



PENZANCE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Minutes of the Committee Meeting held in The Workbox, Pz360 Business Centre, Penzance on Tuesday 3 Dec 2013

Present: Dick Cliffe (DC) Chairman, John Garrison (JG), Margaret Cass (MC), Barbara Hanik (BH), David Grey (Iriss), Emily Kavanaugh (Pure Nuff Stuff), Chris Edwards (CE), Nigel Pengelly (NP), Town Council Rep.

Item 1. Apologies.

Nina Minear, James Howarth, Hazel Trembath, Lucy Kean. Sally Bodinar, Janet Mogford,

Item 2. Previous Minutes.

The minutes of the Members Meeting held on 3 Oct 2013 were not available.

Item 3. Matters Arising.

Matters arising from the previous meeting are included in the agenda.

Item 4. Applications for Membership.

Pure Nuff Stuff Ltd (Egyptian House, Chapel Street) had applied for membership and membership had been approved ex-committee. Pure Nuff Stuff Ltd has been sent a welcome letter confirming membership of the Chamber.

The Chairman was pleased to welcome Emily Kavanaugh, Director, Pure Nuff Stuff, to the meeting.

The Chairman had also written welcome letter to: Travers Bell Architects, Apply, JBWills, JCK Plus on 19 Nov..

Secretary's Note: Delays in confirming membership applications had arisen because the format of the 3 Oct Members Meeting had been unsuitable for dealing with membership applications and the November meeting had been cancelled (no quorum) after being moved twice a short notice. The Chairman has consulted Committee members about agreeing membership applications

outside of the Committee meetings (via Basecamp) where there were objections from a Committee Member.

Applications approved ex-Committee would be recorded in the minutes of the next Committee meeting.

Item 5. Correspondence

The Chamber wrote to Cornwall Council (Andy England, Planning) on 19 November seeking release of Sainsburys S106 funds to fund free parking and to provide Penzance Town Council with a budget for events in the run-up to Xmas. See below for more details

Item 6 Chamber administration.

There was a need to overhaul aspects of administration, including handling of membership applications, to avoid errors which could embarrass the Chamber. The problem had been aggravated with the Chairman and other Committee Members being distracted by an extremely busy summer. Renewing member Nick Nicholas, JCK Plus (Quality Systems Analyst/Auditor) had expressed an interest in getting involved with the Chamber Committee.

Action. Chairman to approach Mr Nicholas regarding help with improving Chamber processes.

Item 7 Sainsburys

Sainsburys main food store had opened on 13 Nov and was proving popular as expected. The Chamber President, Chairman and Membership Secretary had attended the Sainsbury's dignitaries event on the evening of 12 Nov.

It would not be possible to established the longer term impact of the store for 6 months or more.

The Section 106 funds (£1.6 million) intended to help mitigate the impact of the store on Penzance Town Centre had recently been transferred to Cornwall Council after a delay of about 2 weeks (funds were due to be paid before the store opened).

The Chamber, with support of the Town Council and local Cornwall Councillors, had written to Cornwall Council asking for a S106 budget allocation for Xmas 2013 as Xmas was a trading period vital for the survival of many retailers. Approximately £21,000 of the £152,000 fund for free and subsidized parking had

been committed to free parking all day Saturday and on Thursdays after 4 pm (late night shopping). The Chamber had also requested an allocation to the Town Council for events in the run up to Christmas; it was unclear what had become of this proposal.

The issue of the £1.2 million allocated to building a Park & Ride on what was the old Heliport Car Park was still under discussion. The plan had weaknesses because it did not include funding for a dedicated bus service to support it and although many existing routes ran along Jelbert way there were periods of 30 minutes or more when no bus passed the site. There was also currently insufficient demand although that might change in the future if Penzance was successful in marking itself as a destination. In the long term it was likely that Penzance would need a Park & Ride but in the short to medium term the money could be better spent on Town Centre projects. The current Town Centre contribution was £249,500 (£20,000 already assigned to Penzance BID).

The Chamber Chairman had met with the Mayor and Marcus Wilkinson (Penzance BID Chairman) yesterday and were agreed that the S106 needed to support a sustained programme (3 years duration) that helped the Town Centre compete and also helped it transition away from over-dependence on traditional retail shopping. It had been agreed that the S106 programme needed to be dovetailed with the emerging BID programme. For this to happen the programme needed to be driven from Penzance and not elsewhere. The programme needed to engage businesses. Whilst the Chamber and BID Chairman wanted the S106 programme driven from Penzance, the contractual terms of the S106 agreement made Cornwall Council responsible for accounting for the funds. Tight Cornwall Council controls on spending were unavoidable.

The Chairman would be writing immediately to Cornwall Council on the issue as a meeting was taking place the next day between Cornwall Council and Sainsburys.

Secretary's Note. The Chamber and Town Council are not fully informed on all aspects of the S106 negotiations. There was uncertainty over deadlines. Council also had an issue regarding IOS parking because approximately 500 spaces were due to disappear with redevelopment of Coinagehall St and the old Jewson's site in Wherry Town. The Section 106 agreement can be viewed here: <http://tinyurl.com/kdeqtdt>

Item 8. Neighbourhood Plan / Chamber Involvement

Penzance Town Council agreed at its 4 Nov meeting to support creation of a Neighbourhood Plan. The plans give parish and town councils an opportunity to take a proactive role in planning in their local area. Whilst Neighbourhood Plans cannot be used to obstruct national plans (i.e. house building targets) they can direct how such plans are implemented. In the absence of a Neighbourhood

Plan the responsibility for local planning decisions rests with the local authority - in our case Cornwall Council.

Neighbourhood Plans are community plans and they require majority support from a ballot of the community. There is a grant to £7,000 towards the costs of developing plans. Cornwall Council would pick up the cost of the ballot.

The Chamber expected to play a significant role in the section of the plan dealing with the economy.

Anybody interest in getting involved in the Neighbourhood Plan should contact the Chairman.

Item 9. Christmas Events .

Free Parking & Pz Presents Website. With help from local Cornwall Councillors and the Town Council the Chamber had arranged with Cornwall Council officers to provide free parking in Penzance in the run up to Xmas. Free parking was being provided for the four Saturdays from 30 Nov. and from 4 pm on Thursdays from 5 Dec. The cost of the free parking was covered by a ~£21,000 allocation from the £152,000 Parking contribution in the Sainsbury's S106 agreement. The large allocation from the S106 was considered justified given the importance of the Xmas shopping season to retailers (some take 40% of annual turnover in this period).

A A5 size flyer advertising free parking and events in the Town had been produced and was being distributed by businesses in Town and by the supermarkets. Tesco had been particularly quick to respond but Sainsburys, Morrisons and the Co-op had also all supported the initiative. The Chamber was grateful to Martin Nixon (Nixon Design) for putting together the striking Pz Presents flyer and getting it printed in a very short timescale. Associated with the flyer was a website www.pzpresents.info which published details of events in Penzance in the run-up to Christmas. The website was smart phone compatible. It was intended that this website should become a permanent feature to help promote events in Penzance.

Xmas Lights Switch-On Event 30 Nov 2013. The Penzance Xmas Lights Switch-On event on Sat 30 Nov had been a well attended and popular event. Stall holders and retailers had been pleased with trading on the 30 Nov but Chapel St was an exception. The barrier across the entrance to Queens Square had discouraged people from venturing down Chapel St and as a result trading had been poor. A similar problem had occurred last year and been reported to the Town Council. The Chairman understood that the road closure plan proposed by Penzance Town Council had not been accepted by Cornwall

Council who had insisted on closing the the whole of Market Jew St to traffic. Whether this had caused the problem in Chapel St was uncertain.

Action: Emily Kavanaugh agreed to write to Penzance Town Council to explain the problem experienced on 30 Nov and ask for it to be included in the wash-up report.

Teresa Fogarty, Penzance Town Council and the members of the event organizing committee were to be congratulated for putting on the event. The new Christmas lights in the main streets were also considered to be a substantial improvement.

Item 10. No item 10 on the agenda.

Item 11. BBC Mini-Documentary / Grimsey's Grotto

The BBC is preparing a short documentary for Spotlight's 'Inside Out' programme. The topic is the crisis in Town Centres. The feature is expected to be broadcast in January or early February 2014. Three towns feature in the documentary, Totnes (a 'Transition' town) , Liskeard (Portas Bid winner) and Penzance. Penzance business reps were put through a Dragon's Den style grilling by Bill Grimsey (of Grimsey Report fame). The Penzance business community were represented by Marcus Wilkinson (the BID Steering Group Chairman), Dick Cliffe (Chamber Chairman), Emily Kavanaugh (Pure Nuff Stuff) and Keith Bell (Travers Bell Architects). The team established a good report with Bill Grimsey but the producer's emphasis was on the negative aspects of the Town Centre and the dreary condition of the Ritz suited his proposes. No filming was conducted in Chapel St.

Item 12. Penzance Business Improvement District.

There have been three monthly meetings since development of the BID started in Sep 2013. Marcus Wilkinson (Alfred Smiths) is the Chairman of the Steering Group. Josyanne Thatcher and Mario Cortes from Cornwall Council provide advice and a secretariat function which business representatives greatly appreciate. The next milestone is the public launch event which is likely to take place on the 12 Feb, possibly at Penwith College. This will be followed by detailed consultations with businesses to determine priorities for the 5 year BID programme. The ballot of businesses was not expected until the end of 2014.

Item 13 IOS Transport Update / Penzance Harbour Proposals

There was concern that both the airport improvement projects (Lands End and St Mary's) and the Harbour Projects (Penzance & St Mary's) might run out of time to benefit from ERDF funding as it had been understood that the deadline for signing new contracts reliant upon the current ERDF tranche was 31 Dec 2013. The Chairman had been advised that the Dept of Communities and Local Government (that body administering ERDF funds in the UK) were allowing a later deadline because the projects could easily be delivered before the final deadline for ERDF payments which was 31 Dec 2015.

The reason for the delay on the airport works was believed to be contractual. Resolution of the issue involved re-tendering the project.

The reason for the delay on the Harbour projects was the need for confirmation from the EC that the proposed works did not contravene state aid rules. There was not thought to be an issue but confirmation was required before contracts were signed or the projects would be ineligible for ERDF funding. Obtaining the necessary confirmation took about 4 months (one might ask why the request had not be submitted earlier).

An unfortunate consequence of the delay to the Harbour projects was that dredging of Penzance Harbour would not take place this winter as envisaged. The work could not be carried out in the summer because of vessel movements so the work would be delayed to the winter 2014/15.

The proposed Penzance Harbour highways improvements were currently out for consultation.

Secretary's Note. Cormac are undertaking the consultation on highways works and the closing date for comments is 12 Dec 2013. The reference is EDG0175. Link: <http://tinyurl.com/ngmd4eo>

Item 14 Update on Coinagehall St & Other Developments.

Coinagehall St

The Coinagehall Street project had looked to be at risk of failure and re-competition (for a 3rd time) given no agreement between the developer and key property owners and some 'wobbliness' on the part of Cornwall Council about what kind of development it wanted to see on the site. Following meetings between the various parties there was now more optimism that an acceptable design could be achieved that was financially viable for the developer to deliver. The Chamber position on the development remains that it supports the proposed mix of uses, including the inclusion of a hotel, but that architectural acceptability

to the public was a critical factor given the prominence of the site.

Old Gas Works Site.

It was understood that the Churchill Retirement Living development on the old Gas Works Site was due to start Spring 2014.

Old Jewson's Site.

The Jewson's site was owned by Royal Bank of Scotland and it was understood moves were afoot to redevelop the site. There were rumours circulating about what might be developed on the site but the Chairman was not able to substantiate any of them.

St Johns Hall

A major (£5.5 million) refurbishment of St Johns Hall was planned to start in ~April 2014 and take approximately one year to complete. On completion the Library and the One Stop Shop staff from St Clare would move into new accommodation in the building. The Town Council had not yet decided whether to take up the offer of new accommodation in the building. The relocation of office workers would increase Town Centre footfall during the working day and was welcomed.

Item 15. Date of next Committee meeting.

The next Committee Meeting would take place in The Workbox at 5.45 on Tue. 7 Jan 2014.

Item 16. Any Other Business

Approval of Grant to Pop Up Penzance. The Chairman, after consulting the President, had made a grant of £60 towards the Pop Up Penzance Crowdfunder appeal for Grandfather Frost's Christmas Depot. The Chairman asked the Committee to approve the grant so he could be reimbursed by the Treasurer. The Committee approved the grant.

Chapel Street Proposals. Emily Kavanaugh took the opportunity to lay out ideas for improving the trading environment in Chapel St.

- Communication with traders was poor and Chapel St would benefit from having a traders organization through which to disseminate information.

- The idea of lighting (similar to that along the Prom) to mark out the primary retail area would help define the retail area for visitors, would be attractive and not excessively expensive to install and operate. The ideas was put forward for further consideration.

- Chapel St would benefit from a large overhead sign at the top of Chapel St identifying "Historic Chapel Street".

Dick Cliffe
Chairman
10 December 2013