

MINUTES of ST AUSTELL TOWN COUNCIL COMMUNITY COMMITTEE held on MONDAY 23rd FEBRUARY 2026 at Chi Austel, White River Place, St Austell, Cornwall, PL25 5AZ at 6pm.

Present: Councillors: Cohen, Clemo, Hamilton, Hawken, Kimber, Lingham, Nott, Preece, Stephens, Taylor, Thompson, Whitehouse and Young.

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

Also in attendance: Councillor Gray, A Etheridge (interpreter).

CC/25/42) Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Rowse.

CC/25/43) Declarations of Interest

None.

CC/25/44) Dispensations

None.

CC/25/45) Minutes of the Meeting held on the 24th November 2025

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on the 24th November 2025 be approved and signed as a correct record.

CC/25/46) Matters to Note

The Clerk advised that further to minute number CC/25/36, the Community Area Partnership (CAP) received a presentation from Emily Hudson and the following was agreed:

- Write to Noah Law MP supporting the Smartphone Free School campaign.
- Connect Emily to the Education Lead at Cornwall Council so that she can have a dialogue about Smartphone Free Childhoods.
- Request that Cllr Cunningham, as a member of the Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee, asks the Committee if they would consider including the issue on their future work programme.

CC/25/47) Public Participation

Members of the public present:

Mr Simon Pollard – St Austell Festival of Children's Literature

Stephanie Housman – St Austell Amateur Operatic Society

Melody Gray – St Austell Amateur Operatic Society

In order to assist the members of the public present, the Chair agreed to bring Agenda Item 11 Small Grants Scheme forward to the next item.

CC/25/48) Small Grants Scheme

St Austell Festival of Children's Literature

The Chair welcomed Mr Pollard to the meeting.

Mr Pollard thanked the Committee for inviting him to the meeting and explained that the festival is in its fourth year and will be run on similar lines to the previous years on the weekend of 12th and 13th June 2026. He advised that this year is the National Year of Reading and to encourage as many young people as possible and their families to attend the festival a nominal fee of £1 per person will be charged to attend. Mr Pollard outlined the key activities that will take place across the town which include author events at the library and a Junior Book Club on one Saturday a month throughout the year.

Arising from a question, Mr Pollard confirmed that the Academies contribute £1 per pupil to take part and offer assistance in kind.

It was **RESOLVED** to approve a grant in the sum of £1,000 towards the cost of putting on the 2026 St Austell Festival of Children's Literature Festival.

St Austell Amateur Operatic Society

Stephanie Housman provided an overview of the Society, the costs of putting on a show, the community benefit and the success of a committee member who started out in social media for the society. Melody explained that the show planned for 13th – 18th April 2026 is called "Come From Away" and outlined the story behind the production.

During discussion, Stephanie and Melody confirmed that the tickets have been on sale since August and can be purchased through social media.

A proposal to award £500 was proposed by Councillor Kimber and seconded by Councillor Clemo.

An amendment to the proposal to award £1,000 was proposed by Councillor Nott and seconded by Councillor Cohen.

The amendment was carried 8 votes for, 4 votes against.

It was **RESOLVED** to award a grant in the sum of £1,000 to the St Austell Amateur Operatic Society towards the cost of putting on their 2026 production "Come From Away"

Edible St Austell

It was **RESOLVED** to award a grant in the sum of £250 to Edible St Austell towards the repair of their timber shelter.

St Austell Library Support Association (SALSA)

It was **RESOLVED** to award a grant in the sum of £250 to SALSA towards the cost of hosting Easter activities at the library and the hire of donkeys.

St Austell Fire Station

It was **RESOLVED** to award a grant in the sum of £250 towards the cost of improving the memorial garden at the St Austell Fire Station.

CC/25/49) Deaf Awareness

Councillor Nott provided a short presentation on deaf awareness. His presentation explained the problems that deaf people experience and outlined helpful tips on how to communicate with the deaf. He provided some basic words in sign language and encouraged members to attend his deaf awareness course held in White River Place, every Tuesday.

CC/25/50) Poltair Cafe

The Deputy Town Clerk advised that the current tenant of Poltair Café has given notice that she will be leaving after the 2026 summer season. She explained that the way forward needs careful consideration and will be discussed informally at the Chair and Vice-Chair meeting later in the week and a report will be brought for consideration by a suitable committee meeting in due course.

CC/25/51) Poltair Park Play Equipment

The Clerk advised that there is an increasing need to consider replacing the large helter skelter play unit in Poltair Park as it is now 16-17 years old and, due to its age, is becoming increasingly expensive to repair as replacement parts are becoming discontinued or require custom manufacturing.

The Clerk further advised that the helter skelter is a very visible piece of equipment and suggested that its replacement should be equally significant, robust and have lots of play value and that following extensive research the "Birds' Nest Tower" was deemed to be a suitable replacement.

The Clerk added that the replacement value for all the play equipment across the Town Council's 17 parks and open spaces is over £1m and the reserve for replacement playground equipment stands at £440,000. The purchase of the Birds' Nest Tower, including installation would be in the region of £80,000 excluding VAT.

During discussion, Members raised the following:

- Consideration of a disabled swing being the replacement for the helter skelter;
- The need for the helter skelter to be replaced with a significant piece of play equipment with lots of play value
- The need for a consultation process to take place to ensure that any replacement has the support of users
- The potential for a consultation to take place in the library, to include images of equipment from suppliers ensuring that school children, Young People Cornwall and the Youth Council are all consulted.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that the helter skelter in Poltair Park is replaced with a suitable piece of play equipment that has the support of users gained through a robust consultation process at St Austell Library with a budget in the region of £80,000.

CC/25/52) Poltair Park – Wheelchair swing (at the request of Councillor Taylor)

The Clerk advised that at the request of Councillor Taylor, research had been undertaken with regard to the potential for a wheelchair swing at Poltair Park. He advised that they are considered “high risk” pieces of play equipment due to their size, weight and high ground clearance and are rarely found in public parks. If they are installed in public parks, they are strictly locked when not in use. Research suggested that they are usually installed in schools and nurseries where their use can be closely supervised and monitored.

The Clerk added that he had taken the opportunity to speak to the Town Clerk at St Blaise Town Council who advised that they had installed a wheelchair swing in their park at Polgreen approximately six months ago and that on average it has 3 users a month and has been vandalised once.

The Clerk advised that if Members were mindful to instal a wheelchair swing in Poltair Park, the only flat space within the play area to accommodate it is close to a set of junior swings which would have to be removed to make room for it. He advised that to mitigate risks, it would have to be locked when not in use with a key or combination code being obtained from either the library or café.

The Clerk concluded that the installation of a wheelchair swing at Poltair Park would be of high risk to the Town Council and recommended caution to Members.

During discussion, Members raised the following:

- Whether a wheelchair swing could be installed in the area close to the bat house;
- Whether there is any data demonstrating community interest in a wheelchair swing in the park
- The need for an audit of accessibility at Poltair Park;
- Whether a wheelchair swing could be installed in another park;
- Concern that the swing would not be available for use when the library or café are closed;
- Concern with regard to the risk of mis-use and injury if not properly supervised.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that a consultation process be undertaken with wheelchair users to ascertain the appetite for a wheelchair swing in Poltair Park and an Accessibility Audit be undertaken to assess the accessibility of the play area in Poltair Park.

CC/25/53) Tree Policy

Members considered the draft tree policy.

During discussion, a view was expressed that the policy should encourage private homeowners to maintain their land so that there is no inappropriate encroachment onto public areas.

It was **RECOMMENDED** to approve the Tree Management Policy subject to the addition suggested above.

CC/25/54) Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) Renewal

The Clerk advised that Cornwall Council has consulted on a renewal of the county-wide Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) prohibiting street drinking associated with anti-social behaviour. He clarified that the order is not a ban on alcohol in the streets listed but provided power to control drinking in public spaces.

It was **RESOLVED** to support the renewal as outlined subject to the spelling errors being corrected.

CC/25/55) Closure of Payphones

The Clerk referred to correspondence received from Cornwall Council on BT's proposal to remove 2 telephone boxes within the parish of St Austell on the grounds of lack of use. He advised that both had been the subject of anti-social behaviour complaints in the past.

It was **RESOLVED** to support the removal of the two payphones, located at Carclaze Road/Agar Road and Daniels Lane/Buckers Lane as outlined in the consultation due to a lack of use.

CC/25/56) Projects Update

The Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk provided an update as follows:

Town Vitality Fund

Holy Trinity Church. The corner where the welfare hut was situated is complete and blends in well with the rest of the piazza.

Pump Track. The pump track is complete with a formal opening event planned for May when hopefully the better weather arrives.

Town Revitalisation and Improvement Plan (TRIP)

The Priory Car Park signage is in situ and the improvements to the old fire station have been finalised with just the planters to put in place. The railings outside the Baptist church have been installed and are awaiting planters. The planters outside Studio 4 have arrived and will be installed during the next week.

CCTV. The CCTV is on winter monitoring hours with 25 cameras installed across the town. The mobile camera is currently being repaired and discussions have commenced with the organisations located in Polkyth and Enevero about the potential to instal cameras at Polkyth following a successful grant application to the OPCC.

Young People Cornwall (YPC). YPC continue to lever in grant funding and the Town Council representatives meet with the Steering Group quarterly. The Chief Executive, Nick Smith, is the guest speaker at the Annual Parish Council meeting in April. YPC facilitated some schools games in the Town Council's parks last summer utilising the games trailer and it is hoped that they will do the same again this year.

Youth Council. Councillor Preece advised that a letter has been sent to the two secondary schools for their attention following half term. The letter outlines the objectives of the youth council, who can be on it and how it will work. It is hoped that the Membership of the Youth Council will be made up of approximately 12 young people and will be supported by Town Councillors.

Anti-social behaviour. There are a few new faces around the town, particularly in the vicinity of the Travel Lodge which we understand Cornwall Council is using as temporary accommodation. Shop lifting continues to be a problem, but the security guards are providing an excellent service assisting shops and are invaluable to the Police for providing intel and assistance.

Grounds Maintenance. The winter maintenance schedule continues with winter jobs such as path clearance, weeding flower beds, play equipment maintenance, tree works, fence repairs and library maintenance all being carried out over recent weeks. The grass cutting season will start towards the end of March/beginning of April when the ground should be drier.

Arts Centre. The feasibility report is still awaited from Cornwall Council.

Cornwall Armed Forces Day. The Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk are assisting with the road closures for the event which will be quite significant, particularly with regard to traffic management and parking for the attendees and spectators. A funding request will be considered by the Council meeting on the 16th March to assist with the cost of security personnel for the road closures. The event is a county event and will be managed at a county level.

Arising from the above, Members expressed their gratitude to Bill McCardle for all his hard work with the town centre revitalisation projects that he has helped facilitate over the few years he has been employed with the Town Council.

CC/25/57) Dates of Meetings

It was noted that the next meeting of the Community Committee is scheduled for 23rd March 2026.

The meeting closed at 7.58pm.