MINUTES of the MEETING of ST AUSTELL TOWN COUNCIL held on MONDAY 13th JULY 2026 in Chi Austel, White River Place, St Austell, Cornwall, PL25 5AZ.

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

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

Also present: Annie Etheridge (Interpreter to Councillor Nott), Councillor Paul Ashton (Cornwall Councillor).

The Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting and the Clerk provided housekeeping information.

C/26/33) Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Kimber, Lingham and Young.

Apologies were also received from Councillor Jack Yelland (Cornwall Councillor).

C/26/34) Declarations of interest and gifts or hospitality received

Councillor Taylor declared an interest in agenda item 20 (Bethel and Holmbush Vacancy) by virtue of working with Mr James Bullock.

Councillor Clemo declared an interest in agenda item 19 (Schedule of Payments), by virtue of being married to the owner of Manor Made.

Councillor Rowse declared an interest in agenda item 15 (South West Water) by virtue of his connection with the organisation.

C/26/35) Dispensations

There were no requests for a dispensation.

C/26/36) Minutes of Meeting held on 9th July 2026

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 9th July 2026 be approved and signed as a correct record.

C/26/37) Matters to Note

The Clerk advised that a tender for the Mount Charles Social Club had been submitted **(Minute: C/26/30)** and receipt acknowledged by the agents. The agents have advised that the tenders would be opened after 12 noon on Friday 10th July and then sent to solicitors for evaluation.

C/26/38) Mayor's announcements

The Mayor provided an update on his latest engagements as follows:

- Cornwall Armed Forces Day

- Literacy Festival
- Penrice School Art Exhibition
- High Sheriff Garden Party
- Tania's Courage Dog Show
- Visit to the Foodbank
- Opening of the new extension at the hospice

C/26/39) Public Participation

There were three members of the public present.

Local resident, Mr Pallet advised that he is keen to learn about the Council's weed control practices as he is concerned about the use of glyphosate and the possible detrimental effect on humans and the environment. Mr Pallet advised that he is an experienced gardener and, in his view, there is no need to use glyphosate. He expressed concern about the officers' recommendation within the grounds maintenance report and wanted to hear more about the Council's use of glyphosate.

Ms McLaren asked that the Town Council re-considers its use of glyphosate and outlined some scientific research on its toxic properties. She expressed concern with regard to its continued use and the effect it is having on the environment. She advised that alternatives to glyphosate do exist and referred to the mechanical brushing of weeds in Wadebridge.

Ms Brault expressed her concern with regard to the use of glyphosate and suggested alternatives such as food grade vinegar and Block Blitz Go Weed Pro which is currently being trialled in Penryn. Ms Brault advised that following Cornwall Council's decision not to re-commence chemical weed treatment until further investigation, the general public did not know that local Councils were still using it.

C/26/40) Members' Questions

There were no Members' questions.

C/26/41) PC Ben Jones

The Mayor advised that due to the large agenda it had agreed with PC Jones that his attendance at a Town Council meeting would be postponed until September. In the meantime, PC Jones' written update report was circulated to all Members.

C/26/42) Grounds Maintenance Service

The Town Clerk advised that the Operations Manager will provide a presentation on the grounds maintenance service and that his vast experience in commercial grounds maintenance and health and safety matters had enabled the Town Council to carry out huge improvements to grass cutting regimes, planting and horticultural displays, tree management and play parks since 2016.

The Clerk added that in 2014 Cornwall Council stopped weed treatment due to budgetary pressures and had passed on the opportunity to take on the service to Town and Parish Councils which St Austell Town Council did. He advised that weed treatment will be discussed in more detail after the Operation Manager's presentation.

The Operations Manager provided a presentation on the following grounds maintenance activities:

- Planting and horticultural activities
- Grass cutting regime
- Pollinators
- Urban re-wilding projects at Jubilee Meadows and Polmarth Close
- Tree management and inspection regimes
- Play equipment inspections
- Poltair Park helter skelter replacement in Summer 2026
- Wildflower areas at The Meadows, Bethel Park, Daniels Lane and Mount Charles roundabout
- Bethel Park play park refurbishment
- The Meadows open space

Weed Control Practices

The Operations Manager advised that the Town Council's grounds team use glyphosate on hard services such as footpaths and walls in the parks and open spaces but **not** on flower beds, wildflowers, grass, inside play areas or near drains. Weeds in play areas and flower beds are controlled by hand weeding.

The Operations Manager explained that the Town Council contracts with a local weed control contractor who targets weeds across the town by spot treating weeds where they are visibly present and advised that both products used for the Town Council's parks and the kerb line are fully licensed for use in the UK. The Operations Manager advised that without weed control weeds will quickly become established in cracks and joints within roads creating an untidy and un-cared for appearance and that, if left untreated long-term, pavements and kerbs can become severely damaged and become a trip hazard.

The Operations Manager advised that "Pride in Place" is a key consideration in the Town Council's grounds maintenance and environmental activities and that the Town Council has received numerous compliments over the years for the superb flower displays, well cut grass, wildflower areas and well-maintained roadsides and that effective weed management forms an important part of maintaining the quality and attractiveness of St Austell's open spaces.

The Clerk advised that the Town Council seeks to balance environmental considerations, operational effectiveness and the community's expectation of a clean, attractive and well cared for town.

Different methods of weed control trialled by the Town Council and/or other local Councils were discussed, including:

- Hand weeding
- Hot steam
- Petrol strimmers
- Propane gas burner
- Vinegar and salt
- Electrocution of weeds

The Clerk advised that the Parish of St Austell has 125km (78 miles) of kerb line which inhibits some methods of weed control.

During discussion, the following was raised:

- Cornwall Council and the Government are due to undertake a review of the use of glyphosate during the next six months;
- The need for a balanced view of the alternatives to glyphosate;
- The negative social media in towns where weed control is not carried out;
- Untreated pavements causing accessibility issues and trip hazards;
- The use of glyphosate in agriculture;
- The potential to trial a reduced strength of glyphosate in the town;
- Further information required on what is being done in other towns;
- Research into what is being done in France where some areas are pesticide free;
- The content of the safety data sheet for Block Blitz Go Weed Pro;
- The need to better understand the health implications surrounding glyphosate;
- A special meeting in 3 months' time, where the public can be fully involved in discussions on methods of weed control in other similar sized Town and Parish Councils.

It was **RESOLVED** to:

1. Maintain the existing weed control measures with a review in six months' time;

2. Undertake a trial of a 1.25% strength of the glyphosate mix in an area on the town Council's land;

3. Research the weed control measures undertaken in other Town and Parish Councils of similar size to St Austell Town Council and report the findings back to the Council in three months' time.

Councillor Bull abstained from voting on this item

C/26/43) University of Exeter – Announcement of job losses (at the request of Councillor Brown)

Councillor Brown advised that the University of Exeter has announced major cuts across the university which could fall disproportionally on the Penryn campus and thus impact on many residents of St Austell whether employed or studying at the campus. In addition, the cuts could affect a number of degrees currently offered and potentially the future of the Institute of Cornish Studies. Councillor Brown added that the University of Exeter was in a good financial position and made important contributions to the economic wellbeing of the county.

During discussions Members expressed their concern and agreed that appropriate representations should be made.

It was **RESOLVED** to write to the University of Exeter expressing the Town Council's dismay and objection to the scale of the cuts backs and to write to the MP to ask what representations he can make and ask what the Government is doing with regard to reviewing the strategy for higher education.

C/26/44) Draft Annual Report – 2025/26

The Deputy Town Clerk advised that the Senior Projects Officer and Community Projects Officer had worked together on the draft annual report and that she was particularly pleased with the improved modern format and asked for Members' views.

During discussion, Members expressed their support for the improved format and made the following suggestions:

1. The cover photograph be adjusted to include both the former Mayor and his wife;
2. Pages 7 & 8. Each of the Chairs to produce their own words for the Standing Committees;
3. Pages 9 &10. Include only the overall attendance percentages and dedicate the remaining space to information on Members' attendance on outside bodies.

It was **RESOLVED** that subject to the above amendments, the Annual Report for 2025/26 be approved.

C/26/45) Members appointed to outside bodies update reports

Councillor Gray advised that representatives from Young People Cornwall and staff were delighted to have been asked to meet the King and Queen and thoroughly enjoyed the experience. Additional hotspot funding has been provided for outreach work to assist with ongoing ASB issues amongst young people.

Arising from the above, the Clerk confirmed that the current round of hotspot funding ends in September, but the OPCC has been in contact requesting information which it is hoped will lead to further funding rounds.

Councillor Brown advised that the last CALC Board meeting was on the 1st June and that the CEO had been to a small parish council meeting to assess the legality of their procedures. There is an extraordinary general meeting later in the month and a conference in October which will be attended by the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Clerk.

Councillor Brown added that the bus conference planned for June had been cancelled due to the railway representative not being able to attend. It is planned to be re-scheduled in September.

Councillor Tayor advised that Climate Action St Austell (CASA) is going from strength to strength, had met with the MP and is expanding public awareness and involvement.

Due to time constraints, the Mayor brought Agenda Item 20 (Town Councillor Vacancy – Bethel & Holmbush Ward) forward to the following item

C/26/46) Town Councillor Vacancy – Bethel & Holmbush Ward

The Town Clerk advised that three candidates had put themselves forward for the one vacancy in the Bethel and Holmbush Ward, two of which were present at the meeting.

He explained that Members would be given a voting form and asked to vote for one candidate out of the three. He advised that in line with the Town Council's standing orders 9 votes or more (a majority) would be needed to be successfully elected.

Mr James Bullock and Mr Nathan Huddy each outlined to Members why they would like to be elected as a Councillor for Bethel & Holmbush Ward.

Members voted for their preferred candidate and the Town Clerk announced the votes received as follows:

Mr James Bullock – 6 votes
Mr Nathan Dring – 2 votes
Mr Nathan Huddy – 8 votes

The Clerk advised that a majority of votes had not been obtained and that the lowest scoring candidate, Mr Dring would be removed from the second round of voting.

Members voted for their preferred candidate and the Town Clerk announced the votes received as follows:

Mr James Bullock – 9 votes
Mr Nathan Huddy – 7 votes

It was **RESOLVED** that Mr James Bullock be elected as Councillor for the Bethel and Holmbush Ward.

C/26/47) Cornwall Councillor update report

Councillor Ashton advised that he had learnt a lot from the grounds maintenance/weed control discussion and thanked the Council for the information. He added that Trevarthian Road is currently closed due to emergency works and that the Police are going to start using facial recognition technology in certain locations. Councillor Ashton advised that he is doing a review of grit boxes in his division and if any Town Councillors have got areas that would benefit from a grit box to let him know. Councillor Ashton concluded that the highways improvements outside the methodist church in Victoria Road have been programmed to be undertaken.

Councillor Rowse referred Members to his previously circulated report and in answer to a question advised that a new scheme of delegated powers has come into force which means that there will be more officer delegation in the approval of planning applications.

C/23/48) South West Water – Dowr Glan Motion of no confident

Members noted the correspondence from South West Water and the notification of a protest planned outside County Hall, Truro on the 21st July 2026.

The Mayor adjourned the meeting and advised that the remaining business would be dealt with at a future meeting, the date of which to be confirmed

The meeting closed at: 7.59pm.