

MINUTES of a MEETING of the FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE held on MONDAY 28th SEPTEMBER 2026, 6pm in The Stable Block, Pondhu House, Penwinnick Road, St Austell, Cornwall, PL25 5DP.

Present: Councillors: Brown, Cohen, Gray (Chair), Kimber, Lanxon, Nott, Preece and Whitehouse.

Also present: Councillor Hamilton.

In attendance: David Pooley (Town Clerk) and Sara Gwilliams (Deputy Town Clerk), Annie Etheridge (Interpreter).

F/26/18) Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Clemo, Marshall, Stephens, Thompson and Young.

F/26/19) Declarations of Interest

None.

F/26/20) Dispensations

None.

F/26/21) Minutes of meeting held on 22nd June 2026

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 22nd June 2026 be approved and signed as a correct record.

F/26/22) Matters to Note

The Town Clerk advised that negotiations for the transfer of the library have progressed and the "buy back" clause has now been deleted. Unfortunately, the library's new boiler has gone wrong and the transfer is now delayed until Cornwall Council ensures that the boiler is fully functioning. All being well, Cornwall Council's contractors should be fitting the new part tomorrow (29th September).

The Chair enquired whether Members still wanted to attend a working group to consider the printing and distribution of agendas. After discussion and the mixed views expressed, the Chair undertook to arrange a meeting of the Members nominated to the working group.

F/26/23) Public participation

There were no members of the public present.

F/26/24) Budget Timetable

The Clerk advised that as in previous years, he would like to hold a series of meetings to steer the budget setting process for the 2027/28 financial year and that a first draft budget will be available for Members to consider at the informal meeting on the 22nd October 2026.

If needed, a second informal meeting has been earmarked for 29th October 2026. It is hoped that following the informal meetings and a discussion at the Finance and General Purposes Committee, the Town Council will be able to approve a budget, precept and Council Tax leaflet at their meeting on 14th December 2026.

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the budget timetable set out in the report.

F/26/25) Standing Orders

The Clerk advised that he has reviewed and updated the Town Council's Standing Orders to reflect the revised guidance received from the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) and due to a lack of time at the full Council meeting on the 1st September, the draft was referred to this Committee.

Councillor Brown circulated 19 proposed amendments to the Standing Orders as presented and the Committee went through each amendment and either AGREED or DISAGREED with each amendment proposed.

1. 1c. Add at the end "or may be moved by another councillor present" (AGREED).
2. 1g. Delete "early verbal" (AGREED)
3. 1m. leave this unchanged (AGREED)
4. 3g. Delete 2 and Insert 3 (AGREED)
5. 3m. leave this unchanged (DISAGREED)
6. 3s. Line 5 after "question" add "or abstained from voting" (AGREED)
7. 3tii. Delete "are absence" and insert "have sent apologies" (DISAGREED)
8. 3x. Leave this unchanged (AGREED)
9. 4d. the first v delete (AGREED)
- 10.4d move the second v to the place of the original first v (AGREED)
- 11.4dxi Add "or combine two or more committees or sub committees" (AGREED)
- 12.5h. "they" not "he" (AGREED)
- 13.5j. Reinstate all three paragraphs (AGREED)
- 14.7c and 7d. Capitals for Planning and Regeneration Committee, Council and Committees (AGREED)
- 15.15v. Reinstate "and other residents" (AGREED)
- 16.19 Capitals for Chair and Vice- Chair (AGREED)
- 17.19c "Review" not "Reviews" (AGREED)
- 18.26b. Delete "7" and insert "3" (DISAGREED). (AGREED to insert 5)
- 19.Appendix 1. Reinstate pages 45-53 (AGREED)

It was **RECOMMENDED** that subject to the above amendments, the Standing Orders should be approved.

F/26/26) Financial Regulations

The Clerk advised that the Financial Regulations had been updated to reflect agreed changes to delegation levels and changes to procurement legislation in accordance with guidance issued by NALC.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that the revised Financial Regulations should be approved.

F/26/27) Dignity at Work Policy

The Clerk advised that the Dignity at Work Policy was approved in August 2022 and in line with good practice has been reviewed in line with NALC's guidance.

During discussion, Members expressed concern with regard to the composition of a grievance hearing and felt that a member of staff should be allowed to be accompanied by either a friend, fellow worker or a trade union representative to a panel meeting.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that subject to the Town Clerk clarifying the composition of a grievance hearing with the Town Council's HR advisors, the Dignity at Work Policy should be approved.

It was **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Town Clerk would report back on the advice received.

F/26/28) Action Plan – 2026/27

The Clerk advised that the Town Council approved the 2026/27 Action Plan in March and in order to satisfy NALC's assessment panel for "Silver" quality status, the Action Plan has been revised with the addition of a budget column and a Red, Amber, Green (RAG) rating. He added that once the 2027/28 budget has been approved, the Action Plan will be updated to reflect the new budget and priorities of the Council.

During discussion, the following amendments were suggested:

- Page 37. (Action 8). "Counsellor" should read "Councillor"
- Page 45. (Action 39). "Coprnwall" should be "Cornwall"
- Page 47. (Action 49). "£3,5000" should be "£3,500"

In addition, the following was suggested:

- A column of "Actual Cost" be inserted onto the Action Plan
- The Action Plan be broken down into Committees and each Committee be asked to review its Actions on a regular basis.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that subject to the above amendments, the Action Plan – 2026/27 be approved.

F/26/29) Budget Monitoring Report

The Clerk explained the key variations in the report for the current financial year to 31st August 2026 and raised no concerns.

Arising from a question, the Clerk confirmed that the pay award agreed by the Unions for the 2026/27 financial year is 3.3%.

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

F/26/30) Regular Payments

Arising from a question, the Clerk confirmed that the payments to Kent County Council relate to the library's energy bills which are under a favourable framework agreement used by Cornwall Council.

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the Regular Payments as set out.

F/26/31) Mayor's Chain

The Clerk advised that the Mayor's chain has a small break in one of the links and needs repairing before further breakages occur. He further advised that the chain has not had a professional clean or a valuation for a number of years and that he has taken the opportunity to obtain a quotation for the repair works, a professional clean and valuation by a firm of jewellers in Bodmin which has been returned in the sum of £5,200 ex VAT. He added that several of the local Town and Parish Councils use the jeweller for the maintenance of their mayoral chains. The Clerk advised that the alternative was to send the Mayoral chain away to be repaired, possibly using a firm in Birmingham who specialise in civic regalia.

During discussion Members raised the following:

- Expressed a preference that the work should be carried out locally;
- Acknowledged that on average the chain requires work approximately every 5 years;
- Acknowledged that in the current climate the chain requires a re-valuation.

It was **RESOLVED** by 6 votes for, 2 votes against, to authorise the Town Clerk to accept the quotation for the repair, clean and valuation of the Mayor's Chain.

F/26/32) Member Internal Audit

The Clerk advised that in between the Council's Internal Auditor auditing and inspecting the Town Council's records, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee undertake a number of spot checks on the Town Council's processes and procedures. The last spot check was undertaken in July 2026 from which there were no concerns.

During discussion, it was suggested that spot checks of the library's financial records should be undertaken by the Chair and Vice-Chair.

It was **RESOLVED** to note the July audit by the Chair and Vice Chair.

It was **FURTHER RESOLVED** that a spot check of the library's financial records be incorporated into the list of checks undertaken by the Chair and Vice-Chair.

F/26/33) Library

The Deputy Town Clerk introduced the St Austell Library newsletter and highlighted:

- Staff numbers
- Volunteers
- Work experience placements
- The successful summer reading challenge

- Education library service operational changes
- The issues with the library boiler
- Performing arts collection usage and plans for promotion
- Excellent performance during the summer with higher issues than Truro in June and July

Councillors raised a number of issues including the number of groups supported by the library, the successful Proms in the Park event utilising the library chairs, the budget for the event, the lighting in the park for the event and the potential for permanent lighting in the park.

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

F/26/34) Date of next meeting

It was noted that the next meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee is scheduled to take place on 2nd November 2026.

The meeting closed at 8.06pm