



PENZANCE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

MINUTES OF PENZANCE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE COMMITTEE MEETING

Tuesday 7th March 2012

Present: John Garrison (JG), Margaret Cass (MC), Barbara Hanik (BH), Dick Cliffe (DC), Chris Edwards (CE), Sally Bodinar (SB), Steven Richford (SR), Malcolm Lawrence (ML), Ruth Grant (Truro and Penwith College), Arnaud Reutsch (AR), Lucy Kean (LK) (Secretary)

Apologies: Ruth Jenkin, Hazel Trembath

Item 1 Apologies

Apologies were recorded as above.

Item 2 Previous Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

Item 3 Matters Arising

The matters arising were dealt with through the agenda items.

Item 4 Applications for Membership

There have been no applications for membership. Following the AGM the membership lists have been reviewed in conjunction with the accounts. The list is now having final amendments before a recruitment exercise with JG.

Actions:

LK to review the account information and complete the yearly accounts.
LK/DC/JG to carryout membership audit followed by an email account and website review.

Item 5 Correspondence

Two letters had been received one to review the street trader's license renewal for the Olive Man and a letter from the CIOSPCT requesting the Chamber's support for proposals.

A request had also been received for comments on the Core Strategy, members had been emailed for comments and DC had replied on behalf of the Chamber.

The overall highest priority was identified as lack of affordable housing (especially social housing). Looking at the economy alone the priorities were:

Re-vitalize Penzance Town Centre by expanding its role as a social, cultural and retail centre serving the Penwith population and visitors.

Provide affordable facilities for small businesses including specialist business premises in potential growth areas such as marine leisure related businesses

Encouragement and support for large investors considering marine based investments and perhaps other types of investment. Examples would be facilitation of private sector investment in marina facilities such as PM6 (Penzance harbour Extension) at Penzance and/or Port Penlee.

High priority to be given to maintaining transport links to the IOS.

Diversification of Newlyn's economy which is overly dependent upon a declining fishing industry

Members felt the continuous building of new homes on green field sites was a particular effective strategy for resolving housing needs and that a more holistic approach was needed. This need to include reviewing the level of occupation in the current housing stocks, especially social housing which was in such short supply.

ML (Town Council rep) had noted when attending a recent Cornwall Council event on the Core Strategy that earlier and wider distribution would have facilitated constructive feedback.

Action:

DC will review the requests.

Item 6**Communication Links**

DC provided a report following the Town Council's Harbour Options Review that reached a conclusion on the 23rd February. Following a well attended public consultation and exhibition in the Pz Gallery on 9 Feb the Town Council's Harbour Scheme Management Board met on the 16 Feb and agreed a 'preferred option' which turned out, as predicted, to be an amalgam of the two remaining shortlisted options. The Management Boards preferred option was approved by the Town Council at a special meeting on 23rd February.

The only point of concern expressed by Councillors was the impact of the proposals on Harbour businesses along Wharf Road which would require relocation under the scheme. The Town Council voted 15 in favour and 4 against.

The key elements of the 'preferred option' are summarized below:

Freight Facilities

- Gry Maritha remains berthed inside the Wet Dock.
- Rank Building knocked down and replaced with a bespoke freight building.
- North Pier widened on both external edges.
- Shell Shop and possibly the Dockers' Rest Café demolished to improve access and visibility at entrance to North Pier

Passenger Facilities

- Scillonian remains on South Pier
- Meadery demolished (approximate site of new passenger terminal)
- Green Sheds demolished to provide passenger drop off area.
- Covered walk way on South Pier (deemed desirable but not necessarily essential).

Dredging. The scope of dredging has been greatly reduced to reduce costs. The proposal to dredge a berthing pocket on South Pier to 4 metres below Chart Datum to aid IOSSCo with vessel replacement was abandoned on cost grounds. Dredging to -1 m below Chart Datum (to -2 m if budget allows) is proposed from the entrance to the Wet Dock to harbour entrance and beyond.

Rock Armour. The issue of rock armour on South Pier to reduce overtopping and protect the structure of South Pier was not addressed by the Options Review but will have to be considered during the detailed design stage. The IOSSCo state it is essential to reduce overtopping. It was also required under the previous project to protect South Pier's structure over the planned life of the project. It is however an emotive issue for some people.

The Town Council's consultants have work to complete on the 'preferred option' but exploratory discussions are already taking place with Cornwall Council. There is no feedback on these discussions but it is understood that Cornwall Council is adamant about not financing the project due to the risks involved and experience thus far.

The Town Council and Chamber Chairman met with Harbour businesses on 22 February to brief them in advance of details of the Options Review 'preferred option' coming out in the Cornishman. Most businesses have long leases remaining meaning they are in a strong negotiating position. The reality of the situation is that there is considerable flexibility in delivering an acceptable solution for the Harbour and especially as far as the Meadery and Green Sheds are concerned. Given the tight time constraints to qualify for EU (ERDF) funding, any business determined to stay would probably have to be worked around.

The results of the public consultation survey can be found here:

http://www.pzharbourfutures.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/SurveySummary_02142012.pdf

The Chairman praised the Town Council for the courage in taking the project forward. The broad public support for the various elements in the preferred option vindicated their decision to involve the community from the very start of the Options Review.

Item 7

Town Centre

7.1 TIC The National Trust open day for potential volunteers was a success with local members of the public as well as existing National Trust volunteers. A centre manager and been appointed and volunteers will undergo training in forthcoming weeks. The centre will be opening at Easter.

7.2 Peacocks (From BBC news). Fashion retailer Peacocks has been sold out of administration to Edinburgh Woollen Mill, saving 6,000 jobs, but 3,100 staff will be made redundant. Some 224 stores have ceased trading with immediate effect. The Penzance branch has survived but the Austell branch is to close.

7.3 Portas Report The recent Portas Report review made 38 recommendations. Many are ideas that high street retailers will welcome. They include:

- Put in place a "Town Team": a visionary, strategic and strong operational management team for high streets
- Empower successful Business Improvement Districts to take on more responsibilities and powers and become "Super-BIDs"
- Make it easier for people to become market traders by removing unnecessary regulations so that anyone can trade on the high street unless there is a valid reason why not (Portas is keen on markets).
- Government should consider whether business rates can better support small businesses and independent retailers
- Local authorities should use their new discretionary powers to give business rate concessions to new local businesses
- Local areas should implement free controlled parking schemes that work for their town centres and we should have a new parking league table
- Town Teams should focus on making high streets accessible, attractive and safe
- Make explicit a presumption in favour of town centre development in the wording of the National Planning Policy Framework

Follow the link for recommendations:

<http://www.maryportas.com/news/2011/12/12/my-28-recommendations/>

The Government is also funding her recommendation to pilot some of her ideas through grants of up to £100,000 to 12 towns. The grant is to enable successful towns to deliver innovative projects designed to enhance and support their local high street.

The Chamber is discussing with other organizations and the Town Council whether there is merit in applying. There is a tight time deadline for applying for a grant and it has to have Cornwall Council's approval as the Account Authority.

Note. The Chamber, at the request of the Town Council and other interested parties, submitted a Portas Bid on behalf of Penzance's embryonic Town Team on 26 Mar 2012.

Follow the link below for the Portas Review:

<http://www.maryportas.com/news/2011/12/12/the-portas-review/>

Item 8 Parking

The Chairman has an ongoing action to investigate the rationale behind Cornwall Council's strategy for parking charges which appears to Penalize Penzance and certain other coastal towns.

Action:

DC to investigate CC policy rationale

Item 9 Sainsbury's

One of Sainsbury's consultants Nicola Beech has contacted the Chamber regarding their visit to the town next month. They would like to present at a Chamber meeting and find out what residents and business owners think about their proposal. Committee members felt it appropriate that the Civic Society be invited to attend the presentation.

There are mixed feelings within the town regarding Sainsbury's proposals however it is also recognised that without it the risk would be another town becoming the premier retail centre in the area instead of Penzance.

Action:

DC to invite Civic Society to Sainsbury's presentation

Note. The Sainsburys presentation is delayed awaiting approvals from Central Government of the outline planning permission.

9.1 Chamber Trophies – The Silver Salver has been traced to the Cancer Research shop. Due to their turnover and type of stock they decided to display the Salver for a short period before they believe they returned it. They are not sure who they returned to it but it is possible that it is Les Gillard; MC will contact him to confirm if it was him.

Note. Les Gillard has no knowledge of the Silver Saver and it has not proved possible to find who did collect the Salver from Cancer Research.

9.2 Truro and Penwith College Business Centre Ruth Grant from the business centre gave an overview of their services including the apprenticeship schemes available and training and support they can offer local businesses. The business centres have development advisors whose work includes providing help to access funding, raise productivity, increase morale and increase innovation within a business. They can provide free consultation to businesses and provide a report to suggest opportunities and resolutions to problems.

There is an extensive range of apprenticeship schemes available to anyone, regardless of age who wants a level 4 qualification. People are invited to attend the Cornwall Business Club apprenticeships networking event 29th March 12. The event will be held in Truro College with satellite events with live webcast to Truro from Penzance and Launceston. Further information can be found on www.trurocollege.ac.uk/cornwallbusinessclub

With no further business the meeting was closed at 2124hrs



D Cliffe
Chairman
18 Apr 2012