MINUTES of the MEETING of ST AUSTELL TOWN COUNCIL held on MONDAY 26th JANUARY 2026 in Chi Austel, White River Place, St Austell, Cornwall, PL25 5AZ at 6pm.

Present: Councillors: Brown, Bull, Clemo, Cohen, Hamilton, Hawken, Kimber, Lanxon, Lingham, Marshall, Nott, Preece, Rowse, Stephens, Taylor, Thompson, Whitehouse and Young.

In attendance: David Pooley (Town Clerk), Sara Gwilliams (Deputy Town Clerk) and Mark Mitchley (Senior Projects Officer).

Also in attendance: Annie Etheridge (Interpreter).

C/25/117) Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: Gray and Pearce.

Apologies for absence were also received from Cornwall Councillors, Jack Yelland and Paul Ashton.

C/25/118) Declarations of interests and gifts or hospitality received

None.

C/25/119) Dispensations

There were no requests for a dispensation.

C/25/120) Minutes of Meeting held on 15th December 2025

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on the 15th December 2025 be approved and signed as a correct record.

C/25/121) Matters to Note

The Clerk advised that further to minute number C/25/114 the play equipment is due to be installed before the end of March and Corserv Facilities Limited is considering the disposal of the General Wolfe building either by auction or a tender process. (Minute number C/12/115).

C/25/122) Mayor's announcements

The Mayor provided an update on his activities since the last meeting as follows:

- A recent Town Council article written for the St Austell Trader providing a roundup of St Austell Town Council activities during 2025
- Christmas care home visits with the Deputy Mayor
- A dinner with the Royal British Legion
- An evening event with Climate Action St Austell (CASA)
- A Christmas reindeer event at the Library
- Attendance at the St Blazey Amateur Operatic Society production of Sleeping Beauty at The Keay Theatre

The Mayor added that he is planning a dinner at Edies Restaurant on Thursday 19th March and that an invitation will be sent to all Councillors shortly.

C/25/123) Public Participation

None.

C/25/124) Members' questions

There were no questions from Members.

C/25/125) Small Grants Scheme

Ms Walker advised that Studio 4 Dance CIC acquired the unit in White River Place four years ago and thanked the Town Council for the grant support towards the conversion costs at that time. She advised that around 250 families attend the studio each week and the onsite coffee shop is well used by a number of young mums seeking a safe, warm space where they can safely chat to other young mums. The CIC has recently supported two Town Council Fun Days, a number of BID events and the annual Children's Literacy Festival and continues to be committed to the town centre. The Studio was the venue for the 2025 Remembrance Day VIP refreshments and a number of community meetings.

Ms Walker advised that her contract with Cornwall College has ended but with effect from September she will be in contract with another college to provide a performing arts course to 24 young people which will be carried out in the studio 5 days a week.

Ms Walker advised that the year has been challenging with rising costs and is seeking financial support to assist the CIC over the next few months until the new college contract starts.

A member of the public and her daughter both spoke in support of Studio 4 and the positive effect it has had on their family.

During discussion, Members expressed their support for Studio 4 Dance CIC and thanked Ms Walker for her hard work in providing an excellent community facility in the town centre.

It was **RESOLVED** to provide a grant in the sum of £4,000 to Studio 4 Dance CIC to assist with the core running costs of the space, the ability to continue to provide free community sessions, reduced cost activities and affordable meeting room hire costs.

Councillor Lingham arrived to the meeting during the next item

C/25/126) St Austell Library

The Deputy Town Clerk advised that the Town Council took on the leasehold of the building and the day to day running of the library in September 2017. The lease was renewed in September 2022 with an agreement that negotiations would start taking place with Cornwall Council for the Town Council to take on the freehold of the building.

The Deputy Clerk advised that under the current lease, Cornwall Council is responsible for the fabric of the building, central heating system, provision of book stock and the IT. The Town Council is responsible for the staff, contents of the building and minor internal repairs.

Cornwall Council is very keen for the library to be transferred to the Town Council with effect from 1st April 2026 and to aid a quick transfer, have recently installed a new boiler and authorised contractors to carry out maintenance works on the roof and gutters.

In order to protect the Town Council, the Town Clerk has commissioned an independent condition survey of the Library by a local contractor and a report is awaited. If significant issues are identified in the report that are the responsibility of Cornwall Council, these will be referred to Cornwall Council's Property Team. The Deputy Clerk advised that the last time Members discussed the potential transfer of the freehold of the building to the Town Council, it was stressed that Cornwall Council should carry out any backlog maintenance works to bring the building up to standard.

The Deputy Town Clerk advised that the 2026/27 Town Council budget has allowed £7,500 for library maintenance which should be sufficient, if the condition survey does not identify any major issues. She added that the legal fees associated with the transfer are likely to be in the region of £1500.

The Deputy Clerk advised that if the Town Council took on the freehold of the building, Cornwall Council would still be responsible for provision of the IT and provision of books.

During discussion, Members raised the following:

- The risks involved in taking on the freehold of the building
- The need for Cornwall Council to carry out any major repairs that they are currently responsible for identified by the independent condition survey

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Council takes on the freehold of the library, subject to a satisfactory condition survey report with terms to be agreed by the Town Clerk in consultation with the Mayor and Deputy Mayor.

C/25/127) The House

The Town Clerk advised that the lease for The House is up for renewal in August 2026 and, at the present time, the Property Officers at Cornwall Council have not decided whether they wish the Town Council to take on the freehold of the building or enter into a new lease arrangement. The Clerk added that if Cornwall Council opt for a further lease arrangement, he would try to negotiate a long lease eg: 25 or 99 years.

The Clerk outlined the economic benefits of The House for the town and the excellent work and facilities they have for young people. He added that The House had a major refurbishment around 7 years ago under a charitable arrangement with Young People Cornwall and that the Goonvean Group is about to carry out some damp proofing and improvement works under a charitable arrangement.

The Clerk advised that he has commissioned an independent condition survey for The House and a report is awaited. He further advised that Young People Cornwall currently have a full repairing lease with the Town Council, which means they are responsible for most repairs and maintenance work. During discussion, Members expressed a preference for the Town Council to take on the freehold of the building and a full repairing lease with Young People Cornwall.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Council takes on the freehold or leasehold of The House, subject to a satisfactory condition survey report with terms to be agreed by the Town Clerk in consultation with the Mayor and Deputy Mayor.

C/25/128) Local Council Award Scheme

Mr Mark Mitchley, Senior Projects Officer, introduced himself and outlined the Local Council Award Scheme. He advised that under the scheme the Town Council can apply for a Bronze, Silver and Gold Award and that the Town Council is very close to qualifying for a Bronze award. Mr Mitchley advised that the Award Scheme requires policies and procedures to be up to date and that over the next few months a number of policies will be brought to Members to review.

Mr Mitchley advised that as well as covering for an officer on maternity leave he would be working on a number of projects and initiatives including the Local Plan.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Council should work towards applications to achieve Bronze, Silver and Gold Awards under the Local Council Award Scheme.

C/25/129) Scheme of Delegation

The Clerk advised that the Town Council's Scheme of Delegation has not been reviewed since 2017 and that it is good practice to keep it up to date to ensure that it aligns with the Town Council's budget and day to day management of its services.

During discussion, Members raised the following:

- The need to reinstate allotments as a separate heading
- The insertion of words instead of symbols
- The recruitment of staff threshold

Arising from the above, the Clerk advised that under good practice guidance for staff recruitment, the recruitment of non-senior roles is delegated to the Town Clerk and the recruitment of senior roles is the responsibility of the Staffing Committee. He added that to reflect this delegation and the current salaries, the recruitment of staff threshold of £35,000 is fit for purpose.

A view was expressed that the staffing committee should consider the staff recruitment threshold.

It was **RESOLVED** by 14 votes for, 1 against and 1 abstention to approve the Scheme of Delegation as outlined subject to the allotments being reinstated into the document as a separate heading and words inserted instead of symbols.

C/25/130) Cornwall Armed Forces Day – June 2026

The Deputy Town Clerk advised that at the end of last year a meeting was held to discuss the potential for St Austell to host a Cornwall Armed Forces Day in June 2026.

She advised that a draft plan for a parade and the provision of stalls and stands in White River Place was discussed on the understanding that approval for an event in St Austell would need to be obtained from the Lord Lieutenant. The approval was received a week ago and a further meeting has been arranged for 30th January 2026.

The Deputy Town Clerk outlined the capacity issues within the Town Council's Administrative Team, particularly as the Mayor Making ceremony is only 2-3 weeks earlier. The Deputy Clerk suggested that the Town Council should support the event, but on condition that it is a county wide led event. She further suggested that resource could be found for applying for road closures and organising security staff if the working group would like a parade. She added that a budget would be helpful as a number of security staff would be required.

During discussion, Members supported a Cornwall Armed Forces Day in the town centre but acknowledged the limited resource within the Town Council's Administrative Team to lead and organise the event.

It was **RESOLVED** to support a Cornwall Armed Forces Day in June 2026 subject to it being a county wide led event and that the Town Council's input is limited to arranging the road closures and organising security staff to facilitate the road closures.

C/25/131) Youth Council

Councillor Preece advised that both secondary schools are keen to assist with the setting up of a Youth Council and that Penrice School has a Youth Parliament. Both schools have indicated that it would be helpful for the young people nominated to sit on a youth council to have some time with the Town Council to understand a bit more about the Council and its activities. The need for training was also discussed. Councillor Preece advised that he had met with Councillor Whitehouse and Mr Mitchley last week which was helpful and a paper is being drafted on a suggested way forward for Mr Mitchley to review.

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

C/25/132) Members appointed to outside bodies update reports

Councillor Bull advised that she had attended her first Climate Action St Austell (CASA) meeting and that they are pleased with the Town Council's general support for their initiatives but had expressed disappointment with the recent survey responses from Town Councillors. She advised that the group would like sight of the Town Council's Emergency Plan/and more opportunities to attend public events.

The Deputy Town Clerk **AGREED** to e-mail a redacted copy of the Town Council's Emergency Plan to CASA.

Councillor Brown provided an update on the recent CALC Larger Council's group meeting where Councillor Sarah Preece was in attendance.

He advised that a discussion took place with regard to the collapse of Visit Cornwall and the efforts being made to set up a new organisation. The group also discussed the effect of the last storm and the failings of some of the utilities to re-connect people following outage. During discussions on the Local Plan, CALC confirmed that they are continuing to lobby Cornwall Council to ensure that the Town and Parish Councils are involved. Councillor Brown concluded that the Office for National Statistics has issued a consultation to help inform which topics should be included in the next census.

It was **AGREED** that the Town Clerk should respond to the consultation promoting a dedicated Cornish tick box.

Councillor Lanxon advised that there is a Community Area Partnership meeting on Wednesday on TEAMS.

C/25/133) Cornwall Councillor update reports

Members noted the written reports from Cornwall Councillors Rowse and Yelland and an apology from Councillor Ashton.

C/25/134) Councillor Nott

The Clerk advised that following the co-option of Councillor Nott in December, it was necessary to formally appoint him to up to two Committees.

It was **RESOLVED** to appoint Councillor Nott to the Community Committee and Climate and Environment Committee.

C/25/135) Planning and Regeneration Committee

Councillor Brown suggested the following amendments:

Page 4 (minute number P/25/117) Local Plan

"Good Growth Meeting" should read "**Cornwall Growth Board meeting"**

Page 5 (minute number P/25/119) Cornwall Council – Bus Travel Survey

Last paragraph, new last sentence to read **"This was agreed".**

It was **RESOLVED** to note the minutes of the Planning and Regeneration Committee meeting held on 5th January 2026.

It was **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Planning and Regeneration Committee meeting held on 5th January 2026 should be amended as suggested.

C/25/136) Climate and Environment Committee

It was **RESOLVED** to note the minutes of the Climate and Environment Committee meeting held on 19th January 2026 and approve the **RECOMMENDATION** contained therein.

C/25/137) Schedule of Payments

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the Schedule of Payments for the period 5th December 2025 to 16th January 2026 totalling £166,276.99 and the transfer between bank accounts amounting to £80,494.75

C/25/138) St Austell Town Centre Revitalisation Partnership

The Clerk advised that the partnership is due to meet the following day and that due to bad weather, the Town Revitalisation Investment Programme (TRIP) funded projects had become protracted. He added that Cornwall Council is sympathetic to the situation and has extended the deadline for the completion of the projects.

The Clerk added that a claim will be submitted to Cornwall Council this week for the funding awarded to the Town Council under the Community Levelling Up Programme for the Pump Track.

C/25/139) Dates of Meetings

It was noted that the next Town Council meeting is due to take place on the 16th March 2026.

The meeting closed at 7.45pm.