

MINUTES of the MEETING of ST AUSTELL TOWN COUNCIL held on MONDAY 14th JULY 2025 in The Registrar's Office, Carlyon Road, St Austell, Cornwall, PL25 4LD at 6pm.

Present: Councillors: Brown, Gray, Hamilton, Kimber, Lanxon, Marshall, Preece, Stephens, Taylor, Thompson and Whitehouse.

In attendance: David Pooley (Town Clerk), Sara Gwilliams (Deputy Town Clerk) and Bill McCardle (Regeneration Officer).

C/25/28) Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: Bull, Cohen, Clemo, Lingham, Pearce, Rowse and Young.

Councillor Lanxon arrived during the next item

C/25/29) Declarations of interests and gifts or hospitality received

None.

C/25/30) Dispensations

There were no requests for a dispensation.

Councillor Stephens arrived during the next item

C/25/31) Minutes of Meeting held on 12th May 2025

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on the 12th May 2025 be approved and signed as a correct record.

C/25/32) Matters to Note

The Clerk advised that he had nothing to add.

C/25/33) Mayor's announcements

The Mayor thanked Councillors for giving him the opportunity of being Mayor and outlined the events that he had attended in week one of becoming Mayor:

- St Austell ATC
- Mayor Making Ceremony in Hayle
- Stepping Stones charity event in Poltair Park
- Choral Society event in St John's
- VE Day celebration party in Killyvarder Way
- Provided an opening speech at the RNA Area 4 Annual Conference in Roche

He added that since then, he has attended the following:

- A three further Mayor Making ceremonies – Bodmin, Liskeard and Truro
- Torpoint civic service and parade
- Sustainability event at the Library
- 65th Birthday celebrations for the library

- Guest of honour at the Desert Island discs event at St John's
- Judged the welly decorating competition along with the Deputy Mayor at the Summer Fayre in White River Place
- Attended the High Sheriff's Garden Party
- Opened a new high tech training facility at St Austell Golf Club
- Presented prizes for the welly decorating competition at St Mewan, Pondhu, Bishop Bronscombe and Sandy Hill Schools

The Mayor advised that the public really appreciate interaction with Town Councillors and asked Members to support as many events as they can and outlined the VJ celebratory fun day planned for Thursday 14th August 2025.

The Mayor concluded that St Austell is likely to be asked to host an Armed Forces Day on 27th June 2026 and that a formal request for the Town Council to consider will probably be received soon.

C/25/34) Public Participation

The Mayor advised that Mr Walker would like to speak when agenda item 10 is being considered.

C/25/35) Members' questions

There were no questions from Members.

C/25/36) Inspector Simon Andrews

The Mayor welcomed Inspector Simon Andrews, Sector Inspector, and Helen Toms, Community Safety Officer, to the meeting.

Inspector Andrews circulated the key performance figures comparing January - June 2024 with January - June 2025 and highlighted the following:

- There has been a 13% reduction in ASB incidents (down from 283 incidents in 2024 to 247 incidents in 2025);
- 76% reduction in robbery (13 incidents in 2024 to 3 incidents in 2025)
- 32% decrease in drug offences (44 incidents in 2024 to 30 incidents in 2025)
- 31% decrease in shop lifting (200 incidents in 2024 to 138 incidents in 2025)
- A 34% increase in other sexual offences (29 offences in 2024 to 44 offences in 2025)

Helen Toms commented that there has been a change in reporting methods and more offences are now being logged as a crime. This change has resulted in a slight increase in the crime statistics countywide.

Inspector Andrews added that shop lifting is down and that the Police are doing their best to manage prolific offenders within the current justice system. Inspector Andrews referred Councillors to the Devon and Cornwall Police Community Messaging system which is a 2-way messaging system and allows the public to communicate directly with Devon and Cornwall Police.

Inspector Andrews advised that there has been some speed enforcement work in the sector and that the drone team have been out identifying nuisance off-road bikes. Inspector Andrews concluded that additional money has been obtained to bolster the summer policing team, mainly to cover the coastal areas where there has been some high profile ASB issues.

Members raised the following:

- Noisy motorbikes
- ASB outside of the town centre
- Night-time noise and ASB around the vicinity of the nightclub on High Cross Street
- Managing public perception about crime in the town centre
- Educating young people about drugs
- Reporting issues (101)
- Neighbourhood Watch
- The need to see more police on the street

Reassurance was given to Members that St Austell Sector is the biggest sector in Cornwall and on a per capita basis in compares better than other sectors in the county. Inspector Andrews also advised that he has worked in other sectors in Cornwall and, in his view, the St Austell Sector has the best partnership working.

Both Inspector Andrews and Helen Toms advised that they have an open-door policy and will assist Councillors as far as they can with any queries they may have.

The Mayor thanked Inspector Andrews and Helen Toms for their presentation.

C/25/37) Land at Linear Park

The Mayor welcomed Mr Walker to the meeting.

Mr Walker advised that his boundary fence needs repairing and he would like to take the opportunity to extend his garden at the same time by purchasing 2-3m of land to the rear of his property and circulated pictures of the land at Linear Park referred to. He advised that the purchase of the land would not affect the neighbouring properties as his property is not in a row with other properties and sits below the other houses on the street. He added that an estate agent has confirmed that the purchase of the additional land would not increase the value of his property. Mr Walker acknowledged that if the Town Council were mindful to sell the land, the legal costs might be prohibitive. He advised that he would like to purchase the land as extra amenity space for his family and that he already cuts the grass from time to time.

During discussion, Councillors raised the following views:

- Strong support for the purchase of land;
- The need for the Town Council to adopt a policy for the disposal of land;
- Concern that the purchase of the land would set a precedent
- The need to make the transaction cost neutral to the Town Council if the purchase did proceed.

By way of clarification, the Town Clerk advised that the disposal of public open space is not a simple process for Town and Parish Councils and outlined the following:

1. The land was transferred to the Town Council by Cornwall Council as public open space and is held in the Town Council's books as public open space;
2. A formal valuation of the land would have to take place as the land cannot be disposed of below market value;
3. The Town Council's intention to sell the land has to be advertised twice in local newspapers and any public comments as a result of the advertisements must be duly considered;
4. Cornwall Council transferred the land to the Town Council with an overage clause which gives Cornwall Council the right to a share of the land value if they did not agree to the clause being lifted;
5. There could be substantial legal fees involved with the sale of the land.

A proposal for the Town Clerk to:

Begin negotiations with Mr Walker for the disposal of land at Linear Park, on a cost neutral basis to the Town Council, in consultation with the Mayor and Deputy Mayor and draft a policy on the disposal of Town Council land for the next Finance and General Purposes Committee was lost, 3 votes for, 6 votes against.

A proposal for the Town Clerk to:

Draft a policy on the disposal of Town Council land for a future Finance and General Purposes Committee was carried by 8 votes.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Clerk should draft a policy on the disposal of Town Council land for consideration by a future meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

C/25/38) Motion from Councillor Gray

"Against the background of a declining high street, both nationally and here in St Austell, we recognise that the closure of Poundland will be a huge blow to our town. We ask the Clerk to write, urgently, to both Poundland and the landlord asking them to reopen negotiations with a view to keeping this, much needed, shop open"

The Clerk outlined a recent conversation with the managing agent and Members expressed their concern that the very prominent shop in the town centre could close.

It was **RESOLVED** to write to Poundland and the managing agent to ask them to reopen negotiations to keep the much-needed shop open.

C/25/39) Priory Toilets

The Clerk advised that the Regeneration Officer has been exploring various options for installing solar panels on the roof of the Priory Toilets. Two suppliers have been asked for quotations so far which has revealed that installation of the panels would cost in the region of £5,000 to £9,000 depending on the configuration. He added that they should pay for themselves in 7-8 years. A third quotation will be obtained should Members wish to proceed.

It was **RESOLVED** that a maximum budget of £10,000 be approved and the Town Clerk be authorised to acquire a solar panel system for the roof of the Priory Car Park toilets.

C/25/40) Town Centre Fun Day – Thursday 14th August 2025

The Mayor advised that plans are underway for the VJ Day fun day due to take place in the town centre on Thursday 14th August 2025. A youth parade consisting of the Sea Cadets, ATC and Police cadets is due to step off from St John's Methodist Church at 10.30am and conclude at the Holy Trinity Church, with hopefully the new piazza in situ. The Mayor advised that he is seeking raffle prizes for the event and that if Members had anything suitable for a raffle that they drop it off at The Stable Block.

Arsing from a question, the Mayor confirmed that his Mayoral charities are, Gover Valley Foodbank and A Band of Brothers.

The Mayor concluded that he would like the Town Council to consider making Priory Car Park free on Thursday 14th August 2025 to encourage as many people as possible to attend the event.

It was **RESOLVED** to note the update and approve Priory Car Park being made free on Thursday 14th August 2025.

C/25/41) Members appointed to outside bodies update reports

Councillor Stephens advised that he had attended two sounding board meetings facilitated by the Rural Services Network.

The older persons sounding board covered various challenges faced by rural communities that affect older residents such as healthcare, transportation and digital services.

The younger persons sounding board covered various challenges faced by rural communities that affect young residents such as education opportunities, transportation and mental health.

Councillor Kimber advised that the Chamber of Commerce meet very infrequently and he has only been to and invited to, two meetings since he was appointed as the Town Council's representative. The Chamber's future is unclear.

Councillor Gray advised that the White River Plan has been finalised and has identified 8-10 key projects. Councillor Gray highlighted a project to alleviate sewage issues at the Menagwins pumping station.

Bill McCardle, Regeneration Officer arrived to the meeting

C/25/42) Cornwall Councillor update reports

Councillor Rowse's update report was noted.

The Mayor welcomed Councillor Ashton, Cornwall Councillor for Poltair and Mount Charles, to the meeting.

Councillor Ashton advised that he has been appointed to the Budget Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Chief Officer's Employment Committee, Community Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Constitution and Governance Committee (substitute) and Standards Committee.

Councillor Ashton advised that his in-box is mainly on issues with regard to Highways, Planning and SEND and highlighted the roadworks that are due to take place at Cromwell Road at the end of July.

Councillor Ashton concluded that he used to be on the Chamber of Commerce and would like to have a conversation about its future particularly as the organisation used to attract 70 or 80 people at its large events.

Councillor Brown thanked Councillor Ashton for coming to the meeting and advised that it would be helpful if he could attend the Town Council's Planning and Regeneration Committee meeting once a quarter to update the Committee on Cornwall Council Planning and Highways issues.

C/25/43) Pump Track

The Clerk advised that the formal grant offer for the proposed pump track at The Meadows has been received from Cornwall Council in the sum of £86,000 with £10,000 match funding from the Town Council. The Clerk advised that if the Town Council is mindful to accept the grant offer, he would review the quotations received, firm up costings and let the contract to a suitable contractor.

It was **RESOLVED** to authorise the Town Clerk to accept the grant offer in the sum of £86,000 for the pump track at The Meadows with match funding of £10,000 from the Town Council.

C/25/44) Premises Grant Application

Waffle Ltd, 9 Duke Street, St Austell

It was **RESOLVED** to support the premises grant application.

C/25/45) Planning and Regeneration Committee

It was **RESOLVED** to note the minutes of the Planning and Regeneration Committee held on 19th May 2025 and 16th June 2025.

C/25/46) Community Committee

It was **RESOLVED** to note the minutes of the Community Committee held on 2nd June 2025.

C/25/47) Finance and General Purposes Committee

It was **RESOLVED** to note the minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 23rd June 2025 and approve the **RECOMMENDATIONS** contained therein.

Councillor Brown voted against the recommendation relating to the Lone Working Policy for Councillors

C/25/48) Climate and Environment Committee

The Deputy Town Clerk advised that at the annual Town Council meeting 7 Members were elected to the Climate and Environment Committee which requires a quorum of 3 Councillors to enable the meeting to proceed. She advised that unfortunately there were a number of apologies for the meeting due to take place on 7th July 2025 which resulted in it having to be postponed.

The Deputy Clerk read out a statement from Councillor Clemo who expressed a view that the Climate and Environment Committee should be wound up and climate and environment issues included as a standing item at the Council meetings.

During discussion, Members felt that an additional 2-3 Councillors should be added to the Committee to mitigate the chances of it being inquorate in the future.

It was **RESOLVED** that Councillors Brown, Gray and Stephens be added to the Climate and Environment Committee.

Councillor Kimber left the meeting

C/25/49) Schedule of Payments

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the Schedule of Payments for the period 1st May to 4th July 2025 totalling £312,422.03 (net of refunds) and the transfers between bank accounts amounting to £204,916.02.

C/25/50) St Austell Town Centre Revitalisation Partnership

The Clerk advised that the banner is still on target to be erected during the week commencing 28th July 2025. Full completion of the piazza might be delayed due to a delay in a gas pipe being moved but it should be far enough ahead to not affect the event on 14th August.

C/25/51) 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/25/52) Town Centre Regeneration and Investment Programme (TRIP)

Members reviewed a number of potential projects which the Town Clerk considered were deliverable within the timescales prescribed and did not require planning permission.

It was **RESOLVED** to approve match funding in the sum of £15,713 for potential projects to improve the town centre and to submit a bid to the Town Centre Regeneration and Investment Programme subject to finalisation of the details with the landowners.

It was **RESOLVED** to re-admit the public.

C/25/53) Dates of Meetings

It was noted that the next Town Council meetings are due to take place on the 1st September 2025 and 13th October 2025.

The meeting closed at 8.25pm.