

MINUTES of the MEETING of ST AUSTELL TOWN COUNCIL held on MONDAY 27th January 2025 in The Registrar's Office, Carlyon Road, St Austell, Cornwall, PL25 4LD at 6pm.

Present: Councillors: Brown, Bull, Clemo, Cohen, Double, Fox, French, Gray, Hamilton, Kimber, Lanxon, Preece, Rowse, Stephens, Thompson and Young.

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

C/24/113) Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: Guest, Pearce, Pears and Styles.

C/24/114) Declarations of interests and gifts or hospitality received

None.

C/24/115) Dispensations

There were no requests for a dispensation.

C/24/116) Minutes of Meeting held on 9th December 2024

Councillor Preece referred to the noting of four Councillors leaving the meeting at the same time (page 7) and proposed the following wording to reflect, in his view, the nature of the departure:

Councillors Double, Kimber, Pears and Rowse **walked out of** the meeting

Councillor Fox seconded the proposal.

A proposal to delete the word "left" and insert the words "walked out of" was lost 5 votes for, 8 votes against.

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on the 9th December 2024 be approved and signed as a correct record.

C/24/117) Matters to Note

The Clerk advised that the Town Council has not received an update from Cornwall Council on the proposed closure of the Adult Education Centre in St Austell. He added that Cornwall Council's Economic and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee has expressed concern with regard to the proposed changes and the lack of democratic support for them.

Following a successful bid for Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Funding for play equipment improvements to Landrew Road Park and The Meadows, Landrew Road Park has been completed, and The Meadows will be completed when the new play equipment arrives – hopefully in the early Spring.

C/24/118) Mayor's announcements

Since the last meeting, the Mayor advised that he had:

- Visited Mount Edgcumbe Hospice, Little Harbour and St Austell Community Hospital with the Deputy Mayor to wish the staff and residents Merry Christmas;
- Sat on the interview panel for the Library and Community Projects Officer post;
- Attended a Mid Cornwall Hub Event, a Library Volunteers "thank you" cream tea afternoon at the Library, a Harbour Housing Christmas Event and the launch of the green construction skills event at Cornwall College.

C/24/119) Public Participation

None.

C/24/120) Members' questions

There were no questions from Members.

C/24/121) Helen Toms – Community Safety Officer (Mid Cornwall)

Helen Toms, Community Safety Officer (Mid Cornwall), advised that she was a member of Restormel Borough Council's homeless team and in 2017 joined the Safer Cornwall Team as an ASB Caseworker. She is now the Community Safety Officer for Mid Cornwall and covers St Austell, Newquay and Truro.

Ms Toms explained the work of Safer Cornwall and the teams associated with the partnership which include the drugs team, complex needs support, refugees and domestic abuse. She advised that Safer Cornwall is currently signing off their three year plan 2025-28 which includes data from Cornwall Council's Amethyst Team and residents' surveys.

The Safer St Austell Partnership has a core membership of the Police, Fire, Probation, St Austell BID and Town Clerk which meets regularly to discuss and review the priorities in the Delivery Plan. The latest priorities are:

- Public confidence and perception
- ASB
- Drugs/alcohol
- Young people
- Domestic abuse
- Homelessness

Ms Toms advised that the priorities for St Austell could change in due course and gave an example that there is not a lot of street homelessness in St Austell at the present time.

Ms Toms praised the work of the Streetlink Team and their efficiency with regard to reported homelessness.

The Safer Cornwall Partnership are currently offering training on domestic abuse issues, drugs and the administration of naloxone.

Ms Toms advised that the crime statistics for St Austell are now below most other safer towns and praised the town centre security guards for their work and the positive effect of the recent funding which has allowed an extension of their hours into the late afternoon and early evening.

Ms Toms suggested that the key challenges at the present time are:

- An increase in fire setting by young people
- Anti-social use of off-road bikes
- Illegal vapes
- ASB in derelict buildings

Ms Toms advised that she is always happy to answer any questions that members may have and attend awareness raising events along with her police colleagues. She added that the receipt of funding has allowed Safer Cornwall to instal bleed kits into towns in Cornwall with one outside the night club in St Austell and one outside Polkyth Leisure Centre. No training is required.

During discussion, the following was raised:

- An area of the town where drug dealing is regularly spotted
- A large quantity of empty cans and bottles behind Jewsons
- The need to work with schools to educate young people
- The timescales for the town centre security guards to gain their CSAS powers
- Mobility scooters/electric bikes on pavements

The Mayor thanked Ms Toms for her very interesting presentation.

C/24/122) Small Grants Scheme

It was **RESOLVED** to award 169 (St Blazey) Sqn, RAF Air Cadets a grant in the sum of £250 towards the replacement of old and broken IT and training equipment.

C/24/123) Draft Work Plan – 2024/2026

The Clerk advised that it is good practice for the Town Council to have a work plan to refer to from time to time to provide focus on the key projects ahead.

Councillor Brown suggested the following four changes to the Work Plan.

Roof Top Garden

"To consider securing further funding to seek progress towards implementation of a roof-top garden"

Town Centre Economic Growth

"Monitor and identify funding opportunities for further economic investment in the town"

Cornwall Local Plan

"Monitor changes to National Planning Guidance to respond to significant further consultation and seek maximum involvement in work relating to the Cornwall Local Plan drawing from experience on the original plan"

Re-structuring of Local Government

"To monitor proposals from the Government and Cornwall Council on the re-structuring of local government and regional structures that affect Cornwall and respond accordingly"

Councillor Rowse asked that a review of the Town Council's Communications Strategy is added to the Work Plan.

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the Work Plan as drafted subject to the five changes as listed above being incorporated into the document.

C/24/124) Consultation paper – Strengthening the standards and conduct framework for local authorities in England

The Clerk advised that NALC, CALC and SLCC are campaigning for stronger sanctions against Councillors who do not act appropriately or in accordance with the principles of standards in public life and the local code of conduct. He added that St Austell Town Council Councillors are respectful of each other and behave in a professional manner but other Town and Parish Councils in Cornwall have experienced incidents of bullying and inappropriate behaviour. He advised that the current system was introduced in 2011 to discourage scurrilous referrals but unfortunately the system appears to be too light touch with no sanctions to discourage inappropriate behaviour. The Clerk encouraged Councillors to respond individually as well as agreeing a Town Council response.

During discussion Members felt that the current system needs strengthening and a suggestion was made that the item should be deferred to the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

It was **RESOLVED** that this item be delegated to the Finance and General Purposes Committee to agree a response on behalf of St Austell Town Council on the 17th February 2025.

C/24/125) Members appointed to outside bodies update reports

Councillor Kimber advised that instead of writing a letter about the effect of the National Insurance rise on businesses, the Chair of the St Austell Bay Chamber of Commerce has requested a face-to-face meeting with the MP. To date, nothing has been set up.

Councillor Brown advised that he had attended a CALC Larger Councils meeting with the Town Clerk where a presentation was received from Simon Mould and Jon Mitchell (Cornwall Council) on devolution. He added that the Town Council's devolution deal was considered very early in the devolution process and that some Councils are still struggling to get deals agreed.

Councillor Brown advised that CALC has made it very clear that they do not wish to be involved in any politically divisive issues with regard to the Cornwall devolution deal and will leave the Cornish Mayors group to make representations on behalf of local councils.

Preparations for the May Elections was discussed and concern was expressed that Town and Parish Councils may not attract enough candidates.

Councillor Gray advised that the White River Steering Group is looking at sewage, drainage, flood prevention and a potential path at Menacuddle.

Councillor Lanxon advised that plans are progressing well for a 3G pitch at Poltair Park but the clubhouse re-development is dependent on further funding. She added that the CAP meeting had focussed on a residents survey and updates on the White River Project and Social Housing. A representative from Mevagissey Parish Council spoke about their activity centre.

The Clerk advised that in response to a request to share best practice, he had provided the CAP with an overview of the Town Council's finance system "Xero" and had offered demonstrations to other Town and Parish Councils should they be looking to change systems. He added that as a result of previous demonstrations, Saltash and Torpoint have changed over to Xero and Truro are considering a move.

Councillor Thompson advised that he had attended a St Austell Hydrotherapy Pool discussion which indicated that there is a desire from patients and healthcare providers to re-open the hydrotherapy pool. It was agreed at the meeting that a survey is required to assess the real demand for hydrotherapy treatment and a solution found to reduce the energy costs. Noah Law MP is exploring funding and potential contracts for social prescribing and hospital referrals to the facility. Councillor Thompson added that the hydrotherapy pool at Truro has closed and hoped that Town Councillors will support the efforts to get the pool re-opened.

C/24/126) Cornwall Councillor update reports

The reports of Councillors Double and Rowse were noted.

Councillor Brown reiterated his concern with regard to the proposed closure of the Adult Education Centre in St Austell and made reference to a leaflet circulated to residents about the Adult Education Service which made no reference to St Austell within it.

Councillor Double advised that she had expressed her strong disappointment to Cornwall Council officers that the Adult Education leaflet had been distributed prior to the consultation but had received no response to her concerns. She added that she will keep pressing the service for a reply.

Councillor Rowse expressed his concerns with regard to the proposals and clarified that the Adult Education Board of Governors had recommended which sites should close not the Cabinet.

The Clerk advised that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee indicated at a recent meeting that the Strategic Director for the Service will be making the final decision.

During general discussion, concern was expressed that:

- A leaflet had been circulated to the public prior to the consultation which clearly demonstrated that a decision to make the closures had already been made;
- Some adult education learners might be unsuitable to attend a college environment;
- A recent Cornwall South CAP meeting held at The House Youth Centre was dedicated to finding solutions to raise the current academic achievement of young people in the area;
- The current adult education centre in St Austell is well equipped as an educational establishment and is owned by Cornwall Council.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Clerk should write to the Cornwall Council Portfolio Holder for Children and Families and the Chief Executive to express the Town Council's disappointment that a response has not been received to its previous letter and their ongoing strong concern with regard to the proposed closure of the St Austell Adult Education Centre.

C/24/127) Climate and Environment Committee

It was **RESOLVED** to note the minutes of the Climate and Environment Committee meeting held on 20th January 2025.

C/24/128) Planning and Regeneration Committee

It was **RESOLVED** to note the minutes of the Planning and Regeneration Committee meeting held on 6th January 2025.

C/24/129) Schedule of Payments

It was **RESOLVED** that the Schedule of Payments for the period 30th November 2024 to 17th January 2025 totalling £199,288.41 and transfers between accounts amounting to £101,012.55 be approved.

C/24/130) Draft Schedule of Meetings

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the draft schedule of meetings from May 2025 to May 2026 as set out.

C/24/131) St Austell Town Centre Revitalisation Project

The Clerk advised that the next meeting of the St Austell Town Centre Revitalisation Partnership is on 11th February 2025.

Rooftop Garden

A draft report is expected this week which will be reviewed and circulated to the Partnership and Town Council. The report will include a design, broad costings, a business case and a risk assessment.

Gateway Project

The viaduct study is complete, and the Duke Street design should be ready next week. The Regeneration Officer will consult local businesses in the area and a copy of the designs will be circulated to the Partnership and Town Council. Cornwall Council's Highways Officers are reviewing the Duke Street designs and will include them within their work on the Fore Street one way system review if satisfied with the proposals.

High Cross Street

This project is progressing and Cornwall College has been contacted to firm up the demand for student accommodation.

Banners

Work is progressing with the preparation of the banner with the project still on track to be completed in February.

Church Piazza

The Diocese of Truro has recommended that the faculty application for the Piazza at Holy Trinity Church is approved. A public notice of the intended works has been issued to the Church which they are obliged to display for 28 days. After the 28 days notice period, the request for the faculty will be sent to the Chancellor for approval. The Clerk has asked Cornwall Council for an extension of the deadline for the funding and completion of the project.

Highways

Cornwall Council Highways Officers have confirmed that a one-way system past the Market House and Trinity Centre is not feasible due to the narrowness of the roads in the area. The officers are still reviewing Fore Street and the potential to allow buses to pass through the area. It might be possible to change the colour or structure of the road outside the Market House to make it safer for pedestrians.

General Wolfe

Discussions are ongoing with the Strategic Director and Corserv Facilities Ltd about the future of the General Wolfe building.

C/24/132) Dates of Meetings

It was noted that the next Town Council meeting is due to take place on Monday 17th March 2025.

The meeting closed at 8.04pm.