

Minutes of the Fowey Town Council Annual Parish Meeting
held in the Town Hall on Wednesday 27th March 2013

12/241 Present	The Mayor	Cllr J Berryman
	Deputy Mayor	Cllr Mrs Anne Boosey
	Councillors	Cllr Mrs K Alexander Cllr Mrs R Finlay Cllr Mrs S Gudmunsen Cllr N Mason (part) Cllr D Willmore Cllr Mrs J Vincent Cllr T Vincent

12/242 In attendance	C Cllr Mrs S Bain (part) C Cllr D Hughes The Town Clerk, Mrs Sally Vincent 23 members of the public
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12/10 Apologies	None
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12/243 Annual Report of the Town Council – Cllr John Berryman

I would like to open this report by stating that it has been a pleasure and privilege to lead this Council for the last 12 months. I admit however, at times it has been hard work but still rewarding when you see the Council's plans coming to a satisfactory conclusion and very frustrating when the opposite happens.

My thanks go to all the committee chairs for their hard work during the year and to all the Cllrs. We welcomed a new Cllr this year, David Wilmore, I hope he enjoys his spell with the council, and this year we also lost a Cllr, Cllr Kate Sutherland.

Special thanks to our Clerk, Sally for the many hours she devotes to the work and the smooth running of the Council.

Fowey Town Council properly acquired the freehold ownership of the Town Hall and the Town Quay 12 months ago and since then we have been getting to grips with the many different aspects associated with owning and running the properties. We, as a council, are proud to have assumed ownership on behalf of the community and we are committed to investing in both the hall and the quay. At our last Council meeting we voted to transfer £10,000.00 to a special fund, it was on our insistence that the provision of this fund be included in the transfer agreement. We can add to this fund each year, thus building up a capital reserve to meet any future unforeseen problems. All permits, licenses and leases for this year will be as last year with NO changes. In due course we will obviously need to consult with the public about the future of both facilities but, for the moment we intend to preserve the status quo.

Your Council, as many of you are aware, has been offered the return of two previously owned assets, firstly the Allotments and the 1 acre Meadow. We intend to accept this freehold transfer and the intention is to set-up more allotments to satisfy the very local demand. The second is the return, freehold, of Squire's Field and the adjoining parking area. This poses a major problem as a considerable annual cost would be

incurred for maintenance of the field, pavilion and the newly equipped play area, also the surface of the parking area. A total annual cost in the region of £7,000 - £9000 would not seem excessive. The asset at the moment has no earning capability, other than a small income from the pavilion (once every 4 years on voting days)

The other service Cornwall Council has offered us is the ownership and continued provision of the public conveniences. We have been offered the freehold of three toilet blocks, Readymoney and the two car park toilets. The toilets at Polkerris are leasehold with 135 years to run. The freehold of the Town Quay toilet block is ours, but CC lease them from us, with, 4 years to run on its lease. There will be an open discussion following our annual reports to enable your Council to gauge the public views on these transfers.

It has been an eventful year with more to come for the new Council following the elections on May 2nd. For those Cllrs not seeking re-election may I take this opportunity to thank you for all your work and commitment in helping with the running of Fowey Town Council.

12/244 Annual Report of the Planning Committee – Cllr Mrs Anne Boosey

Once again a busy and very frustrating year, with the dreaded Wainhomes development being rather a landmark. In spite of strenuous efforts by the Town Council and a dedicated band of local people, not to mention our own Cornwall Cllr and the Cornwall Cllr from Tywardreath, this was passed by one vote in a mockery of a planning meeting. We couldn't see the point of a judicial review at a cost of thousands of pounds, so once again 'localism' was proved to be the farce that it undoubtedly is. I can get quite heated on this subject!! Although we all know that a supermarket is in the offing, at the moment the Planning Committee have had no plans to deliberate on, and of course, that being the case, I cannot comment apart from the fact that I understand it is at the pre-planning stage - which you all know I am not quite sure where the wind turbine application is at the moment, I understand that there are some revisions to it and it is with the County Council Planners at the moment. But I am sure we will find out in due time.

Other than that, we have had our usual busy year with household applications, some we thought were fine and some we didn't. But the final say, you will all be surprised to know, lies with the Planning Department at County Hall, but at least they take our views on board and more often than not agree with them. I am very pleased that the Stationmasters House appears to be going ahead; we were very supportive of this, and I am very surprised that it is not a listed building. You will be re-assured that the original and all subsequent plans made provision for the bats, but unfortunately not for comments from the conservation officer - but all has been sorted and I think the finished refurbishment will please people and be a great asset to Fowey. I was very pleased that the architects were in touch with Fowey Planning Committee all along the line, it does make life a bit easier.

I would like to thank the members of the planning committee for their support and help over the past year, and to welcome Cllr Willmore on to it. Commonsense is a much undervalued asset

12/245 Annual Report of the Environment Committee – Cllr Mrs Jane Vincent

I would first like to thank the members of this Committee for their dedication and hard work. The gardener, Mr Roger White, and the contractors for hedge cutting, weeding and mowing have also played their part with regular invoices, which made

our treasurer happy, and we have received no complaints to my knowledge, about their work.

I would also like to thank the Eden Project for their gift of 100 potted daffodils and tulips. Thank you Councillor Alexander for securing them for us.

The Old Grammar School Gardens and the Piggy Lane Triangle have been maintained in spite of wind rain and frost by Mr Roger White. We have received so many compliments on his work and his planting I can see that the public loves what he is doing. During June of 2012, Mr Stables cleared the seedlings and brambles from the cliff edge. It was a dangerous job that took two days. The men had to wear safety harness, and use ropes to complete the task. We originally thought that we would set up a contingency fund for this to happen every three or so years, but the plants grew back so quickly that Mr White has purchased the required tools to maintain the cliff edge and keep the brambles, hebes and seedling trees under control.

The Lanhydrock Garden Services have maintained the grass cutting, strimming and weed control

We have also assisted the Committee of Fowey in Bloom by taking over the flower boxes at Piggy Lane, and some of their pruning.

12/246 Annual Financial Report – Cllr Norman Mason

FTC now has control of the Town Hall and Town Quay and parishioners can look forward to benefitting from future investment in the properties with any surplus income being kept in Fowey. We have agreed to set up a ‘sinking fund’ with an initial £10,000 to be deposited in it as a buffer against future unforeseen expenditure required and this will be added to each financial year. The annual accounts will be available for public inspection in due course and will identify this new fund. I thank my fellow members for their dedication and hard work – all unpaid and often criticized – which, unlike some other council’s, has put FTC in a stable and secure financial position to move forward.

12/247 Report of Fowey Asset Committee – Cllr John Berryman (acting Chairman)

The assets committee has not met this year as we now have the freehold ownership of the Town Hall and Town Quay and the offer of Squires Field and the allotments and Parade Park. As these are major decisions they must be made by full council. All days Field will be next on our request list but at present Cornwall Council is only interested in offloading public conveniences.

Mr Neil Hartwell queried if the capital value of the toilets had been ascertained. The Mayor responded that FTC had been offered the freehold for £1.00 and that, to date, a professional valuation had not been commissioned. This would obviously need to be done if Fowey residents indicated that they wished FTC to accept the transfer offer.

12/248 Report of the Town Hall Committee – Cllr Sherlee Gudmunson

Town Hall meetings are held when required with details posted on the notice board outside the Hall. Members of the general public are invited to attend and address the Committee about matters associated with the Hall during the first 15 minutes. As you know FTC now owns the Hall and over the next year will be undertaking repairs and renovations in the building.

Bookings continue to improve and clients include members of the public, various

organisations, Troy Players, craft fairs, wedding receptions, meetings and other entertainment. Hiring rates and Terms and Conditions of Hire are supplied when bookings are made.

We have a new Caretaker, Miss Caroline Lewis, who is doing an excellent job. We have an annual budget for the Hall, which covers general running costs, staff wages, window cleaning, carpet cleaning and safety checks on appliances including the central heating boiler, radiators, fire extinguishers and alarms.

The Town Hall now belongs to the people of Fowey and we hope residents and businesses will show an interest in what goes on in the Hall. As I have already said, anyone can attend meetings and share their views and ideas. Please help FTC by using the Hall and work with us to make it a success.

12/249 Police Report - No report.

12/250 Report of the Cornwall Councillor – Cllr Mrs Sally Bain

This is my 12th and last report to Fowey Town Council Annual Meeting as the elected Member representing Fowey, Golant, Lanlivery and Luxulyan. The boundary changes yet again for those contesting the seat on polling day on 2nd May. The new division will be Fowey with Golant and Tywardreath. On the whole I have found the last 12 years enjoyable, but the coming together of the 7 councils (6 district and 1 County) 4 years ago brought about a massive increase in the work load.

Local Councils have been facing hard times with continual decreases in Government funding each year since the Coalition came into being 3 years ago. Cornwall faced the inevitability of these cuts at the outset, and has ridden the storm well compared to other Councils.

The issue of Shared Services (i.e. joint working with an outside provider together with the Health Service) caused a major upheaval in the Council with the removal of the Leader last October. My allegiance was to the then Leader since he had led Cornwall successfully through such a difficult time. It has been chaotic since then, with many changes in Cabinet placings, at the whim of the new Leader.

As far as the issue of shared services is concerned a contract has now been signed between Cornwall Council, the NHS and BT. BT is to take over all operations within the two organisations involving IT and telecommunication. This will hopefully bring more jobs, and most importantly bring CC and the NHS into closer working together. With the resignation of the Chief Executive in January, Paul Masters has been appointed to take over as interim chief executive. The newly elected council will be responsible for appointing a chief executive when it comes into being.

The Cabinet had agreed 1.97% increase in council tax, but the Council voted for a nil increase for another year, which leaves a short fall of £4million, which has to be found somewhere in the council budget.

Further Government funding cuts involve the council tax relief hitherto provided by the Government to those unable to pay their council tax bill. This is now the responsibility of local councils, putting yet further pressure on already hard pressed budgets. The Council agreed that these people should now pay 25% of their council tax. At the same meeting the council also agreed to set up a £1m hardship fund to help those who would find this tax impossible to pay.

The Government has introduced massive changes to the benefit system, as everyone is now aware, I am sure.

In order to help people understand the changes the Council has produced a film, and

this can be watched at www.cornwall.gov.uk/welfarereform. More information can be found at www.cornwall.gov.uk/housingreform

It summarises:

- Changes to housing benefit – under occupancy
- Changes to council tax benefit in Cornwall – maximum 75% benefit
- Introduction of a ‘benefit cap’ – new maximum total benefits for a household
- Changes to Disability Living Allowance – reassessment and moving over to Personal Independence Payment
- Introduction of ‘Universal Credit’ – many benefits pooled into a single monthly payment

Work has begun on the incinerator, despite massive opposition from the residents in and around St Dennis.

I put my name to the motion to alter the decision made last October to increase the Members’ allowances. I felt this was a bad time to approve this increase especially in view of the hard times and staffing salaries generally being put on hold. This will no doubt come up again in the next council.

Finally, I have today heard that the Fowey Post Office will definitely be moving to the Mini Market, though I have not been informed of when.

12/251 Fowey Public Conveniences

The Mayor explained that Cornwall Council had offered the freehold ownership of Caffa Mill toilets, Main Car Park toilets and Readymoney toilets and the offer of the transfer of the lease on the Polkerris toilets, which had 136 years to run. The freehold ownership of the Town Quay toilets was already with FTC, although Cornwall Council held a lease on them with 4 years left to run Cornwall Council wished to surrender this lease. The Whitehouse toilets were leased to Cornwall Council by FHC who were not prepared to let CC surrender its lease, so it was probably inevitable that these facilities would be mothballed, whatever decisions were made on the other properties. Cornwall Council had undertaken to carry out repairs and improvements before transfer, including the installation of charging mechanisms if required by FTC. The Mayor then produced some financial forecasts showing the predicted costs of each facility, which he distributed to all present. These showed that there would be a very significant cost to be met if the people of Fowey wished FTC to accept the offer of freehold transfer and to maintain the toilets on behalf of the community. The following response was given from the floor –

Alison Fogg Public toilets are a huge asset to the town so everything possible must be done to retain them. The knock on effect of losing them would be that tourists would choose to go elsewhere, which would have a negative effect on Fowey traders.

Bryan Boothby Fowey depends so much on tourism – has FTC considered the Community Right to Buy Scheme?

Neil Hartwell The cost of refurbishment and maintenance must be taken in consideration when making any decisions.

The Mayor It is inevitable that the precept will have to increase if FTC accepts the transfers, although hopefully the business community will contribute in some way. I am disappointed that the Chamber of Commerce is not represented tonight to put forward some suggestions.

Tony Delves Looking at the figures provided it appears that there is a 20K ‘black hole’ in the finances in year one and a higher one in succeeding years if there is no

Cornwall Council grant available. How can this be financed? Possibly a 50p entrance charge would go some way towards it?

Barbara Barker Most people in Fowey earn their living through tourism. The toilets must remain open. Perhaps a small income could be generated through sponsorship and advertising.

Alison Voeleker It is essential that FTC acquires the toilets and must charge for their use.

Paul Trudgian FTC should accept the freehold transfers and assess the situation over the first 12 months while the 26K grant from CC is available. It would be crazy not to do so even if some of them have to be sold off in 12 months' time.

The Mayor It is possible that ½ of the main car park building and ½ of the Caffa Mill building could be leased out for other uses to raise revenue

Chris Wharton In the worst case scenario what would the precept increase be?

The Mayor It is impossible to say at this stage but it could probably be significant

Cllr Boosey I accept that everybody would probably like to keep all the toilets but the question is, how? FTC must look at the whole picture and decide what to keep and what to sell. If the people of Fowey are adamant that they want to keep some or all of the facilities I sincerely hope that they will rally round to help.

Paul Trudgian There is simply not enough information available to make informed decisions. FTC should accept the transfers, run the facilities for 1 year and then decide its future course of action.

Bryan Boothby I am very keen that Fowey retains its toilets. Could the Town Forum get involved with fundraising?

Neil Hartwell Advice is needed on what liability will be involved with legal fees etc. etc.

Kathy (Lifebuoy) Fowey must have public toilets, they are essential in a tourist town

Cllr Hughes If paying devices are fitted they can be time controlled, which would mean the buildings would lock and unlock automatically to save costs.

Barbara Barker Perhaps just one disabled facility could be kept open at each location until the demand is assessed.

Town Clerk The timescales are very tight and it seems there will only be one window of opportunity to have any renovations and improvements carried out at CC expense. FTC would be able to have a say in what works are carried so we would need to be looking in the longer term to ensure the correct outcome. Once this has happened I fear that FTC would be committed to proceed with the transfer.

Alison Voeleker If we say no now we will never have another chance. We must accept the transfer.

12/252 Squires Field and Car Park

The Mayor confirmed that Cornwall Council had offered FTC the freehold transfer of Squires Field including the play park, the pavilion and the car park. However, whilst he accepted that in an ideal world the public would be sure to want to accept the offer he pointed out that there would be a significant financial obligation involved as currently there was no income stream but there were ongoing maintenance costs such as *inter alia* grass cutting, upkeep of the play area, public liability insurance and the surfacing of the car park. Unfortunately Cornwall Council had advised that it was unable to provide any historic running costs whatsoever. The Town Clerk reported that she had obtained a price for cutting the grass and strimming (although not removal of the cuttings), which was £50 per cut with approximately 20 cuts required

per annum. The football club had historically paid for some of the cutting on the pitch when Cornwall Council had failed to do so before a match. The Mayor advised that it had been suggested to him by members of the public that the car park was a potential source of income if it were to be utilised as a residents permit parking area, for instance, although he was fully aware that there could be public opposition to this approach. However, he did not see how FTC could manage the asset without raising some revenue on site.

Paul Trudgian Why would Fowey risk Cornwall Council turning the car park into a Pay & Display in the future and taking the income out of the town? If FTC owned the asset at least the town would be in control and, if parking charges had to be levied, the income would stay in Fowey

Cllr Gudmunsen The Pavilion could be a potential source of income if it was marketed.

Bryan Boothby Maybe the football club would contribute to the grass cutting costs or even take over the responsibility itself.

The Mayor thanked everybody for their input and concluded that all present considered it imperative that FTC proceed with the transfer of some, or all, of the public conveniences and also of Squires Field and Car Park in spite of the significant financial implications for the town.

12/253 Public Questions

None.

Meeting Closed 8.57pm