noted that the consultation is silent on second homes.

Members however expressed concern with regard to the impact of the potential increase in housing numbers for Cornwall, the lessening of protection of good quality farm land and the proposal to make it easier to build in the countryside.

Members welcomed the proposal for more public value from development to address infrastructure needs, highlighting the need for more investment in medical services and water/sewerage in particular, and also supported the proposed strengthening of compulsory purchase powers.

A view was expressed that different models of building should be supported (eg modular housing, community land trusts and co-operative housing) and the Government should consider tighter restrictions on Right to Buy and Housing Associations selling social housing on the open market.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Clerk should respond to the Government on their draft consultation document, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee, based on the discussion and points raised.

P/24/74) Dates of Meetings

It was noted that the dates of the next meetings of the Planning and Regeneration Committee are Monday 23rd September 2024 and Monday 28th October 2024.

The meeting closed at 7.41pm.