

# PENZANCE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



## NEWSLETTER



Issue 52

6 Aug 2011

### Chairman's Comments

#### Future of Retail Sector in Penzance

Following the last Chamber meeting a sub-committee has been formed to look at the future of the retail sector of the Town Centre.

The reason for doing so is the possibility of the Wharfside Car Park being sold off by Cornwall Council to property developers Olympian Homes and the resultant possibility of the construction of a supermarket there which could seriously jeopardise the selling of the Heliport to Sainsburys, thereby potentially affecting the helicopter link to the Isles of Scilly.

Another reason for forming a sub-committee is the simple fact that the way in which the public shop and use town centres in general has changed significantly over recent years, a fact which does not appear to have been taken on board by Cornwall Council.

The last survey on the retail sector of Penzance was undertaken by GVA Grimley on behalf of Penwith District Council in 2007, the survey was hardly comprehensive having focussed on a telephone survey of a few hundred local residents. It is considered by the sub-committee that Cornwall Council, nor anyone else for that matter, can attempt to plan for the future of Penzance Town Centre unless a comprehensive survey of local businesses and the public has been undertaken first.

The Chairman has drafted questionnaires for retailers and customers, both of which the sub-committee hope can be completed through face to face interviews. Obviously to undertake such a task will be costly in terms of time, manpower and money and to that end the Chairman has approached the Economic Development department of Cornwall Council and other potential funding sources for assistance.

The questionnaires will be circulated in a separate email shortly and members are encouraged to forward any comments to [chairman@penzancechamber.co.uk](mailto:chairman@penzancechamber.co.uk).

### News

#### Unfair Parking Charges Challenged by Local Councillors

Parking in Penzance in a Council car park costs typically £1.20 for the first hour where as in some other car parks in Cornwall the Council charges just 40p or 50p. It is a rip off that local people do not need and an unwelcome disincentive to shop in Penzance. The Chamber has pursued the matter with Cornwall Council in the recent past but to no effect.

Cllr's Mario Fonk, Ruth Lewarne and Tamsin Williams have launched a petition calling for the first hour to be charged at 50p and parking to be free after 4 pm. There are notices displayed in shops in the Wharfside Shopping Centre and Causewayhead inviting the public to sign the petition. Mario Fonk is quoted (Cornishman 4 Aug) as saying "*the Council's current charges are killing off trade*". The

Councillors' effort come ahead of a meeting of Cornwall Council's car parking panel (chaired by Cllr Andrew Wallace) on 9 Aug 2011.

Cllr Wallace has pointed out that the problem is the £1.7 million car parking revenue target set by Cornwall Council. Cllr Roger Harding is concerned that the petition will detract from the wider campaign to reduce the financial target. He is quoted in the Cornishman (4 Aug) as saying *"We are being asked to generate 9% of the revenue with just 3% of the population"*.

Please feel free to sign the petition and record your dissatisfaction with Cornwall Council's current inequitable policy.

## **Town Council adopts MP's Proposals for IOS Ferry Link**

At the Town Council meeting on the 18 July the Town Council agreed unanimously to accept the MP's proposal that the Town Council act as an interim Client for the Penzance Harbour project. The Council voted £10,000 (£5000 from this year's budget and £5000 from next year's budget) as a local contribution to the costs of preparing a project proposal. Andrew George MP had indicated at his 15 July meeting that he was hopeful that the Dept for Transport would allocate £50,000+ towards the cost of consultancy work but that a local contribution was expected.

The MP's plan envisaged a project proposal being forwarded to the DfT by the end of 2011 (ambitious timescale). If this was favourably received, and had local support, then it was hoped that Cornwall Council might be prepared to take on the project and deliver it. There appears to be no prospect of Cornwall Council championing the project whilst it remains contentious and a political football.

Acting as Client for a multi-million pound transport project, even just temporarily, is a very significant stretch for Penzance Town Council and this was reflected in the sombre discussion of this agenda item at the meeting on 18 July. There was recognition that the Town Council had a duty to try and facilitate delivery of a solution but also recognition that success was far from certain. The Town Council agreed to use the newly formed Penzance Seafront Forum to assist with public consultation on the Penzance Harbour solution.

## **IOS Council submits St Mary's Harbour Proposal to DfT**

The IOS Council submitted its revised project proposal to the DfT and the local MP (Andrew George) on 22 July 2011 (see link to proposals below). The project has been provisionally costed at £8.4 million or 46% of the original Route Partnership proposal (£18.2 million). The following is taken from the proposal (paraphrased in places):

The project partners are the Council of the Isles of Scilly, Duchy of Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly Steamship Company.

The proposal has been crafted to fall within the constraints set by the Minister which are:

- A substantially reduced scheme with a maximum DfT contribution of around £4 -5 million with possibly the same match funding from the EU (ERDF) and a contribution from the Duchy of Cornwall.
- Must be agreed by all parties including the IOSSCo.
- Must be within the current Harbour Revision Order (HRO) and FEPA (environmental) consents.

Following direction from the DfT, partners did not look in detail at the long term future proofing of the facilities but responded only to the critical needs. The partners felt the following, not in any order of importance, were the main priorities:

- Lengthening of the quay to broaden the choice of vessels which can enter and use the quay. This reduced the significant risk of the IOSSCo being unable to find a suitable second hand passenger ferry (previous vessels were purpose built for the IOS route).

- Improved freight handling facilities at the back of the Harbourside.
- Extend and improve passenger check in, ticketing, baggage collection facilities and passenger waiting.

There was consensus amongst partners that these were the priorities and that further attempts to deliver savings would so devalue the project that it would be difficult to convince the ERDF funders that the scheme justified a grant.

Editor's Comment. The IOS Council submission is an example of the type of proposal Penzance Town Council is now committed to develop. The difficulty faced by the Town Council is that there is not an agreed solution for Penzance Harbour that can be reduced in scope to fit the greatly reduced budget. Because the Minister has stated that the go ahead for the St Mary's will not be given until there is an agreed solution for Penzance, the fate of the St Mary's Harbour is tied to timely success in finding a solution for Penzance. It is for this reason that the "Risk & Mitigation" section of the IOSC proposal identifies the most serious risk in terms of probability and impact as "*Penzance fail to deliver a scheme in the appropriate timeframe for Convergence ERDF and St Mary's Quay loses funding*".

The IOSC project proposal includes at Pier extension (shorter than the original RP proposal) whereas it is expected that the Penzance solution will not. The proposal explains that St Mary's Harbour is much more compromised for berthing the Scillonian III with only 1.5 metres of water (chart datum) under the forward part of the vessel resulting in the stern of the vessel jutting out into the sea beyond the end of quay unlike at Penzance where the whole length of the vessel is protected by South Pier when berthed.

The IOSC proposal is an attachment to the news item dated 4 Aug found at the link below:

<http://www.truefriend.org.uk/our-news>

## **Penzance Town Council & Quality Town Council Scheme**

Newsletter Edition 47 (27 May 2011) contained a piece on the furore over Cllr Peters election as Deputy Mayor and the reasons why Penzance Town Council is not accredited under the Quality Town Council Scheme run by the National Association of Local Councils. The newsletter contained some errors of fact which we regret and correct below following a letter from the Town Council.

The accreditation scheme requires that two thirds of councillors have stood for election. The rules state Councillors who stood for election uncontested (for whom nobody was required to vote) qualify as elected. Only one of the 20 Town Councillors was co-opted. So, whilst a lot of Town Councillors were elected uncontested, they are legally elected and the Town Council meets the accreditation criteria for 'electoral mandate'.

On the issue of not publicizing expenditure above £500 the Town Council has pointed out:

- a) The Town Council is required by law to make accounts available to the public and confirms that they are available (through the Town Clerk) to any member of the public who wishes to see them.
- b) Parish and Town Councils are, through their Local Associations, discussing the issue of publishing expenditure over £500 but are not yet required by current regulations to do so as stated in the newsletter. (See Editor's Note).

On the matter of the vote on the Harbour Development Scheme the minutes of the Special Town Council Meeting on 1 March 2010 (where the decision was taken to oppose the £62 million Route Partnership Scheme) record 9 for (opposing the scheme), 3 against and one abstention. (Note: the Council has 20 councillors).

Parish, Town and Cornwall Council elections are required to be held in 2013 not 2014 as stated in the newsletter.

Editor's Notes: The requirement for Local Authorities to publish details of expenditure over £500 came from Eric Pickles, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, in a letter he wrote 4 June 2010. The intention was that this measure should improve Local Government transparency and take effect from Jan 2011. The requirement has been incorporated into a draft statutory code of

recommended practice. Whilst the requirement to publish details of expenditure over £500 might not be strictly enforceable until the draft statutory code becomes final, it is undoubtedly Government policy and considered best practice.

See <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/localgovernment/pdf/1829193.pdf>.

A Guide to becoming a Quality Council. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition 2008 can be found here:  
[http://www.nalc.gov.uk/Publications/Booklets\\_and\\_Resources.aspx](http://www.nalc.gov.uk/Publications/Booklets_and_Resources.aspx) (one from bottom).

## **Coodes Solicitors - Employment update Breakfast Meeting**

Coodes Solicitors are offering a free Employment Breakfast Meeting to their Clients and up to 10 Chamber members (on a first come first served basis) this autumn. Please see details below:

**EVENT:** Employment update breakfast meeting.

**COST:** FREE for our clients plus up to 10 Chamber of Commerce Members.

**WHEN:** Autumn 2011 (date to be confirmed).

**DETAILS:** Let our experts put you in the picture with practical guidance on key legislative changes (both recent and on the horizon). We don't just tell you the facts but we tell you what they mean for your business.

**WHY:** Understand the latest legal changes and relate them to the tripwires and pitfalls you face in your workplace. By attending this seminar, you will have at your fingertips the key changes in employment law and cases that you need to know.

**WHO:** YOU, if you're the one dealing with people issues in your business.

**I'M INTERESTED:** To register your interest email [suzanne.skerry@coodes.co.uk](mailto:suzanne.skerry@coodes.co.uk)

**Suzanne Skerry**  
Marketing Manager  
Practice Management  
Fax: 01726 874799

## **Becalmed ....Yes Sinking.....No** (from HSBC 'Business Matters' update)

Doubts intensify about the prospects for the UK economy and especially retail spending in an informative assessment by Dennis Turner, 15 July 2011 in HSBC's UK monthly commentary.

*"Both the Office of National Statistics (ONS) data and business surveys indicate that activity on the high street has been falling back markedly. Looking at the three-month on three-month figures from the ONS, sales dipped in the latest quarter while the annual growth slowed to a disappointing 0.9%. During the recession, the consumer sector held up better than expected, supported by tax cuts but the fiscal squeeze is now adding to the downward pressure. Confirming the difficult trading environment is the list of well-known high street names that have announced cutbacks or gone into administration in the last month."*

Click the link to read more: <http://www.hsbc.co.uk/1/2/about/economic-comment>

## **From Rural Services Network**

### **Voluntary & Community Sector Services for Older People – Survey**

If you are involved in providing services for older people through the voluntary and community sector then the Commission for Rural Communities would like to hear from you via their online survey.

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=NqtV3XVv05Y2xi5yHS%2b11Q%3d%3d>

**Rural Services Network News.** : <http://www.rsonline.org.uk/Latest-Rural-News.html>

New planning guidelines will support sustainable development in the countryside, says the government. Follow link for more on this subject.

## **From Truro and Penwith College Business Centre**

### **Business Development Advisor**

Richard Jackson is our dedicated Business Development Advisor for the Penwith area, and is available to meet businesses and discuss their training or development needs. Richard can be contacted on 07966 620708 or [richardj@truro-penwith.co.uk](mailto:richardj@truro-penwith.co.uk)

### **Apprenticeship Advice**

Depending on meeting qualifying criteria, anyone can become an apprentice – even in your own business! Apprenticeships can offer a funded/part funded training route tailored to meet the needs of your role or business – why not contact us today to find out more?

Advice & guidance is available at Penwith College every 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday. Please contact the Business Centre for an appointment.

Apprenticeships Home Page: <http://www.trurocollege.ac.uk/page.php?pageID=2492>

### **Events**

Penwith Business Breakfast at Penwith College on 20 October 2011

One Day Seminars: <http://www.trurocollege.ac.uk/page.php?pageID=281>

### **Truro and Penwith College Business Centre**

Palace Building, Quay Street, Truro, TR1 2HE  
tel: 01872 242711  
mob: 07966 620708

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### **Coodes Solicitors**

8 Market Street, St Austell, Cornwall, PL25 4BB  
DX 81250 St Austell  
tel: 01726 874700  
web: [coodes.co.uk](http://coodes.co.uk)

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We can help everyone, from sole traders and people who are self-employed to companies with lots of staff. Whether you are just starting, or are a well-established company, it is good to know that you have an experienced team of advisors working on your behalf.

Our experts are trusted throughout Cornwall and Devon and we have recently streamlined our services. This means that we can provide you with a more efficient service. We understand that when you are running a business, time is money. When you become a Business Privilege Member, you will have a dedicated client relationship manager. This person will be your first port of call and will be able to coordinate all of the different matters that we may deal with for you.

There is not much we have not encountered. We have experts who advise on company formation, funding, acquisitions, disposals and reorganisations. We have others who specialise in ironing out complex issues surrounding employment law contracts, pensions or tricky civil disputes.

If you are unsure whether you need us, we are offering our clients a **FREE legal health check**. To request our free legal health check either visit our website: [www.coodes.co.uk/businesshealthcheck](http://www.coodes.co.uk/businesshealthcheck) and leave your details or send an email to: [christian.wilson@coodes.co.uk](mailto:christian.wilson@coodes.co.uk)

**We offer a FREE initial consultation for Penzance Chamber members OR if you would like to discuss your matter in more detail and discuss the options available to you we offer a fixed price one hour interview for just £125 + vat**

Coodes Solicitors  
49-50 Morrab Road, Penzance TR18 4EX  
Tel: 01736 362294

### **CHAMBER OF COMMERCE CONTACT DETAILS**

Chairman. Mike Waters, Sycamores, Relubbus Lane, St Hilary, Penzance TR20 9EG

Email: [mike@safetyuk.co.uk](mailto:mike@safetyuk.co.uk) or [chairman@penzancechamber.co.uk](mailto:chairman@penzancechamber.co.uk) Phone: 01736 762888

Vice Chairman. Dick Cliffe, Elmsdale, Alexandra Road, Penzance TR18 4LZ

Email: [dick.cliffe@gmail.com](mailto:dick.cliffe@gmail.com) tel. 01736 331734

Secretary: Lucy Keen, email: [secretary@penzancechamber.co.uk](mailto:secretary@penzancechamber.co.uk)