

MINUTES of a MEETING of the FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE held on MONDAY 23rd JUNE 2025 in The Registrars Office, Carlyon Road, St Austell, Cornwall, PL25 4LD at 6pm.

Present: Councillors: Brown, Cohen, Gray, Hamilton, Kimber, Lanxon, Marshall, Pearce, Preece, Thompson and Young.

Also present: Councillors Hawken and Stephens

In attendance: David Pooley (Town Clerk) and Sara Gwilliams (Deputy Town Clerk) and Terry Shaw (Library Manager).

F/25/01) Election of Chair

The Clerk asked for nominations for Chair.

- A nomination was received for Councillor Kimber
- A nomination was received for Councillor Gray

A proposal for a named vote was lost 5 votes for, 6 votes against.

A proposal to undertake a secret ballot was carried 6 votes for 3 votes against.

It was **RESOLVED** to undertake a secret ballot.

Members undertook a secret ballot to elect the Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee for the 2025/26 civic year. The result of the ballot was:

Councillor Gray – 7 votes

Councillor Kimber – 4 votes

It was **RESOLVED** that Councillor Gray be elected Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee for the 2025/26 civic year.

F/25/02) Election of Vice-Chair

The Chair asked for nominations for Vice-Chair.

- A nomination was received for Councillor Pearce
- A nomination was received for Councillor Marshall

It was **RESOLVED** to undertake a secret ballot to elect the Vice-Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee for the 2025/26 civic year. The result of the ballot was:

Councillor Pearce – 6 votes

Councillor Marshall – 5 votes

It was **RESOLVED** that Councillor Pearce be elected Vice-Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee for the 2025/26 Civic Year.

F/25/03) Apologies for absence

Apologies of absence were received from Councillors Clemo, Rowse and Whitehouse.

F/25/04) Declarations of Interest

None.

F/25/05) Dispensations

None.

F/25/06) Minutes of meeting held on 7th April 2025

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 7th April 2025 be approved and signed as a correct record.

F/25/07) Matters to Note

The Clerk advised that the Town Council's insurers have approved the claim relating to Bethel Park wall damage but the payment has not yet been received.

The Community Projects Officer has arranged for Young People Cornwall (YPC) to facilitate Park Games from Monday 7th July to Thursday 17th July in various parks across the town. The local schools have been informed and each event has been publicised on social media. The games will also be made available for the Bethel Park event in July and the town centre fun day in August.

Arising from questions, the Clerk answered as follows:

Martyn's Law

The Clerk explained Martyn's Law and the potential impact on the Town Council. He stressed that the legislation has been enacted but the detailed regulations are not expected for some time.

Investments

The Clerk advised that the Town Council has agreed a low-risk strategy with regard to investments and that the largest investment at the present time is with Cornwall Council. He advised that the Town Council has a healthy bank balance, but the replacement value of play equipment is approximately £900,000 which will start to erode the Town Council's funds in due course when large pieces of aging play equipment will need to be replaced. The Clerk advised that the Town Council's precept is received from Cornwall Council in April and September.

Election costs

The Clerk confirmed that Cornwall Council has not invoiced the Town Council yet for the May Elections but once an invoice has been received, he will discuss with the Mayor and Deputy Mayor the anticipated underspend.

F/25/08) Public participation

There were no members of the public present.

The Chair advised that to allow the Library Manager to leave the meeting in good time, he would bring the Library report forward to the next item

F/25/09) St Austell Library

The Deputy Town Clerk referred to the Library newsletter and advised that Terry Shaw is the Library Manager managing 9 staff, a number of volunteers and overseeing the activities of the St Austell Library Support Association (SALSA). She advised that the library is extremely busy and has a full programme of activities and events coming up over the next few months including the Summer Reading Challenge.

Ms Shaw advised that the theme for this year's Summer Reading Challenge is Story Garden and that the library has a number of activities lined up to encourage children to take up the challenge which is to read 6 books over the summer holidays. Ms Shaw added that they usually have around 900 children signing up for the challenge, and approximately 600-700 finishers.

Ms Shaw outlined a summary of recent events at the library including a VE Day 80th commemoration event and a visit from the Police Dogs which was particularly well received.

During discussion, Ms Shaw advised that the mobile library will soon be based at St Austell Library and that it will go to the Fun Day event in August. She advised that they are pleased with the reconfiguration of the help desk and that they always encourage people to use the outside space.

It was **RESOLVED** to thank Terry Shaw, the library staff, volunteers and SALSA for their tremendous work at the library.

Ms Shaw left the meeting

F/25/10) Budget Monitoring Report

The Clerk explained that early in the budget setting process Members are invited to informal discussions about priorities which results in a draft budget for Members to consider. Members are then invited to review the budget through the Finance and General Purposes Committee and then finally approved by full Council at their meeting in December.

The Clerk advised that the Finance and General Purposes Committee is provided with a budget monitoring report at each meeting which details the budget spend against budget.

In addition to the budget monitoring reports, the Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee receives a monthly report detailing all transactions for the month.

The Town Council has also appointed an Internal Auditor who is a Chartered Accountant who audits the Town Council's finances twice a year. In between these visits the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee come into the office to "spot check" a number of transactions.

Finally, an External Auditor is appointed to audit the Town Council's Annual Accounts once they have been approved by the Internal Auditor and full Council.

The Clerk referred to the Budget Monitoring report for the financial year to 31st May 2025 and explained the variances therein.

Arising from questions, the Clerk advised members on the rental income received and the latest discussions with Treveth and Cornwall Council on the renewal of the lease for the Stable Block.

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

Councillors Pearce and Stephens left the meeting

F/25/11) Regular Payments

It was **RESOLVED** to note and approve the Direct Debits and Regular BACS payments as at 17th June 2025.

F/25/12) CCTV

The Clerk explained that the contract for the repair and maintenance of the CCTV systems ends later this year and Newquay Town Council has suggested that a tender exercise is carried out in partnership with St Austell Town Council.

The Clerk advised that as the CCTV systems are integrated it makes sense for a joint procurement exercise to be carried out with Newquay Town Council as the lead body.

It was **RESOLVED** to authorise the Town Clerk to proceed with a tender exercise in partnership with Newquay Town Council for the repair and maintenance of the CCTV systems.

F/25/13) Paperless

The Clerk advised that the cost of posting agendas to Councillors has increased significantly in recent years and an increasing number of Councillors have advised that they are not receiving their agendas on time through the post. He added that in the past, Councillors have been given the opportunity to receive agendas electronically only and felt that with the election of a new Council the opportunity to opt out of receiving a paper copy should be discussed again.

During discussion, views were mixed but it was generally agreed that whether or not to opt out of receiving a paper copy of the agenda should be a choice for individual Councillors to make.

The Clerk advised that he would continue to bring a few hard copies of the agenda to each meeting.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Clerk would contact all Councillors to give them the opportunity to opt out of receiving a paper copy of agendas.

F/25/14) Lone Working Policy for St Austell Town Councillors

The Deputy Town Clerk advised that the Town Council's staff, including grounds maintenance staff have lone working policies and through the recent induction training, it had come to light that the Town Council does not have a policy on lone working for Councillors.

She advised that it had been drafted in consultation with the Operations Manager and although, mainly common-sense advice, hoped that Members would find it useful to have it documented.

Councillor Brown voiced his strong objection to the policy and expressed his disagreement to a number of the suggestions contained therein.

During further discussion, Members felt strongly that Councillors should not meet with the public in their homes and some Councillors outlined incidents, threats and uncomfortable situations that they had found themselves in whilst out on Council business.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that the Lone Working Policy for Town Councillors should be adopted as drafted.

Councillor Brown asked that it be recorded that he voted against this proposal

F/25/15) Vehicle Replacement

The Clerk advised that one of the Ford tipper trucks is nearing its end of life and needs replacing over the next few months. He advised that the 2025/26 budget makes provision for the purchase of a replacement vehicle for the grounds maintenance service.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that a maximum budget of £22,000 be approved and the Town Clerk be authorised to acquire a second-hand tipper truck in the most economically advantageous way.

F/25/16) Dates of next meeting

It was noted that the next meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee is due to take place on 29th September 2025.

The meeting closed at 7.37pm.