

LISKEARD TOWN COUNCIL

AT A MEETING of the **FINANCE AND STRATEGY COMMITTEE** held in the Council Chamber at 7.30 pm on Tuesday 23 September 2014 there were present:

The Mayor Councillor Phil Seeva

The Deputy Mayor Councillor Jane Pascoe - in the Chair

Councillors: Rachel Brooks, Adam Hodgkins, Lorna Shrubsole, James Shrubsole, and Hella Tovar

Town Clerk; Steve Vinson

Minute Clerk; Mr Stuart Houghton

In attendance: Cornwall Councillors Roger Holmes and Sally Hawken

Members of the Public - None

/14 PUBLIC SPEAKER

No members of the public were present.

/14 APOLOGIES

An apology was received from Councillor Ian Goldsworthy and The Mayor, Councillor Phil Seeva, for his late arrival

/14 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made either Registerable or Non Registerable.

/14 MINUTES OF THE FINANCE & STRATEGY COMMITTEE MEETING 29 JULY 2014

The Deputy Mayor proposed, Councillor Brooks seconded and the Committee **APPROVED** the Minutes of the Finance and Strategy Committee meeting held on the 29 July 2014. The Chair signed the Minutes.

/14 TOWN CLERK'S REPORT - COUNCILS ROLE IN DELIVERING AND INFLUENCING LOCAL SERVICES ONLY

The Town Clerk's report had been circulated and he outlined the information received at his recent meeting with Andrew Kerr, the Chief Executive of Cornwall Council, about devolution of their services.

He then asked Cornwall Councillor Hawken to give more details about how this Council could take over devolved services.

Cornwall Councillor Hawken explained that Cornwall Council were having to save money as the Government had reduced their grant. Cornwall Council's intentions could be placed under three headings.

1. Asset Rationalisation which could consider moving Cornwall Council's departments in the Town to one location, i.e. Westbourne House and Greylands to Luxstowe House. This could free buildings for disposal.
2. A "One Place" vision to allow all services that meet the public face to face to be at one location, such as the One Stop Shop, Library and Cornwall Housing.
3. Budget Cuts, which are being considered by all departments of Cornwall Council from Education, Health and Social Care, Housing, Planning, Transport to Economy. Cultural and Communities.

Councillor Hawken suggested that the Town Council should consider what approach it should take, did it want to wait to see what cuts would be made or take a pro active approach to take over the services that it values. She would prefer that the Council would take a proactive approach to select items that it valued and to set out a timetable to accept them.

She referred to the Liskeard Community Strategic Plan, 2008 as it contained suggestions of facilities that might be provided in the Town, for example a local community radio station. The Council could also work in partnership with adjacent Councils and Parishes to operate wider ranging services such as winter road gritting. Member debate included;

- Agreement to take a pro-active approach
- To prepare a long list of preferred services and create a timetable
- Consider items that might increase revenue
- Concern was expressed about possible large precept increases
- Would the Council be capped because of a large precept increase
- Proposals must have financial reality
- The Council would have an advantage if it took the initiative

The discussion went on to consider some items that could be considered;

- Grass cutting and weed control
- Winter road gritting
- Longer lease/takeover of Rapsons skate park, car park and grass area
- Registry Office functions, this might conflict with proposals for wedding receptions in the Public Hall
- Car park maintenance
- Local sports pitches that are owned by Cornwall Council
- The Library
- Change the layout of the Council Chamber to make it more user friendly, provide smaller tables
- Consider the Atkins report and other consultations that have been made for the Town

- Involve the wider community such as, Liskerrett Centre, Sports Association, Stuart House, Greenbank Community, Rio, Town Forum, Volunteer Cornwall, Chamber of Commerce and the Traders Association

/14 COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The Deputy Mayor welcomed Councillor J. Shrubsole to the Committee following his selection by the Town Council.

/14 BUDGET REPORT TO 31 AUGUST 2014

The budget reports had been circulated and noted.

Councillors asked for a breakdown of salaries for each Committee and how were they allocated, they asked for this information, together with details of individual salaries to be presented to the Staff Committee meeting to be held on Tuesday 30 September 2014.

They also requested that, at the next meeting of the Finance Committee, details of general and earmarked reserves be presented together with the sums used this year, what is left, the bank balance and what is included in the administration line of the report.

/14 GRANTS

Members requested that in future all grant applications be circulated with the agendas.

1. Caradon Swimming Club, Councillor Brooks proposed, the Mayor seconded and the Committee **RESOLVED** that a grant of £250 be made.
2. Liskeard Lights Up (Liskerrett Centre), Councillor L. Shrubsole proposed, Councillor Tovar seconded and the Committee **RESOLVED** that a grant of £450 be made.
3. Stuart House, The Mayor stated that he had written a letter of support to Stuart House to support their application for a grant for the whole of the works, therefore, he would not join in with this discussion.

Councillor Brooks proposed, Councillor Tovar seconded and the Committee **RESOLVED** that a grant of £500 be made.

4. Vitalised, this was not a local organisation, it was based in London but the application stated that they supported people in Liskeard. The committee decided that the town Clerk would write to Vitalise and request details of their work in the Town.
5. Penhaligan Friends had written requesting that the Council support their

cause. The work of this organisation was known to some councillors and they suggested that it was supported. As they had not completed an application form the Town Clerk would send on to them which would contain the rules relating to the grants made by this Council.

Members commented that if letters were received by the office requesting grants the office should automatically send the applicant a copy of the application form.

/14 PRECEPT 2014 - 2015

The Town Clerk stated that he had requested Committee Chairs to prepare their thoughts for the next years precept and to prepare a three year plan to include services that might be devolved from Cornwall Council together with proposals for increasing revenue from our existing facilities.

He had been informed by Cornwall Council that the grant for the toilets which we took over last year had been discontinued and that the Council Tax Support Grant would be reduced by 15% this year and by 10% in subsequent years.

Comments made included

- If a large increase was proposed this year it would have to be well documented for the public to accept it
- It would be better to include items now for the future
- A timetable should be set for the setting of the precept
- Last year the Town Clerk held several meetings with the Chairs of Committee to finalise the precept

Cornwall Councillor Hawken informed the Committee that Cornwall Council were offering a higher interest rate for monies deposited with them than generally provided by the commercial banks, she suggested that the town Clerk should investigate the interest rate currently received and transfer funds to Cornwall Council if their rate was higher.

Councillor Brooks proposed, the Mayor seconded and the Committee **RESOLVED** that the Town Clerk should investigate the rate of interest currently received and transfer our deposits to Cornwall Council if they offered better terms of investment.

/14 CORRESPONDENCE

None

/14 ANY OTHER RELEVANT BUSINESS

The Deputy Mayor reminded Members of the public meeting, arranged by Cornwall Council, on Thursday 23 October 2014 at the Echo Centre to discuss their proposed budget cuts.

/14 PART II. PUBLIC BODIES (ADMISSION TO MEETINGS) ACT 1960

None.

/14 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next Finance and Strategy Committee meeting would be at 7.30 pm on 28 October 2014.

4. Clerk's Report – Council's Role in Delivering and Influencing Local Services

At the 16th September Council meeting after discussing this item it was agreed that the Council should:

1. **Liskeard Town Council** reporting via the Finance and Strategy Committee look at the Town Councils' own capacity, interest and remit regarding the possible transfer of any Cornwall Council property and/or service provision. To draw up proposals including costings and timetable for submission to Council.
2. **Liskeard – The wider Community** to contact local organisations and groups that might have an interest in the possible transfer of any Cornwall Council property and/or service provision. To coordinate discussions between the local potential partners and Cornwall Council to assist the process.

This meeting of Finance and Strategy is asked to consider its role as above in particular with a view to:

- Consider Cornwall Council sites and buildings that might be of interest to the Town Council. This would probably involve an initial long list reduced to a short by means of discussion with Cornwall Council.
- Consider Cornwall Council services that might be of interest to the Town Council. Again subsequent discussions with Cornwall Council might produce a short list.
- Financial Implications – initial transfer but also ongoing operating costs.
- Timescales – this year + 3 year plan and 10 year plan.
- Neighbouring Parish and Town Councils – whilst our discussion focussed on other potential interested parties within our town boundary – there is the potential to approach other local Parish and Town Councils to explore service provision that might be too much for a single Town Council to consider but might be feasible for collection of local Councils.

To assist in considering these issues – I add below my report on the meeting with Andrew Kerr Chief Executive of Cornwall Council to which I referred.

Clerks of the Larger Towns Meeting 5th September 2014 with Andrew Kerr and Cornwall Council team.

Andrew Kerr Presentation Key Points

1. Cornwall Council is capital rich in terms of the potential for eligible economic projects - 2014-2020 European and match funding programme value £1billion.
2. Revenue situation is poor - £31million reduction in staff bill
3. Four Year financial plan needed.
4. Devolution potential to Town and Parish Councils – if they wish
5. Devolution potential to other organisations. (again if they wish)
6. Devolution potential to local Cornwall Council members.
7. Town Package – each town unique and differing capabilities and interests.
8. A Team is being set up in Cornwall Council to support asset management packages being drawn up, considered and implemented.
9. Town packages might include car parks. Inclined to dispose of less well used car parks.
10. Not just next year but also longer term plan and thinking required – e.g. 10 years.
11. Cornwall Council might undertake direct provision of revenue and capital receipt generating development projects where possible.
12. Negotiation and discussions on a Town by Town basis are needed.
13. Public Sector property including Government buildings and sites that are surplus to requirements.
14. Need to look at buildings and services e.g. Libraries as a service might continue but not from their current buildings.
15. Value can be measured not just in financial terms but also service provision and community value.
16. Town and Parish Council Support grant - Cornwall Council will estimate in November and confirm the final figure in February.
17. Assume that Cornwall Council will be limited to only 1.97% increases in Council Tax for the next four years.
18. Leisure Centres – Cornwall Council is looking at the private sector running the leisure centres at zero cost to the public sector within 18 months – they will take into account geographic spread.
19. Town and Parish precept from Cornwall Council will be reduced probably 15% in 2015/2016, 10% each year thereafter for three years.

Town and Parish Council Observations:

- 1. Important that precise figures for the reduction in the Town and Parish precept are passed on as soon as possible to assist in the local budget setting process – cumulative impact of the reductions over four years 35%? lower than this year's precept and not allowing for inflation.**
- 2. Concern that the Government will extend the 1.97% Council Tax cap to the Towns and Parishes which could limit severely a small Councils' capacity to deal with later cuts in revenue.**
- 3. Visit Cornwall cuts – the Unitary Council could run it as a Community Interest Company (C.I.C.) as are several of the Tourist Information Centres in Cornwall.**
- 4. Concerns that T.U.P.E. transfers of Cornwall Council staff across to Town Councils will cause significant financial problems if closure and redundancy is necessary later.**
- 5. If toilet grants are cut in April 2016 small parishes might give leased Cornwall Council toilets back – too big a risk for too small a Council.**
- 6. Team in Cornwall Council looking at joint work with town and parish councils must include legal.**
- 7. Use 2014-2020 European grant to bring forward employment space projects that will generate rents, business rates and expand the local economy. Perhaps this could be done in conjunction with residential development on difficult sites.**

Agreed

- Meeting valuable in understanding respective views and looking forward**
- info on precepts and toilets to be passed through as soon as possible**
- Town based approach to taking things forward**
- Next meeting of this group April**