

MINUTES of the MEETING of ST AUSTELL TOWN COUNCIL held on MONDAY 13th JULY 2020 (Remote Meeting) at 6pm.

Present: Councillors: Bishop, Brown, Cohen, Colwill, French, Hanlon, Heyward, Lanxon, Palmer, Pearce, Pears, Rees, Styles (Chair), Thompson and Walker.

In attendance: David Pooley (Town Clerk), Sara Gwilliams (Deputy Town Clerk), Steve Skinner (Operations Manager).

C/19/178) Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: Bull, Jones and Oxenham.

Councillor Pears advised that he needed to leave the meeting at 7pm

Councillor Walker advised that he needed to leave the meeting at 7pm

The Clerk advised that the Operations Manager would be late attending the meeting as he was stuck in traffic.

C/19/179) Declarations of interests and gifts or hospitality received

Councillor French declared an interest in agenda item 8 by virtue of being a part owner of Gover Woods.

C/19/180) Dispensations

There were no requests for a dispensation.

C/19/181) Minutes of Meeting held on 1st June 2020

Councillor Thompson asked that it be recorded that he had left the meeting after the Making Spaces for Nature Project discussion.

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on the 1st June 2020 be approved and signed as a correct record subject to Councillor Thompson being recorded as having left the meeting after the Making Spaces for Nature Project discussion.

C/19/182) Matters to Note

Further to minute number C/19/168, the Clerk advised that the fence erected by Mount Charles School is working reasonably and that unless Members felt strongly to the contrary, he was mindful to permit the school to re-erect the fence in September as outlined in previous discussions. There were no objections to the Clerk taking this course of action.

C/19/183) Mayor's announcements

The Mayor advised that he had attended a socially distanced 100th birthday celebration which had included a Royal Navy fly past.

C/19/184) Public Participation

There were no members of the public present.

In the absence of a "Members Questions" agenda item, Councillor Thompson asked a question regarding the timing of the Annual Meeting and election of Mayor and Deputy Mayor. Members expressed confidence in the current administration and a preference for retaining the status quo for the time being until face to face meetings can be held.

The Clerk agreed to ensure that the "Members Questions" agenda item is reinstated for the next Council meeting.

Councillor French reiterated his interest in the next item and left the meeting

C/19/185) Gover Woods

The Clerk explained that during lockdown the Town Council was approached by several members of the public who are keen for the Council to buy Gover Woods which is currently on the market with Jefferys Estate Agents. He referred Members to the report and advised that until the Town Council's finances have stabilised the Town Council should not commit to any additional expenditure. He suggested that the situation could be reviewed again in six months' time if the woods are still on the market.

Members expressed concern about the additional expenditure that the woods would bring with regard to maintenance and accessibility works as well as the initial capital outlay for the purchase.

It was **RESOLVED** not to make an offer for Gover Woods but review the situation in six months' time should the woods still be on the market and the Town Council's financial situation have stabilised.

Councillor French returned to the meeting

C/19/186) Budget Projections 2020/21

The Clerk advised that current projections indicate that the Town Council will have a year-end shortfall of approximately £100,000. Full charging in the car park commenced a couple of weeks ago and the projected income during these early weeks was slightly higher than first anticipated.

He advised that he had been asked by NALC and CALC to represent the Cornish Town and Parish Councils at a Committee of MP's to talk about the hardship that the sector is experiencing as a result of Covid19. It is hoped that legislation will be passed shortly to permit business rate relief on toilets and that other hardship funding may become available as a result of NALC's lobbying.

Members thanked the Town Clerk for his excellent work during these difficult times.

C/19/187) Grounds Maintenance

In the absence of the Operations Manager the Town Clerk advised that under Government guidelines he had furloughed all of the grounds maintenance staff during lock down and gradually brought them back to work over a period of a few weeks

during May/June. The grass cutting, as to be expected, is slightly behind schedule but the staff are doing their best to catch up with the second cut due to be completed shortly. All the flower beds have been planted up as in previous years and it had been announced during lockdown that The Meadows had achieved a 4* Award in last year's Pride in Park Awards. Poltair Park has had some improvement works including a wheelchair accessible roundabout, new safety surfacing in part of the play area and a footbridge spanning a particularly muddy area of the park. Refurbishment schemes for Thornpark Road and Lostwood Road parks have been completed and a waste contractor has been employed to assist with the bin emptying and litter picking on Town Council owned land.

In answer to a question, the Town Clerk agreed to liaise with the Operations Manager to see if the current "West to East" grass cutting methodology across the town could be changed to "East to West" on alternate years.

The Operations Manager entered the meeting

The Operations Manager added that the grounds maintenance staff have received lots of praise from many members of the public for the work that they are doing and the play areas had recently re-opened under government guidelines. He advised that some swings have been removed and the helter-skelter in Poltair park has been fenced off to encourage social distancing.

C/19/188) Public Spaces Protection Orders

Members noted that due to Covid19 Cornwall Council are minded not to carry out a review of the dog control Public Spaces Protection Orders which expire in October 2020 for a further 12 months. The Clerk advised that the only anomaly appears to be that under the current order, dogs are banned from Poltair Park which is not practical as a number of footpaths run through the park and there is a large area of grass used by many dog owners for exercise.

In response to a question, the Operations Manager advised that there are mixed waste bins in Poltair Park which can be used for dog waste.

It was **RESOLVED** to support Cornwall Council's proposal to defer the revision of the Dog Control PSPO's for 12 months and request that when the review does take place the current dog ban in Poltair Park should be lifted.

C/19/189) Councillor Advocate Scheme

The Clerk advised that the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) is inviting nominations for representatives to join the Councillor Advocate Scheme. Members noted that Councillor Thompson has been nominated by Carlyon Parish Council as an advocate. The role of the Advocate is to help improve communications between the Police, Councils and the Police and Crime Commissioner. Councillor Heyward advised that she had been nominated by Cornwall Council to be a Councillor Advocate.

It was **RESOLVED** to nominate Councillor Pearce as the St Austell Town Council Advocate.

C/19/190) Small Grants Scheme

4FS Youth Dance

It was **RESOLVED** to award £250 to 4FS for their "Summer Intensive" virtual dance event.

Churches Together

It was **RESOLVED** to award £250 to Churches Together for their Christians Against Poverty (CAP) Debt Advice Centre in St Austell.

Councillor Palmer abstained from voting on this item

Councillor Walker left the meeting

C/19/191) Mount Charles Ward – Councillor Vacancy

The Clerk advised that following the advertisement of the Town Councillor Vacancy at Mount Charles Ward, ten people had written to Cornwall Council requesting an election which, due to Covid19, will not be held until May 2021.

It was **RESOLVED** to note that the Mount Charles Ward Vacancy would not be filled until the May 2021 election and that the position will remain vacant until that time.

C/19/192) Schedule of Payments

It was **RESOLVED** that the Schedule of Payments for the period 26th May 2020 to 6th July 2020 totalling £148,337.17 be approved.

C/19/193) Finance and General Purposes Committee

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting dated 29th June 2020 be noted.

C/19/194) Planning and Regeneration Committee

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Planning and Regeneration Committee meeting dated 15th June 2020 be noted.

C/19/195) Dates of Meetings

It was noted that the dates of the next meetings of the Council are Monday 7th September 2020 and Monday 19th October 2020.

The meeting closed at 7.00pm.