



PENZANCE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

MINUTES OF PENZANCE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE COMMITTEE MEETING

Tuesday 3rd April 2012

Present: John Garrison (JG), Margaret Cass (MC), Barbara Hanik (BH), Dick Cliffe (DC), Chris Edwards (CE), Hazel Trembath (HT), Arnaud Reutsch (AR), Tony Mill (TM), Lucy Kean (LK) (Secretary)

Apologies: Sally Bodinar,

Item 1 Apologies

Apologies were recorded as above.

Item 2 Previous Minutes

Due to the level of work resulting from the Portas Pilot bid the minutes had not been circulated. The Chairman apologised, they will be circulated prior to the next meeting.

Item 3 Matters Arising

3.1 TIC - The TIC has re-opened and is now opened 5 days a week. It expected to extend its opening hours later in the season. The Committee welcomed the development and acknowledged the work done by the Tourism Association supporting the National Trust in its efforts. It is expected that further volunteers will be needed in the coming months so interested individuals should make themselves known to the Centre Manager (Beth Rose Email: beth.rose@nationaltrust.org.uk T. 01736 335531).

3.2 Rate Values- The Chairman had drafted a letter to the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) seeking an explanation of the rating process which resulted in big differences between the rates paid by businesses in Penzance own Centre and those on the Town's periphery. The example being used was Tesco business rated at £210 per m² versus the Coop (Market Jew Street) rated at £500 per m² (for its Zone A trading space).

The Chairman hoped to build up sufficient evidence to justify a campaign by the Cornwall Chamber and/or a Parliamentary question.

Action: DC to request clarification around the differences in rating values for businesses.

The remaining matters arising were dealt with through the main agenda items.

Item 4 Applications for Membership

There have been no applications for membership although applications have been sent out following enquiries. The committee was also joined by Tony Mills who introduced himself. TG recently moved to the area full time. He has previous experience with Town Centre issues from his previous role a Cambridge city councillor and member of the planning committee. He was also involved with inn in Cambridge as well as town centre promotion. Following a career as a research scientist Tony now works in art photography (as a business as well as an interest). He is keen to contribute to the Chamber's efforts to develop strategies to deal with pressing issues like Penzance Town Centre.

Item 5 Correspondence

A letter to request sponsorship for the Penzance and Newlyn RFC U 12's. Unfortunately due to the current situation the Chamber are unable to offer financial support however the Chairman will place an article in the Chamber newsletter and write to the club.

Action: DC to provide a response to the club.

Item 6 Communication Links

6.1 Harbour - A public exhibition of the preferred option for Penzance Harbour improvements took place in St John's Hall on 29 March. Overall those who attended appeared content with the option and saw it as realistic proposals with benefits for the Town, the IOS Link and Harbour users. A frequently expressed concern was whether the project would actually go ahead given past troubles with the project. Of the businesses having to relocate only one needed premises in the Harbour area (Penwith

Marine Engineering Services). The preferred option now includes marine engineering workshops (in the new freight building to replace the Rank Building) so there was an option for the relocation of Penwith Marine Engineering Services.

(Note: The issue of relocation and compensation packages for harbour businesses is a matter for Cornwall Council (as harbour authority and landlord) and the individual businesses affected. The Town Council and Chamber have no special insight into what agreements might be struck between the parties involved).

The Town Council is expected to announce how the Harbour proposals are to be taken forward in the next few weeks. It is understood that a structural survey of the North Pier is required before the detailed design stage can start.

View exhibition displays here: <http://www.pzharbourfutures.org/?p=226>

View 3D representations here: <http://www.pzharbourfutures.org/?p=239>

6.2 Helicopter – No further information has been received about BIH and therefore no change in the plan to move the service to Newquay after October 2012.

Item 7

Town Centre

7.1 Portas Bid – The Town Council encouraged a meeting of Town Centre stakeholders on 9 March (Waves Café, Causewayhead) to discuss the merits of Penzance submitting a bid for a Portas Pilot grant. The meeting included Nicola Stinson, (Cornwall Council- Planning & Regeneration) as Cornwall Council will be acting as Accounting Authority for any grant made to towns in Cornwall. The Portas Pilots are part of a £1 million Government scheme to pilot recommendations made in the Portas Review. Successful bidders will receive grants up to £100,000. The Chamber was asked to lead the Penzance Portas Bid and has done so.

There was early agreement amongst key stakeholders that what was important was establishing a consensus amongst stakeholders about what was best for the Town and not just crafting a bid to appeal to the Portas Pilot bid assessors.

Since this inaugural meeting on the 11th March two further meetings had taken place to explore ideas. There had also been a helpful critique of the draft bid by Guy Thomas, Cornwall Councils Town Centre Management Specialist.

Truro and Penwith College have provided valuable support for the bid which student Tom Collyns created the short YouTube video to accompany the bid (a mandatory element). Creating the video revealed just how much Penwith College had to offer in terms of equipment, facilities and skills.

The final Portas Bid has two main thrusts:

- a. Reinforcing the Town Centre by re-establishing a regular market in the vicinity of the Market House (Lloyds Bank) supported by regular live music events.
- b. Better marketing of what Penzance has to offer with a heavy emphasis on internet based solutions.

The total cost is £159,000 with the Portas Bid accounting for £79,000. It is envisaged that large part of the remainder would be funded from the Sainsbury's Section 106 funds subject to the Sainsbury's project going ahead as planned and the Town Council voting the necessary funds.

The Penzance Portas Bid can be found at:

www.penzancechamber.org.uk/PPBid_26March2012.pdf

Many hundreds of Towns have applied for Portas Pilot Bids so the chances of success are modest. We have since heard that the Government is funding a second tranche of pilots with a further £1 million of funding allocated in June.

7.2 Town Team

The Portas Review makes a strong recommendation that Towns should:

Put in place a "Town Team": a visionary, strategic and strong operational management team for high streets

Business stakeholders felt that it was important that the Town Team should be tightly focussed. The result has been a Town Team with 9 members all of whom are significant economic stakeholders or have statutory or civic responsibilities for the Town Centre. Other

organizations with an important interest or role in the Town Centre are Town Team Partners. There are potentially many Town Team Partners.

Members	Partners
Penzance Chamber of Commerce	West Cornwall National Trust
Penzance and District Tourism Association	The Cornishman
The Wharfside Shopping Centre	
Future Penzance	
Penzance Civic Society	
Truro and Penwith College	
Penzance Town Council	
Causewayhead Traders Association	
The Farmers Market	

Penzance Town Team does not have any legal powers. It does have the potential to be an influential consultee on Town Centre issues, lobby group for improvements in the Town Centre environment and coordinating body for Town Centre activities. If the Town Team can achieve a consensus about how the Town Centre should adapt to the structural changes in retailing underway then it will make it much easier for Cornwall Council and the Town Council to effect improvements.

7.3 Signs – Cornwall Council (Highways) sent letters to Town Centre businesses in Penzance advising that there was a “*marked increase in the number of advertising signs and other obstructions on the streets of Penzance*” and that they “*can cause problems for pedestrians – especially those with impaired visibility or mobility problems*”. Mike Peters, Highways Manager went on to say “*the numbers now involved have reached the stage where I consider them a hindrance to the free passage of pedestrians along the public highway..... Cornwall Council, as Highways Authority, has a duty to ensure the highway remains available for safe public use and has the power remove objects from the highway*”

that are causing an obstruction. Whilst hoping you “will remove your material from the highway voluntarily” should either signs or goods remain in place on the highway , I will instruct my staff to remove them without further reference to you as premises owner and/or manager. Costs of removal and storage of items can be reclaimed.

Link to letter: http://www.penzancechamber.org.uk/CC_Highways_27_Mar_12.jpg

The letter did not differentiate between busy thoroughfares and largely pedestrianized areas like Causewayhead where street displays add to character of the street and are popular with shoppers. Inevitably the letter had caused a storm of protest.

The Chairman has written to Mike Peters (Highways Manager) seeking a more measured approach whilst acknowledging there was an issue that needed addressing. The letter invited CC Highways to talk to the Town Team so that a more measured approach could be developed that did not undermine the vitality of the Town Centre.

Note. Mike Peters, DC and Paul Shaw (Causewayhead Traders) have since conducted a walk through of Causewayhead and Market Jew Street which was followed by a meeting in the Wharfside Centre Conference Room. It was agreed that DC and Sally Newby would work with Mike Peters to agree guidelines for businesses which reduced the likelihood of enforcement action by the Highways Dept.

The Penzance Portas Bid includes improved signage (what is termed zone signage) as this had already been identified as an issue by the Town Team.

Item 8 Parking

JG reported a recent increase in parking charges in the Harbour Car Park has not been communicated on the published tariff boards in the car park. He was one of several people trying to pay the advertised cost and finding the ticket machine unresponsive (it was expecting a further 25p to achieve the minimum charge).

The out of date signage comes on top of a poorly communicated consultation of proposed changes to parking charges.

Coincidentally, partly due to the Portas Review, Government has now

acknowledged the adverse impact of high parking charges upon town centre vitality.

Action: The Chairman will contact the Council to get the matter corrected and find out why new rates and new signs had not be introduced together.

Item 9 Sainsbury's

It had been hoped that the consultants working for Sainsbury's would be at this month's meeting to present details of the final design for the new store however no contact has been made with the Chamber.

Action: The Chairman will contact them and invite to address the next members meeting.

Note. Investigations have revealed that Cornwall Council are still awaiting a letter from the Government Planning Unit within the Department of Communities & Local Government confirming the current outline planning permission. It was not possible for Sainsbury's to proceed to the next stage until approval was received. The delay stems from legal issues raised during the St Erth debacle which had targetted both the St Erth and the Penzance Heliport applications. Punctilious handling of the issues raised has resulted in delay.

Item 10 Any Other Business

10.1 Golowan - The PDTA will be becoming a Silver Sponsor for Golowan and there are several individuals becoming sponsors also. DC encouraged individuals and businesses to become Friends of Golowan. Maze Day will held 23rd June this year.

Note: The deadline for Golowan printed material is imminent so if you want to get the most out of being a business sponsor of Golowan then you need to act immediately. You make a payment on line (see link below) or drop off a cheque (made out to Friends of Golowan) at the Golowan office. Either way tell Steve Ryman by emailing at golowan@hotmail.co.uk

<http://www.golowan.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/FOG-Bank-mandate-Corporate-.doc>

Contact tel: Tel: 01736 369686.

F.O.G. Golowan Festival Office, The Barbican, Battery Road, Penzance, TR18 4EF.

10.2 Website & Online Applications – The Chamber has started using an

online collaboration tool called Basecamp to aid Town Team cooperation over the Portas Bid and other matters. The facility will be provided to Committee Members and eventually members. DC has already registered a domain that could be used by the Town Team in the future. DC has also registered www.penzancechamber.org.uk which is currently being used to upload documents referred to in these minutes and in the newsletter but which eventually be part of a Chamber website upgrade.

10.3 BID Scheme – As a spin off from discussions about the Portas Bid, Guy Thomas (Cornwall Council) briefed DC and Peter Wood (Wharfside Shopping Centre) on the other projects run by Cornwall Council affecting town centres in Cornwall. Penzance was seen as the logical candidate for BID scheme. Truro's businesses have decided to renew their scheme for another 5 years (90% voted in favour). Camborne is currently in the process of establishing its first BID scheme. The scheme sees a slight increase in business rates (1% typically) but provides a dependable revenue for Town improvements. The scheme typically takes 2 years to set up but Penzance was in the fortunate position of expecting to benefit from Sainsbury's Section 106 money in the near term so the BID scheme could be part of a longer plan to fund Penzance Town Centre improvements.

10.4 Discovery Map – Newquay, Hayle and St Austell have benefited from the creation of Discovery Maps, a project run by Cornwall Council's Sustainability Team promoting sustainable (car free) enjoyment of the Town by residents and visitors.

http://www.newquaymap.co.uk/map_town.htm

Ruth Grant, Penwith College, had been involved with first such map and the Portas Bid included a bid for funding for a Penzance map. The creation of the map would be a community exercise and the resulting product would help local people and visitors discovered Penzance's many hidden treasures.

Note. Veryan Jones, Cornwall Council (Sustainability Team) has since been in contact with the DC about a visit to discuss a Penzance map and other sources of funding given the uncertainty over the outcome of the Portas Bid.

10.5 Bins – It was noted that following the change from Biffa to Cory for the collection of refuse and recycling across the county there have been issues with communal recycling bins. Those at St Erbyns and Wherry Town car parks have been removed and due to the delay in replacing them people have dumped recycling at the locations due to the poor communication regarding the changes. To date the recycling bags for households have not been delivered and there is great concern that wheelie bins are no longer required. It was agreed that the situation would be monitored and issues raised appropriate authority in the future if not resolved.

With no further business the meeting was closed at 2100hrs

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D Cliffe', written in a cursive style.

D Cliffe
Chairman
18 April 2012