

Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly held on Thursday 22 April 2021.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, this meeting was held virtually.

The meeting was attended by Cllr Bill Leach Chairman of St Austell Bay Parish Council (who took the Chair), Cllrs Malcolm Neill, Sue Leach, Peter Tombs, Trudy Reynolds, Sue Osbrink, Nick Foster, Nigel Chatterjee from St Austell Bay Parish Council, Cllr Tom French Cornwall Councillor, 6 members of the public and Julie Larter, Clerk to St Austell Bay Parish Council.

(1) Apologies for Absence

Cllr Richard Hallows.

(2) Minutes of the Annual Meeting held on 18 April 2019

The minutes were accepted as a true record of the meeting.

(3) Chairman's Annual Report

The past year throughout the world has been dominated by the Coronavirus pandemic which has resulted in major changes to the way we have lived our lives and conducted our business. My first duty as Chairman of St Austell Bay Parish Council is to say a heartfelt thankyou to all front-line workers who have looked after us and provided services of all kinds over the past year – Thank You!

We have all become quite expert in the use of Zoom, Microsoft Teams and Facetime and the council is no different. All of our regular meetings over the year have been via Zoom and we have been pleased to welcome members of the public on a number of occasions. It has been a learning curve for us all.

Despite all this, it has been a very busy year for the council and this year for the first time we are including brief accounts from some of our working groups as part of my report – we look forward to hearing what you think about this initiative when we can meet again.

We have been pleased to welcome two new councillors: Nick Foster, Duporth Ward and Nigel Chatterjee, Charlestown. I am sure that both will make valuable contributions to our work.

Your council has examined the vexed problem of parking in Charlestown and up Duporth Road – a traffic survey was carried out, we had discussions with the

Highways Manager about possible solutions including residents' parking permits but sadly they were thwarted by cost. We will nonetheless continue to investigate other solutions.

Following incidents of anti-social behaviour in autumn 2019 residents and members of the council set up a 'Keep Charlestown Safe Group' and worked with Cornwall Council and the Police on a number of initiatives. Another significant piece of work has been the revision of the Charlestown Character Appraisal and Management Plan, which will be published soon, following the end of a consultation period. Within our offices at the Pattern Hall we have added an additional hearing loop and panelling to improve the acoustics. Obviously, we have not been able to let the Hall over the year resulting in a loss of income of nearly £7000 and we have been very grateful for the Small Business Grant of £10000 which has kept us going.

Our Working Groups

The short accounts below outline the excellent work that these groups have carried out over the past twelve months:

Neighbourhood Plan Strategic Group Report

St Austell Bay Parish Neighbourhood Plan - coming to a parish referendum this summer!

Strategic Group Members: Charlestown – Cllr Sue Osbrink; Ken Jones; Gareth Bray. Duporth – Cllr Sue Leach; Chris Wright; Steve Morris.

Porthpean/Trenarren – Cllr Trudy Reynolds; Steve Lowden.

With the aid of grant funding we were able to carry out the statutory 6-week consultation period on the Neighbourhood Plan (NP), albeit in a different way from the original intention because of Covid-19. We sent hard copies by post to all homes and businesses with a reply-paid envelope for comments, as well as offering an online comment option. We received 42 responses and replied to all those who had provided contact details. The draft plan was then modified, approved by the parish council and submitted to Cornwall Council who carried out the final consultation, this time over 10 weeks (extended because of the pandemic). Statutory consultees and businesses were contacted individually and parishioners notified via various websites. 23 comments were received by Cornwall Council of which 8 required a response from the SG. All comments at this stage were sent to the independent Examiner who had been appointed in January. She assessed the submissions and our responses as well as examining the NP to check that it met basic conditions. Her report is supportive with mainly minor modifications being required, as well as larger scale maps. The SG is currently making these modifications, after which, once approved by the parish council, the finalised NP will be put forward for referendum, hopefully in early summer. This process is organised by Cornwall Council and parishioners will be contacted by them direct about it.

Please vote for it! It puts in place some important protections for the parish, reflecting the concerns mentioned by residents and businesses in responses to questionnaires and at drop-in sessions.

The SG's hard work is drawing to a conclusion and I would like to place on record my huge thanks to all of the members, and to everyone else who has assisted in any way with comments, or practical help, throughout the process of developing the plan.

Cllr Sue Leach, Acting Chair, St Austell Bay Parish Council Neighbourhood Plan Strategic Group

Tree Officer's Report

This has been a difficult year but one in which our appreciation of nature and the value of trees has probably never been greater. Unfortunately we have lost some of our established trees due to ash dieback and age but also due to felling. At times we have felt that higher authorities have not given all our trees sufficient protection, despite Tree Protection Orders and Conservation Area status. Where trees have been removed, we will always try to ensure that suitable replacement trees are planted.

On a positive note the work of the Duporth Bay Residents Association and the Duporth Community Interest Company continue to support an annual review of their trees undertaking both necessary tree surgery work and replanting.

The Parish Council has obtained free tree saplings from The Woodland Trust and has planted a hedgerow of Dogwood, Hazel, Hawthorn, Rowan, Silver Birch and Wild Cherry near the Holmbush Arch. Similar, smaller planting schemes have been completed at the top of Porthpean Beach Road and at Trenarren. The recent lockdown has prevented the planting of the remainder of the saplings but we hope that these will be planted out in the autumn.

A project jointly funded by the Parish Council and Charlestown Regatta Committee has planted over 50 trees in the Regatta Field. Ten Beech saplings, to replace the ageing Beech trees, have been planted along the roadside boundary. A small apple orchard area has been planted at the top of the field. Beech, Oak, Silver Birch and Crab Apple have been planted along the inner boundaries.

We have planted over 350 trees in the Parish during 2020/21. Further information on what has been planted and where can be found on our "Tree Log" on the parish website.

The Parish Council is committed to protecting all our trees and to work with residents and businesses to encourage tree planting schemes throughout the parish.

Cllr Trudy Reynolds, Tree Officer

Regatta Field Working Party Report

Members (as agreed Sept 2019): Terry Butler; Sue Facey; John Fowler- Regatta Committee; Bill Leach; Malcolm Neill; Peter Tombs - Parish Council.

It has been a busy time, not helped by the pandemic. Virtual meetings have been held to help the process.

The emphasis in the past year has been to primarily progress the Toddlers area, with a new layout and equipment, with connecting paths to the boundary and to plant new trees in the field. Following a design and procurement process the preferred play equipment provider/installer was identified in June 2020 as Wicksteed (who have previously worked in the area on various playgrounds). There then followed a period of discussion on the actual scheme, to include footpaths and a new seating bench, which enabled the total costs to be ascertained.

Additional funding was required to complete this new scheme and discussions with Cornwall Council on the availability and allocation of funds was undertaken. Under "localism" the Council also have the remit to devolve facilities like the play areas to the local councils. By the Parish Council agreeing to the principle of taking over the lease on the field, agreement on securing Section 106 funds of £37,379 for the new scheme was achieved in December 2020. Wicksteed could now be instructed to proceed on the scheme and complete the design and material procurement.

Whilst we had a Covid factor to contend with, Heras fencing was erected to most of the site area in late March 2021 with an actual start of works on the 6th April 2021. We look forward to the next month for completion and the opening of the new Toddlers playground.

New trees have been planted to the northeast and south east and west boundaries during March 2021. Daffodil bulbs were also planted on the North boundary (thank you to Regatta ladies and a couple of residents) – most flowered this spring, hopefully more will show next year.

During this winter period, it was noticed (again) that a section of the field adjacent to the east boundary, where the mine shaft appeared in 2014, was flooded for many weeks and not usable. Some monitoring was undertaken and it was noted that the water level in the mine shaft was above the ground level!! This is being viewed as a serious problem by the Parish Council and has been raised with Cornwall Council, The Duchy of Cornwall, landowners and our Member of Parliament. The issue requires resolution prior to the Parish Council accepting the lease on the field.

The Working Group are committed to continue with improving the Field, for others to use along with the Regatta – the 50 year celebration we hope will occur in 2022!!

Cllr Peter Tombs

Climate Change Working Party Report

Members: Cllr Trudy Reynolds; Cllr Richard Hallows; Pat Smith.
Covid 19 seems to have taken over our lives in the last 12 months and has halted much of the work that the Climate Change Working Party was hoping to start. Our main aim would have been to get residents actively involved in and

engaged with Climate Change and what we can all do to halt the devastating impact that man is having on our environment. Hopefully we can restart this engagement process as lockdown ends.

Trees are one of the main ways in which we can slow the effects of climate change and the Parish Council has been able to plant a number of trees and saplings this year. The trees have been sourced from a local nursery and are locally grown. Many of the guards are biodegradable and plastic free so they will either disintegrate safely into the ground or can be recycled or composted.

We have also planted around 1000, locally sourced, daffodil bulbs. There are two Cornish varieties to give an extended flowering season. These were planted at the top of Porthpean Beach Road, in Higher Porthpean and in Trenarren.

The Parish Council is using environmentally friendly toilet cleaner for the Public Toilets. This has been bought in bulk to reduce plastic waste. In the Pattern Hall there is a recycling point for old batteries and printer ink cartridges.

When the contract for electricity supply for the Pattern Hall is due for renewal a provider which provides energy from 100% renewable sources is likely to be favoured.

Last spring we all had the time to appreciate nature, without rushing to get to places, to "do" things and to buy "stuff" that we didn't really need. Think back to that season of blossom and birdsong. No noise, no pollution. Staying local, buying local.

Perhaps Covid 19 is a reality check for us all. We can do better than we were and the Parish Council will make decisions which encourage energy efficiency, carbon reduction and the use of renewable energy. We aim to protect and enhance the natural environment wherever and whenever we can.

Cllrs Trudy Reynolds and Richard Hallows

History Working Party Report

Members: Andy Trudgian; Sue Facey; Peter Hancock; Cllr Malcolm Neill; Cllr Trudy Reynolds; Cllr Peter Tombs.

Last summer, the Parish Council, with valuable assistance from Sid Allen and Andy Trudgian, of the newly formed but short-lived, Charlestown History Group, submitted an application to Historic England (HE) for the listing of three Cask Banks, and in November, the Banks were designated Grade II listing. Two of them lie immediately above the inner harbour and the third on the northern end of the Shipwreck Museum. These raised, walled areas were important structures for the storage and transhipment of fine clays and the efficient operation of the harbour.

Following the successful, additional protection of the Cask Banks, the PC, at their November meeting, resolved to set up a History Working Party, and in January 2021 their Terms of Reference were agreed to include the following important extracts:

Purpose

To work with relevant local groups in
Researching the history of the parish.
Assisting with the dissemination of the research to the wider community.
Helping to establish a secure, accessible community archive.

Membership

Membership of the group to comprise 3 interested councillors, nominated by the Parish Council and 3 members nominated by the relevant local group.

The three local members are from the new Charlestown History Group, and the two meetings held (virtually) by the HWP this year, have led to the PC agreeing two more submissions for listing. The first, is for the Old Sunday School Room at Porthpean (in a poor and deteriorating condition) which pre-dates the Church. In addition, the PC has asked The Cornish Buildings Group and HE to include the building on their At Risk Registers.

The second is for the listing of the Rashleigh Arms Car Park (which many believe is already listed). This is the last remaining extensive example of an ore floor in Charlestown, used to store piles of, primarily, copper ore for transshipment, mainly to South Wales for smelting. Clearly, the historic importance of this floor warrants additional protection.

The PC has also agreed to seek the advice of the Cornwall Archaeological Unit and the WHS Office, on the best way forward to investigate the remains of the South Polmear mine area, situated to the SW of the top pond. The PC has recently received permission to access the site from the relevant landowners.

Cllr Malcolm Neill, St Austell Bay Parish Council

More sadly, I report on a number of failures of the South West Coast Path within the parish, namely major falls and erosion to the cliffs on both sides of Charlestown and another at Duporth. The coastal path has been re-routed behind the coastguard cottages at Charlestown, another re-routing is underway to the east, and at the time of writing a full cliff survey is being conducted at Duporth and the SWCP is closed! I extend my grateful thanks to the Cormac Countryside team for their speedy and thorough response. It does beggar belief, however, that despite all the warning notices and padlocked barricades on the path to ensure safety, people have cut through the chains holding the barricades in place and torn down notices without any thought for the safety of others!

On the same issue, most sensible people were saddened by the collapse of the Harbour wall at Charlestown and were very heartened by the swift response of the Harbour team to effect repairs to the grade 2* historic structure. Sadly, the 'trolls', both online and by phone chose to be abusive and aggressive to both the Harbour team and the contractors – how very sad!

On a completely different matter your council is in discussion with Wainhomes on the possible transfer of freeholds and various parcels of land. It is very

important that we consider most carefully the community benefit of any such proposal against any future planning approach. These matters will be discussed in open forum at our regular meetings.

Perhaps surprisingly given the current situation the council has had a very busy year dealing with 34 planning applications as well as pushing ahead with so much else as clearly outlined in the reports above.

Farewells

CC Tom French

Tom has been our Cornwall Council member for the last eight years and has represented the St Austell Bay Ward with quiet good sense and considerable diplomacy. He has always been a voice of reason, able to encourage people to work together. He has chaired a number of committees with calm assurance and considerable skill. Tom has always been willing to support the parish council at County level and has been a considerable advocate on more than one occasion. We shall miss his quiet and courteous manner.

Cllr Peter Tombs

Peter joined us in November 2018 and quickly became a hardworking and enthusiastic member of the council. He has been involved in all aspects of parish work, but his main contribution has been to the newly formed Regatta Field Working Party where he has become a lead member on the condition and upkeep of the field and the replacement of the toddlers' play area. Peter was a very caring councillor, sometimes frustrated by the ways of the public sector but always because he sought the best for the parish – we shall miss him!

Cllr Sue Osbrink

Sue Osbrink was co-opted to the council in April 2016 and rapidly became an outstanding member. Her expertise in IT has been invaluable, particularly during the development of the Neighbourhood Plan while her support of the clerk in all matters financial has been greatly valued. Sue was an excellent member of the Hall committee where she demonstrated good sense and judgement. Sue was a good judge of a planning application and never afraid to express her opinion which often gave better balance to a decision. A first-class councillor, she will be very difficult to replace and I hope that she will stay in touch with the parish

Cllr Malcolm Neill

Malcolm Neill was one of the original 'pressed men' when Cornwall County Council first became a Unitary Authority and the parish of St Austell Bay was created. He served with others on the Temporary Parish Council which later became a full council in 2009. Malcolm represented the Charlestown Ward until 2017, when to avoid the parish having to pay election costs, he offered to stand for the Duporth ward, the position he holds until today. Mr Charlestown, Malcolm, has lived in the village for over 50 years and probably knows more of its history than any other resident – he will be impossible to replace! Malcolm became Vice-Chairman of the council in 2018 and has served Charlestown and the parish with distinction since 2009 and for many years before that as Chair of the Charlestown Residents Association. On behalf of us all – Malcolm we thank you!

And finally

I cannot complete this report without thanking our staff for adapting to the new and changing cleaning regimes demanded by Covid and by expressing huge thanks and admiration to our caretaker Keith who has tirelessly painted and repainted the yellow arrows on the pavements to provide one-way pedestrian travel into and out of Charlestown. There is no doubt that the Covid -19 signage and advisory speed limits have and are making a significant contribution to the safety of visitors and locals alike.

To conclude this report: I thank our clerk Julie Larter for her knowledge, unflappable good humour and her ability to be nice to everybody – these are rare qualities and as chairman of the council, on behalf of us all – thank you!

(4) Devon and Cornwall Police Report

Neighbourhood Police Team

Neighbourhood Team Leader

Sergeant 4794 Dave Mitchell

Neighbourhood Beat Manager

PC 4886 Andrew Barnicoat

PC 5929 Gareth Hawken

PC 6170 Colin Sheppard

PC 7177 Will Chesterfield

PC 7069 Yasmin Vokes

Police Community Support Officer

30499 Julie Carpenter

30047 Wendy Christophers

30528 Natalie Merrikin

30004 Ally Relf

30262 Steve Tibbles

30055 Graham Wade

30449 Jamie Ward

30740 Yasmin Barrott

Overall Crime

Really positive news, roughly a 10% reduction in all crime over the last 12 months. Almost all crime types are down with significant reductions in dwelling burglary, vehicle offences and shoplifting. The main increase has been in violence without injury and this is largely due to changes in the crime recording rules and the classification of offences, all harassment/stalking/mal comms offences for example are categorised as violence without injury which inflates the numbers considerably. Other areas which have increased include possession and trafficking of drugs, and weapons offences which should be seen as a positive thing as these offences only get recorded when they are detected by officers and demonstrates our proactive work to tackle drugs and weapon crime.

Despite the numbers being up in these crime categories they are still low by national standards. Individual crime figures can be found on our website.

Priorities over the last 12 months

Safeguarding of vulnerable people particularly with Covid and significant partnership work undertaken. Domestic abuse has been a national priority due to the concerns around increases particularly during periods of lockdown. We have seen some rises at various times but overall, our sector hasn't seen the increases that other sectors have.

Anti-Social Behaviour has been an issue from time to time and has been tackled with partner agencies such as Helen Toms ASB Officer.

County Lines has been a real priority which as a sector we have tackled very well in terms of executing warrants, charging, and remanding several key individuals and seizures of drugs. The perpetrators of county lines have continued their 'business' but using different tactics, as a sector we have carried out more drugs warrants than anyone else.

We must stress the importance of community intelligence and encourage communities to report things to us. Information relating to vulnerable persons being exploited is particularly important right now.

Covid legislation has been introduced and it has been a priority for some time to deal with reports of breaches. We have utilised the 4 E's approach, Engage, Explain, Encourage and Enforce. There have been a significant number of reports to us placing real pressure to respond and at times we have been unable to due to other more pressing issues around Threat, Risk and Harm.

Moving forward

Last year was unprecedented for us in terms of demand. There was approximately a 20-30% increase on our demand and we anticipate the same this year due to the number of visitors coming down as opposed to going abroad. We are planning for the easing of lockdown and anticipate real challenges. G7 is taking place but the impact on local resourcing for this will be minimal.

An increase in neighbourhood officers over the last 12-18 months has been a real positive for the team. There is talk that we may see more staff, but this is not yet confirmed. We have operated as 'one team' for some time now and the system is working well. There is currently no thought that we will return to dedicated officers for each area. The national uplift of 20,000 officers has also meant that response staff have seen the benefits so in terms of staffing we are in a better place than we were a few years ago.

(5) Report from Cllr Tom French, Cornwall Council Divisional Member for St Austell Bay

In the preceding four years to May 2017 the demolition and planning for the Coliseum site on Crinnis Beach dominated my workload, however in the past four years Charlestown has taken over with its interwoven series of challenges.

Before I give you my perspective on the past year can I stress that it has rightly been the Parish Council, with its ward members, who have taken the lead in responding to the resident's concerns and the neighbourhood plan will be a great help. I believe it is for the Cornwall Councillor to support the Parish Council, very rarely should the Cornwall Councillor go it alone and risk using their initiative – in my experience not a good idea.

Charlestown is a beautiful historic community where the residents are feeling threatened by the ever-increasing volume of visitors and the associated increase in hospitality businesses. I don't need to tell you how Charlestown has also become the evening playground for the younger St Austell generation who have on occasion behaved appallingly. I am only sorry that we have not made substantial progress with this issue on my watch - even if COVID has given us a breathing space.

I am grateful that some residents alert me and the planning authority to abuses of the planning laws. I am however fully aware that the subsequent investigations do not always lead to the robust response by Cornwall Council which you expect. The temporary structures in the harbour are a prime example, but I applaud the efforts made by Bill and the Parish Council to negotiate a better working relationship with the Charlestown Harbour Company. A key issue that effects most coastal communities in Cornwall is the great and growing demand for housing by incomers which keeps house prices too high. Incidentally, I am not criticizing people who wish to come and live in Cornwall. However, it is reported to me that the COVID factor is currently greatly exacerbating this situation. A local family I know who live close to here needs to move from a two-bedroom house as they now have three sons; when they find a property they like in their price range, they are losing out to bids as high as £40,000 over the original asking price thus creating 13% house inflation. It may settle down over the next few years, but it is not going away.

Although I am standing down as a Cornwall Councillor, I am staying on as a St Austell Town Councillor and I hope to be able to support St Austell Bay Parish Council in the future, that is as long as I don't tread on the toes of the incoming Cornwall Councillor.

No members of the public wished to speak during the open forum

The meeting concluded at 1840.