



PENZANCE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

MINUTES OF PENZANCE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE COMMITTEE MEETING

Tuesday 7th February 2012

Present: John Garrison (JG), Margaret Cass (MC), Barbara Hanik (BH), Dick Cliffe (DC), Chris Edwards (CE), Sally Bodinar (SB), Steven Richford (SR), Hazel Trembath (HT), Richard Hilder (RH), Arnaud Reutsch (AR), Cherie Woodhouse (Cornishman), Lucy Kean (LK) (Secretary)

Apologies: Ruth Jenkin, Pheona Lowell, Heidi Webb

Item 1 Apologies

Apologies were recorded as above.

Item 2 Previous Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting would be issued to the remaining Chamber members and would be tabled at the next meeting.

Item 3 Matters Arising

These would be dealt with through the agenda items.

Item 4 Applications for Membership

There have been no applications for membership. Following the AGM and confirmation of the new Secretary the accounts would be reviewed and completed enable the planned membership review. JG has kindly offered to support in undertaking a membership audit would involve a review of the email and website information.

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

No correspondence has been received.

Item 6 Communication Links

6.1 Harbour – The next stage of the Town Council's Options Review Project planned for the 13/02/12 at the Pz Gallery would be led by Hyder Consulting supported by Penzance Seafront Forum. The event has been heavily advertised with some 9,000 leaflets printed and coverage in social media, The Cornishman and over Radio Cornwall. The two options would be on display for people to view and then make their comments on in a survey. The event is not to necessarily choose one out of the two shortlisted options but to ascertain which elements in the options are preferred. The Town Council's Management Board expected the preferred solution to be be an amalgam of the best parts of the two remaining options.

Both shortlisted options proposed extensive dredging to improve the range of vessels that could be considered by the IOSSCo when replacing the Scillonian. The Department for Transport had agreed to fund capital dredging out of its £4 million allocation but dredging was not eligible for ERDF match funding. Proposed dredging, when costed in early January, exceeded the £4M DfT budget for the entire project; as a result the preferred option would specify a greatly reduced spend on dredging.

The outcome of the public consultation would inform the Harbour Scheme Management Board's choice of a preferred option. The Management Board was due to meet on the 16th Feb 12 and its recommendation would be presented to the Town Council for a final decision on 23rd Feb 12. There would be an opportunity for the public to review the preferred option later in March 2012 at a Public Exhibition.

During the Options Review the Penzance Harbour Scheme Management Board had been advised by Andy Brigden, Cornwall Council (responsible for harbours) that there was a 10 year backlog of maintenance dredging in Penzance Harbour which had resulted in approximately 30,000 cubic metres of silt accumulating in the Harbour. A small amount of dredging had taken place along South Pier in 2011 following difficulties berthing the Scillonian earlier in 2011. Future maintenance dredging was an issue which the Chamber needed to keep abreast of.

Action: DC would provide a report of the event the next Chamber meeting.

6.2 British International Helicopters – There has been no further information regarding the recent reports that BIH would relocate to Newquay after Oct 2012 for the foreseeable future. As the Company had previously said that Newquay was not a sustainable long term base for the IOS service (greatly increased distance and therefore fuel cost) this development was potentially ominous.

BIH annual accounts (2010) were non-committal about the future of the link identifying the IOS passenger service as a “material part of the Groups activities”.

Members questioned the possibility of another company being interested in the route. The Chairman explained that past company accounts (2008) attributed BIH's poor financial performance to the long term downward trend in passenger numbers on the IOS service. Meanwhile the IOSSCo, its competitor, had reported winning more than 50% of the air passenger traffic to and from St Mary's. The combination of stiff competition, downward trend in passenger numbers and the need for a new entrant to make a large initial investment made the business proposition unattractive. The IOS scheduled helicopter service was believed to be the only scheduled helicopter service in the UK.

The Chamber would continue to keep a close watch on developments concerning the Isles of Scilly transport infrastructure because it was critically important to the economy of the IOS and important for the economy of Penzance.

Item 7 Parking

The Chairman had an outstanding action to investigate Cornwall Council's policy regarding parking changes and in particular how revenue targets (that drove parking charges) varied across the County resulting in parking being more expensive in Penzance than in certain towns away from the coast. Parking is unresolved but the Chairman remains committed to this problem and would talk to local Cornwall Councillors and other chambers of commerce.

Action: DC would discuss parking with local councillors.

Item 8 Sainsburys

There had been no further developments on the issue of the Section 106 Agreement. The Chamber needed to obtain a copy of the new proposals negotiated with the Town Council.

Sainsburys had agreed to BIH continuing to operate from the Heliport until Oct 2012 after which BIH operations would move to Newquay as mentioned above.

Action: DC to formally request a copy of the Town Council's proposed changes to the S106 in relation to the Sainsbury's planning application.

Item 9 Any Other Business

9.1 Town Centre – Members welcomed guest speaker Cherie Woodhouse a reporter from The Cornishman. Cherie addressed those present about the paper's 'Go To Town' campaign. The campaign was a local response to the Mary Portas report which identified the need for people to support their Town Centres and for Town Centres to re-invent themselves. The campaign aims to;

“...highlight the fantastic mix of shops and businesses on our door-step, promoting them and their role in helping Penzance to flourish.

Core themes of the campaign will include lobbying for cheaper car parking, helping to fill empty shops and shouting about the positive aspects of our town.

The Cornishman will be driving home the campaign message with a series of competitions, features and news stories that the whole community can get involved with....”

The Cornishman hope to have support from volunteers to enable the sprucing up of the town centre and a different local trader highlighted each week. There would be a particular emphasis on Leap Day (Wed. 29 Feb) with free parking in all Cornwall Council and Town Council car parks. Businesses are also being encouraged to have a special event on the day.

Cherie invites all members to contact her with any suggestions or ideas for the campaign on T. 1736 351146.

Following the Portas Review, DC had discussed with the Chair Civic Society the idea of the Chamber and Civic Society working together. An initial exploratory meeting was planned for the 3 Feb. DC highlighted what he felt was the most important observation of the Portas Report which was that the Town Centre should be about more than just retailing; it should be a social and cultural centre as well. If the findings were correct then Penzance was well placed to prosper in the future if it recognized its strengths and made the most of them.

The Town had lots of cultural activities but many people did not know about them. Members discussed the need for a central point for information about forthcoming events in the Town. RH explained the difficulty that can be experienced trying to gather information and ensure that it is current. The TIC would facilitate this to a degree but members asked if this is something that the Cornishman may be able to do.

Other ideas for improvements in the town included enhancing the area at the bottom of Causewayhead to encourage it as a meeting place, improving the upkeep of the water feature at the top of Market Jew Street.

The discriminatory effects of businesses rates which were higher for Town Centre shops than for out-of-town supermarkets needed to be challenged. This was not a matter that could be changed locally but it could be lobbied for through Cornwall

Chamber of Commerce and eventually the British Chambers of Commerce.

SR discussed the promotion of the town centre and all of the positive features within the town to ensure that people expect and look for the excellent attributes that the Town has. The Town contains architectural triumphs and excellent advertising and marketing is essential to capitalise on these elements. The guides for the Town could prove to be an excellent source of information.

Actions:

DC to invite the Civic Society Chair to a Chamber meeting and collaborative working for the future of Penzance including reviewing the BID Scheme.

DC to write to Valuation Office Agency for guidance on how businesses rates are calculated for Town Centre and out-of-town retail premises.

9.3 Tourist Information Centre – HT requested that someone talk to her about becoming a volunteer at the TIC as she would be away for the open day in St John's Hall. The open day 23/2/12 9am – 4pm would enable people to express interest if they wish to volunteer in the centre. There would be training for people who express an interest. AR agreed to talk to HT.

9.4 Chamber Trophies – HT had been unable to establish the location of the St Piran's Day Salver. It had been thought that the previous President had presented the silver salver to Agapanthus however they did not have it and further investigation proved unsuccessful. It proposed that the Chairman write to the owner to confirm this and locate the previous President to gain further insight to its possible location.

Currently The Lugger hold the silver Horse presented for the best dressed pub at Christmas and Andrewartha's hold the trophy for the best dressed shop. The new committee would need to discuss the future competitions and uses of the trophies.

Action: DC to contact previous winners of the Silver Salver.

With no further business the meeting was closed at 2054hrs



D Cliffe
Chairman
19 April 2012