

REPORT OF TOWN MAYOR – 10 MAY 2010

A YEAR OF CHANGE

Following the departure of our former Town Clerk after 19 years, the new municipal year started the appointment of our new Town Clerk, Elaine Baker. Formerly with Penwith District Council, Elaine has helped the Town Council meet the new challenges it faces since the local government reorganisation last year.

St Just Town Council continues to play an active role in the delivery of local services and works with the new local Cornwall Councillor and the local Community Network, as a member of the West Penwith Town & Parish Forum to ensure that local needs and service priorities are delivered to the benefit of the local community.

You will now be aware that the Town Council meets in full session twice a month giving the local residents greater access to its town councillors. The Council now actively encourages the local community to attend meetings and a period of 15 minutes has been set aside at the beginning of each meeting to enable local residents to put a question directly to Councillors. We also have a new user friendly website where agendas, reports and minutes are available to the public which also includes news and information about the local area, community events and projects which we hope you will find useful and interesting.

Last year was a challenging year for our footpath contractor who battled against the elements to keep the footpaths clear. There are hundreds of miles of footpaths within the parish and only limited funds for their maintenance. Together with Cornwall Council we try ensure that those footpaths that are regularly used are kept open for the enjoyment of all. As in previous years we are grateful to those of you who tirelessly monitor them and report any problems to us.

Planning issues continue to dominate Council business and last year was no exception. With the new unitary authority came new protocols and procedures which are kept under review as the new system beds in. One of the major changes is that the Town Council now has the ability to “call-in” applications to the local area planning committee. We see this as a positive step in local democracy with greater town and parish involvement in local decisions.

Another example is the work that the Council is undertaking with Cornwall Council on the delivery of affordable homes within St Just. Through enhanced partnership working we have been successful in delivering a list of potential sites within St Just which has been the subject of a public exhibition and consultation process. Throughout this year and coming years we will continue to work with Cornwall Council and the newly established Land’s End Community Land Trust to deliver much needed affordable homes for local people.

Another project that the Town Council has been working on is the provision of allotments within the parish. I am very pleased to report that a site has now been secured at Bosavern Farm on a 10 year lease from Cornwall Council and the project is now taking a step nearer to completion. With the agreement of an 18 month lease of the farm to the Bosavern Farm Group the next 12 months will see considerable change on the farm for the benefit of the community as a whole.

In September we welcomed a new Councillor, Farmer Morris to the Town Council following his election. As a consequence of the new unitary authority the next town and parish councils for the whole of Cornwall will be held in 2013 and therefore I hope that this period of continuity will enable us to deliver on our commitments.

Through the award of Section 137 grants we have helped support a number of local organisations such as the St Just Football Club, Pendeen Gig Club and the Phoenix Project, a local mentoring scheme for young people which is being developed by the local Fire

Service to name but a few. £15,000 has been set aside in this year's budget to support local groups and organisations and the Town Council welcomes applications from you all.

In October last year, together with Cornwall Council a new "Out-an-About" Service was started in St Just and Pendeen on a six month trial basis. Officers from Cornwall Council are available to answer queries from the local community on any aspect of service delivery from housing benefit to dog fouling. Cornish Community Banking is also present and I am pleased to report that the service seems to be working well.

The annual St Just Feast celebrations took place at the beginning on November and we were privileged to have our local MP and the new Vice-Chairman of Cornwall Council in attendance along with local organisations and groups from St Just and Pendeen. Unfortunately the number of planned events to celebrate feast has declined and the Town Council is hoping to work with the local schools to identify new ways to mark the event.

The approach of Christmas saw the annual Shop Window Display Competition which this year was judged by Sally Newby, the Community Network Manager. Although the number of shops participating was down on last year the quality of the shop window decorations was not. With the new lights on the Christmas tree and the other lights around the town there was certainly a strong festive feel.

I am particularly pleased that in March the Town Council finally signed the official twinning agreement with Huelgoat, Brittany. As a member of the Twinning Committee I have taken an active role in fostering the town's links with our Breton friends. We hope to develop cultural, educational and arts & heritage links through the development of an exchange programme and I look forward to working with you all in the coming months to deliver our promise.

I am please to say that this month will see the publication of the much awaited fourth edition of the St Just-in-Penwith Town Guide. Unlike other editions this guide has been produced “in-house” and I would like to thank Mawgan Lewis, who designed the new guide and the Council’s Working Party who over saw its production.

Finally, as you all know I’m standing down as Mayor this year. It has been honour to represent the town over the past few years but I now feel that it’s time for a change – so end where I began! I will now take my seat as an active member of the Council in representing the views of the local community at Council meetings.