



PENZANCE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

MINUTES OF PENZANCE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE COMMITTEE MEETING

Tuesday 1st May 2012

Present: Dick Cliffe (DC)(Chairman), John Garrison (JG), Margaret Cass (MC), , Chris Edwards (CE), Hazel Trembath (HT), Arnaud Reutsch (AR), Tony Mill (TM), Stephen Richford (SR), Ruth Jenkin (RJ), Anne Williams (AW), Lucy Kean (LK) (Secretary)

Apologies: Sally Bodinar, Barbara Hanik, Janet Mogford, Philip Payne, Heidi Webb

Item 1 Apologies

Apologies were recorded as above.

Item 2 Previous Minutes

The previous minutes were agreed however MC didn't think that she had received them but would check and let the Secretary know if another copy was needed.

Item 3 Matters Arising

Rateable Values. The Chairman had written to the Valuation Office Agency in Bristol on 3 Apr 12 and received a reply dated 12 Apr. The VOA reply explained the two different approaches taken for large format stores (Tesco) and high street premises. They did not concede that any unfairness existed (VOA pointed out that although the Co-op Zone A rate was £500/m² the average for the whole store was £107.91/m² whereas the Tesco average figure was £210). The Chairman had forwarded his letter and the VOA reply to the Coop Store Manager and invited comment (letter dated 18 Apr).

The Chairman had also researched rates paid by different types of business in adjacent and similar properties and discovered that betting shops had their own special rates tariff which appeared to result in them paying substantially less than ordinary retailers

Correction; The Chairman has subsequently double checked the VOA database and found he had identified the wrong property and drawn the wrong conclusion. It appeared that betting shops paid broadly comparable rates per square metre compared to businesses in similar premises.

(Chairman's Note. The purpose of the investigation of rateable values was to identify issues that illustrated the problem faced by town centre stores. This would support lobbying and perhaps the raising of a Parliamentary question. What had been discovered was:

- The business rate regime for retail premises appeared consistent when one delved into the detail (consistently high but still consistent).
- There were anomalies (like parking spaces belonging to Town Centre stores being rated at £250/year but no charge being applied to supermarket parking spaces) but the impact of this anomaly on Town Centre stores was generally small (~3%).
- More significant was the substantial rise (~20%) in rateable values in the 2010 revaluation. This revaluation used the inflated commercial rents as at 1 Apr 2008 as a baseline. Commercial rents had peaked in 2008 before the recession had set in. Commercial rents have since slipped back but rates have just risen remorsefully with a further 5.6% increase this year due to indexation (linked to RPI).
- Industry and retail trade bodies had made representations about the damaging impact of business rate rises but the Treasury had dug its heels in to protect tax revenue.

Businesses can check their rates and compare them with other businesses at the link below (search using post codes):

<http://www.2010.voa.gov.uk/rli/en/basic/find>

Item 4 Applications for Membership.

There have been no applications for membership although applications have been sent out following enquiries. Information on current membership has been passed to JG with membership forms. JG will now canvas new members as part of the membership audit.

Item 5 Correspondence.

There had been no correspondence

Item 6 Communication Links.

6.1 Harbour – Time remains critical for the Penzance harbour project. If the project does not progress quickly it will be too late for EU Convergence (ERDF) funding as the current EU scheme is coming to an end. An announcement from the Town Council was expected regarding how the Penzance project was to be taken forward. It was understood that Cornwall Council saw the Minister's strategy of leaving vessel replacement to the private sector as a substantial risk.

There was no appetite on the part of Cornwall Council to accept any further financial risks over Penzance Harbour. It was currently unclear how the proposed new project would be delivered.

6.2 Helicopter – It is still expected that the helicopter service will move from its current location to Newquay in October this year.

Item 7

Town Centre

7.1 Town Team - The Chairman took the opportunity to run through the Town Teams strategy for the Town Centre as presented in its Portas Bid. This led to a discussion and an elaboration of ideas. The outcome of the Portas Bid is expected to be known later in the month.

(Chairman Note. The Penzance Portas Bid was unsuccessful (one of the 359 unsuccessful bids). All unsuccessful bids will automatically be reconsidered in the second round for which the deadline was 30 June 2012. Bidders had the option of revising their bids and the Town Team will be doing so).

7.2. Penzance Discovery Map. Other towns in Cornwall had benefited from the creation of 'Discovery Maps' which encourage enjoyment of the local town and its environs but in an environmentally sustainable manner. The Town Team had included funding for a Penzance Discovery Map in its Portas Bid. Cornwall Council (Sustainability Team) had subsequently come forward and proposed a Town Team briefing on a possible Penzance Discovery Map project to be pursued irrespective on the outcome of the Portas Bid. The Tourism Association, Chamber and Civic Society were prepared to take a major role in the project. The Town Team were meeting on 2 May to be briefed on the project.

(Chairman's Note: Following a successful meeting with Veryan Jones (Cornwall Council) & SR Studios (graphic designers) on 2 May and a further Town Team meetings on the 29th May, the Town Team has approached the Town Council for support. All previous Discovery Map projects have been strongly supported by their respective Town Councils and the project needs a VAT registered fund holder in order to recover VAT (up to £6000) on the work to create the map and print it. The Chairman, as Town Team Coordinator, has asked to speak at the Town Council meeting on 11 June in the public speaking spot).

7.3 Country Market. HT highlighted that within the Town there are two markets, the WI Country Market and the Farmers Market. The WI market has been running since the 1st World War in various locations in the Town. The Farmers Market was a member of the Town Team but the Country Market was not. As markets were a key part of the Town Team strategy this appeared to be an oversight. DC agreed and stated he would consult the other Town Team members and extend an invitation to the Country Market to join the Town Team as member.

Action: DC to invite Country Market to join the Town Team after consulting the other members.

7.4 Pavement Signs – There was an outstanding action on the Chairman to draft guidance for Town Centre businesses on how to minimize the risk of Cornwall Council Highways taking enforcement action and removing obstructions on the pavement.

Action: DC to provide general guidance regarding signs (through Town Team).

Item 8 Parking

Outstanding action on the Chairman to write to Cornwall Council about the way parking rate rises were implemented (ticket machines changed before the signage) and also the lack of identification of “marked bays” for short (30 min) stays given the instruction to use “marked bays only”.

The high parking charges were discussed and questions were raised regarding whether parking income had dropped due to people avoiding car parks. Members felt that ‘payment on exit’ barriers would be less damaging for the Town and provide the Council with more data about car park usage which might lead to better decisions.

Action: DC would seek information on charge park revenue (see below).

Penzance Car Park	Total 2011/12 £	Change fm 2010/11 £	%
Causewayhead	73,296.40	-1,217.97	-1.63%
Clarence St	141,350.66	4,411.01	+3.22%
Greenmarket	79,615.63	1,786.36	+2.3%
Harbour	635,195.47	-1,2096.94	-1.87%
Penalverne	102,757.12	-5,901.88	-5.43%
St Antony's Gd	35,101.52	7,565.71	27.57%
St Erbyns	56,501.94	-8,337.1	-12.86%
Wherrytown	10,670.40	668.54	6.68%
Total	1,134,489.14	-13,122.27	

(Chairman's Comment. The overall impact of a substantial increase in parking charges in Penzance has been a drop in revenue of 1.16% (£13,122.27). The percentage drop in cars actually parking would have been substantially larger given the substantial increase in parking charges between 2010/11 and 2011/12).

Item 9 Sainsbury's

Outline planning consent was finally granted on 1 May 2012 following Central Govt removing any objections. Sainsbury's detailed plans for the site are due to be submitted in June (referred to as the 'reserved matters' application). The Company is aware of the need for the building and environs to be aesthetically pleasing given its prominent location on the main approach to the Town.

The announcement removed uncertainty for BIH who are financially dependent on the sale going through.

Item 10 Any Other Business

TIC - The TIC re-opened and is now open 5 days a week. It is intended that it will be open 7 days a week and that daily opening hours will be extended past 17.00 hrs. HT reported the Centre to be bright and cheery with approximately 80-100 people visiting daily. They are displaying local artist's work and selling items made locally. The College has also decorated the community section in recent weeks. Amongst the information provided are times, lists of local accommodation and in the future they will provide a booking service.

There has been a delay preparing business advertising packages but an announcement was expected soon. Encouraging business to advertise through the centre was important for the Centre's long term financial sustainability.

(Chairman's Comment. The TIC (Welcome to West Cornwall Centre) published details of its business packages on 6 June. Email Beth Rose at Beth.Rose@nationaltrust.org.uk for details.)

With no further business the meeting was closed at 2045hrs



DICK CLIFFE

Chairman
9 June 2012