

MINUTES of a MEETING of the FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE held on MONDAY 7th APRIL 2025 in The Stable Block, Pondhu House, Penwinnick Road, St Austell, Cornwall, PL25 5DP at 6pm.

Present: Councillors: Brown, French, Lanxon and Pearce.

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

Also in attendance: Councillor Thompson.

F/24/62) Apologies for absence

Apologies of absence were received from Councillors Clemo and Young

F/24/63) Declarations of Interest

None.

F/24/64) Dispensations

None.

F/24/65) Minutes of meeting held on 17th February 2025

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on the 17th February 2025 be approved and signed as a correct record.

Councillor Brown arrived during this item

F/24/66) Matters to Note

The Clerk advised that with regard to Risk Management (F/24/56), Martyn's Law has been enacted and all Risk Assessments, where relevant, will reflect the requirements under this legislation.

With regard to F/24/60 (General Wolfe Building), the Clerk advised that no further update has been received from Cornwall Council.

F/24/67) Public participation

There were no members of the public present.

F/24/68) Budget Monitoring Report

The Clerk explained the variances as at 28th February 2025 as follows:

- **Car Park income** – more income than anticipated
- **Interest income** – higher interest rates and balances
- **Other grants and contributions** – Shared Prosperity Fund and Town Vitality Fund grants
- **Contract payments** – small saving anticipated.
- **Grounds maintenance supplies** – increased cost of planting and winter maintenance.

- **Miscellaneous expenses** – Town centre projects
- **Other transport/plant expenses** – new mower/brushcutters.
- **Play equipment** – Projects in progress
- **Rates** – successful appeal against rateable value of Priory car park
- **Repairs/Maintenance Vehicles/Plant** – increased cost of repairs due to age of vehicles
- **Salaries and Wages** – reduced staff costs/vacancies

The Clerk added that the Town Council is in a good financial position and expected a surplus at the year end.

During discussion, it was noted that election costs will be less than budget due to only one Ward being contested and a view was expressed that the surplus from this budget could be expended on a community project. The Clerk suggested that the expected surplus at the year-end could also be put towards a project if Members wished.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Clerk should produce a report for the next Finance and General Purposes Committee, in consultation with the Mayor and Deputy Mayor, outlining the anticipated surplus funds and the options available for bringing forward a community project.

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

F/24/69 Asset Register

The Clerk outlined the items added to and deleted from the Asset Register and arising from questions, explained the valuation criteria for assets within the register.

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the Reconciliation of Assets and Asset Register as at 31st March 2025.

F/24/70) Treasury Management Strategy

The Clerk outlined the Treasury Management Strategy and highlighted the amendment within paragraph 2.5 "Liquidity of Investments". The Clerk explained the Town Council's current investments and advised that he is in discussions with NatWest about additional investment opportunities.

It was **RESOLVED** to note the report and approve the Treasury Management Strategy for a further 12 months.

F/24/71) Insurance Claim

The Clerk outlined the circumstances of an insurance claim in the sum of £2,762 and that, apart from a small excess in the sum of £100, the full cost of the claim should be received. Final approval from the insurers is awaited. The Clerk reassured Members that security has been increased at the Town Council's offices to prevent, as far as possible, another incident of this nature.

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

F/24/72) Community Capacity Fund

The Clerk advised that Cornwall Council has approved the grant application to the Good Growth Fund in the sum of £6,500 for a trailer and large garden games. The grant application was submitted to the 2025/26 budget round, but due to a surplus, Cornwall Council has approved the grant against the 2024/25 budget. A condition of the grant is to show the spend before 31st March 2025.

The Clerk advised that due to the very short timescales given to fulfil the grant obligations (3 working days), he agreed to the offer from Cornwall Council under delegated procedures and fulfilled the grant conditions by purchasing the equipment before 31st March 2025.

It was **RESOLVED** to endorse the action taken by the Town Clerk.

F/24/73) St Austell Library

The Deputy Town Clerk provided an update on the following:

- The re-configured Library Help Desk
- Two retirements and the resultant two vacant positions
- The disconnection of the Customer Service telephone line
- The excellent performance figures for March
- SALSA. VE Day, VJ Day and 65th Birthday Events.

Arising from the above, Members expressed their gratitude that the Town Council election packs could be picked up from the Library and suggested that Cornwall Council should be asked to make this the default venue for picking up Town Council election packs in the future.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Clerk should write to Cornwall Council to request that the library is the default venue for prospective Town Councillors to pick up an election pack.

It was **FURTHER RESOLVED** to note the update.

Before the meeting closed, Councillor Brown expressed his gratitude on behalf of the Town Council to Councillor French, Chair of the Committee, who is standing down at the election. He highlighted his diplomacy and tact as a particular strength and that he would be missed in the Council Chamber.

Councillor French advised that he had been a Town Councillor for 16 years and thanked Councillor Brown for his kind words.

F/24/74) Dates of next meeting

It was noted that the next meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee is due to take place on 23rd June 2025.

The meeting closed at 7.02pm.