

MINUTES of a MEETING of the FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE held on MONDAY 23rd SEPTEMBER 2019 in the Stable Block, Pondhu House, Penwinnick Road, St Austell, PL25 5DP at 6pm.

Present: Councillors: Cohen, French, King, Lanxon, Oxenham (Chair), Palmer, Rees, and Walker.

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

F/19/17) Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: Bishop, Brown, Colwill, Jones and Styles.

F/19/18) Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

F/19/19) Dispensations

There were no requests for dispensations.

F/19/20) Minutes of meeting held on 1st July 2019

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on the 1st July 2019 be approved and signed as a correct record.

F/19/21) Matters to Note

Further to minute number **F/19/15 (Carlyon Road Bus Shelter)**, the Clerk advised that Cormac is looking into an issue with regard to the drainage at the site and SABEF have commissioned an artist who has prepared some draft designs. The Clerk suggested that the artist and SABEF should agree the final design.

F/19/22) Public participation

The Chair welcomed Inspector Ed Gard to the meeting.

Inspector Gard advised that he had attended a Safer St Austell meeting on Thursday where the benefits of CCTV in St Austell had been commended. He advised that the national trend for crime is on the up, but the St Austell Sector had seen a 19% reduction in crime and felt that the improved CCTV in the town had contributed to this reduction. He outlined some positive results where CCTV had been used to convict people of assault, attempted murder, robbery and county-lines drug related offences. Inspector Gard advised that two new Neighbourhood Beat Officers are due to join the St Austell Sector shortly and in answer to a question, confirmed that his team of Police officers have access to body cameras.

Members thanked Inspector Gard for his attendance at the meeting and agreed that a joint press release with the Police should be issued outlining the effect that the improved CCTV has had on St Austell town centre.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Clerk should liaise with Inspector Gard to draft a suitable press release outlining the positive effect that the improved CCTV has had on St Austell town centre.

To assist with the flow of the meeting, the Chair suggested moving into private session to discuss the Town Centre CCTV System, Waste Management and Poltair Park – Safety Surface.

F/19/23) 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 following three items in view of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

F/19/24) Town Centre CCTV System

The Clerk advised that Newquay Town Council had carried out a tender exercise for the maintenance of the CCTV system for Newquay and St Austell and had awarded its element of the maintenance contract to SSE for the next three years. Three tenders were received and evaluated by a panel using assessments based on price, quality, experience, references and training.

It was **RESOLVED** to:

1. Send a letter of thanks to Newquay Town Council for undertaking the tender exercise;
2. Endorse Newquay Town Council's decision to award a contract to SSE for the maintenance of the CCTV system for the 3 years commencing October 2019;
3. Award a contract to SSE for the maintenance of the St Austell Cameras for 3 years commencing October 2019.

F/19/25) Waste Management

The Clerk advised that when the Town Council took on the parks and open spaces from Cornwall Council in 2017 it was on the understanding that the Council would honour the Biffa contract for bin emptying and litter picking with a right to terminate the contract with effect from 31st March 2020.

He referred Members to the business case outlined to bring the bin emptying and litter picking on Town Council owned/managed land in-house. Members noted that the in-house proposal is slightly cheaper than the current arrangement and there is likely to be an improved service if the Town Council employ and supervise a member of staff to carry out the work. The Clerk advised that at the time of writing, Cornwall Council could not provide an indication of how much it would cost to contract with them for the service post 1st April 2020.

Members expressed concern with regard to the service provided by the current Biffa contract and supported the proposal to bring the bin emptying and litter picking on Town Council owned/managed land in-house.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that:

1. Three months' notice is given to Cornwall Council to terminate the current waste contract with effect from 31st March 2020;
2. The waste management function to empty bins and litter pick on St Austell Town Council owned/managed land is brought in-house;
3. A small pick-up vehicle is procured with a budget of no more than £15,000;
4. An additional operative to carry out waste management tasks and general grounds maintenance duties with effect from 1st April 2020 is recruited.

F/19/26) Poltair Park – Safety Surface

The Clerk advised that some areas of the safety surface at Poltair Park are showing signs of wear and prices had been obtained from three organisations for its repair. He advised that the preferred option was to use a new rubber kerbing system which should reduce the shrinkage and lifting as the rubber surface will bond to the rubber kerb which would fix to the brick edging currently around each play area.

During discussions Members noted the investment needed each year to keep the play equipment and safety surfacing in good repair. The Clerk confirmed that this would be discussed in more detail during the next budget round.

Members felt that as the proposed option is a fairly new concept, it would be prudent to repair the three high priority areas and then, if successful, improve the remaining areas over the next 12 months.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that the Town Clerk be authorised to appoint T K Play Limited to undertake the safety surface works to three high priority areas identified at Poltair Park in accordance with their quotation.

F/19/27) It was **RESOLVED** to resume the rest of the meeting in public session.

F/19/28) Paperless Committee Agendas and Reports

The Clerk explained that the Committee at its meeting on the 1st July 2019 asked that a report be brought back setting out the costs of issuing Members with laptops and the savings which would be made by not having paper agendas. He outlined the current costs (all paper), option 1 (10 laptops and 50% reduction in paper) and option 2 (20 lap tops and 100% reduction in paper). Members noted that options 1 and 2 both had an increase in cost over 4 years.

During discussions, Members raised the following issues:

- The cost of providing cheaper "document readers" for Members rather than laptops;
- The need to survey Members to ascertain the appetite amongst Councillors to go paperless;
- Whether as an interim measure Councillors could "opt out" of receiving paper agendas and bring their own laptops to meetings to view electronic copies.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

1. The Town Clerk should explore the costs of providing Members with document readers and;
2. Survey all Councillors to ascertain whether or not they wish to go paperless.

F/19/29) External Audit Report

The Clerk advised that following a comment from the Auditor, he would in future channel all Risk Management reports through the of full Council rather than the Finance and General Purposes Committee as had been the practice in the past.

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

F/19/30) Members Internal Audit Report

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

F/19/31) Direct Debits and Regular BACS Payments

It was **RESOLVED** to note and approve the Direct Debits and Regular BACS payments as at 13th August 2019.

Arising from the above, the Clerk **AGREED** to compare the cost and benefits of "pay as you go" phones for the Grounds Maintenance Staff with the current contract arrangements.

Councillor Lanxon left the meeting

F/19/32) Budget Monitoring Report

The Clerk introduced a budget monitoring report and explained the significant variances which were highlighted. He explained that the car park income is on target, not much had been spent against the play equipment budget to date and the overspend on the contracts budget was due to the Biffa contract payment being paid up front. He confirmed that the cost of the new van, currently shown within the transport budget will be met by reserves.

F/19/33) Budget Process and Timetable

The Clerk advised that he proposed holding an informal meeting on the 8th October to discuss progress to date, the general direction of the Council and the budget strategy to enable a suitable draft budget to be drawn up for the Finance Committee to consider in November. He outlined some of the liabilities facing the Town Council over the next few years including the gradual replacement of the Town Council's play equipment currently valued at circa £700,000.

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

F/19/34) Car Park Working Group

The Clerk advised that there is a need to consider the car park charges for the 2020/21 financial year and asked for volunteers to sit on a Car Park Working Group.

It was **RESOLVED** that Councillors Cohen, King, Palmer, Rees and Walker would sit on the car park working group.

F/19/35) St Austell Library

The Deputy Clerk advised that the library had had another very successful summer reading challenge with 1064 sign ups, 688 finishers and 111 people joining the library purely to do the challenge. Helen Barden was employed for a few hours over the summer to help out during busy periods and four young people from local schools also helped out by listening to children read.

The Deputy Clerk advised that the staff had appreciated the library being closed on Christmas Eve last year and had asked if the same arrangement could be authorised this year.

It was **RESOLVED** that the library opening hours during Christmas week would be as follows:

Monday 23rd December – Open
Tuesday 24th December – Closed
Wednesday 25th December – Closed
Thursday 26th December – Closed
Friday 27th December – Open

It was **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the library should be formally thanked for another successful Summer Reading Challenge.

F/19/36) Dates of next meeting

It was noted that the next meetings of the Finance and General Purposes Committee are due to take place on Monday 11th November 2019 and Monday 24th February 2020.

The meeting closed at 7.29pm.