

REPORT TO COUNCIL REGARDING CHAPEL STREET CREATIVE CIO

Unfortunately, despite being elected a Council representative alongside Cllr. Marrington to Chapel Street Creative, I have never been invited to a meeting due to a misunderstanding on the part of the CIO.

I have, however, now been given a report on their activities as follows:

“Since your appointment as a representative, the Board of Trustees has met on 4 occasions to discuss mainly the progress of the Grant spend and plans moving forward to obtain further grants for improvements.

With regards to bookings, we have been continuing mainly with existing hirers for the time being while the improvements have been going on so as to continue generating a steady stream of revenue into the building while contractors have been working flexibly around them. The disruptive work carried out to satisfy the COF grant is now complete and we will be actively advertising the spaces for future bookings. That said, thanks to the Lottery grant and once the approval has been cleared from planning to install accessible toilets we will once again be creating a bit of a building site for a short period of time, however if the work involved is not too intrusive we cannot see why this should pose too much of an issue to new users.

We plan to have a trustees meeting around the middle to end of March (2025)”.

Cllr. Joan Beveridge

Penzance/Concarneau Twinning Association

The Association has a very busy programme lined up for the year ahead:

- A group of school students are due to visit Penzance from Sunday 13th April to Friday 18th April, staying at the YHA. A number of activities are being arranged including a town centre quiz tour, a visit to the Morrab Library (which also operates regular book exchanges with the library in Concarneau), a visit to the Fire Station, and excursions to Geevor and St Ives.
- Cllr Sorrell, who is one of the Council's representatives on the Twinning Committee, has arranged to host a visiting artist from Concarneau (Jean-Jacques Barzic), from 30th May to 3rd June. He hopes that this will be the first of many other artistic and cultural exchanges between our two communities.
- Around 18-20 members of the Concarneau Twinning Association will be visiting Penzance from 9th to 13th July, where they will be hosted by members of our own Twinning Association.
- As Town Mayor, I have received an official invitation from Marc Bigot, my counterpart in Concarneau, for four delegates from Penzance to attend the Filets Bleus festival in August 2025. I have provisionally accepted the invitation, with the caveat that it will be for whoever is in the role of Mayor after the May elections to give a definitive response.

Finally, the links between Penzance and Concarneau have been further strengthened by the fact that the new passenger and freight vessels serving the Isles of Scilly are being constructed by Piriou, a company based in Concarneau. I had an informal meeting with a member of the Piriou management team on a recent visit to Penzance, and we are looking at how we can use this relationship to build even closer ties between our towns.

Councillor Stephen Reynolds

Penzance/Cuxhaven Twinning Association

The main event in the calendar for 2025 is a visit from Penzance to Cuxhaven, from 29th August to 7th September. The Association is keen for there to be some Council representation on this visit, as it is a long time since representatives from the two councils have met.

Councillor Stephen Reynolds

Larger Councils Committee of Cornwall Association of Local Councils

Along with the Town Clerk, I attended the most recent Larger Councils Committee meeting, held in Truro on 23rd January. Issues on the agenda included:

- A round table discussion of devolution and asset management issues with senior officers from Cornwall Council. Concerns were raised about the decision to transfer some car parks to Corserv with enforcement outsourced to a private contractor, and more generally about the lack of notice and transparency with which these issues are handled with town councils. The aspiration is that the larger towns will be able to use the arrival of a new administration at County Hall after the May elections to develop a more equal partnership with some basic ground rules along “no surprises” lines. The discussions at the meeting were also useful in helping inform Penzance Council’s own approach to devolution.
- There were also discussions around the live government consultations on (i) the standards regime for local authorities and (ii) the Devolution White Paper.
 - (i) There was a general consensus in support of the principle of reinforcing the standards regime to allow members to be suspended in serious cases. The consultation ended on 26 February, leaving insufficient time for Penzance Council. However, I have responded in a personal capacity, as have the Town Clerk and Democratic Services Officer.
 - (ii) Having coordinated the Cornish town councils’ response to the Devolution White Paper – which supported a Cornwall-only devolution solution, using the same wording as approved by Penzance Council on 11th November 2024 – I was able to inform the Larger Councils Committee that 20 larger towns, representing 40% of the population of Cornwall had formally registered their support. This information has been passed on to Jim McMahon, the minister responsible for devolution.
- Finally, there was a discussion around the forthcoming local council elections, and the difficulties some larger councils have experienced in recruiting new councillors and filling casual vacancies. The Town Clerk and I were pleased to be able to report to the meeting that Penzance Council has no difficulty attracting councillors, and would be actively engaged in encouraging people to come forward to stand in the May elections.

Councillor Stephen Reynolds

Penwith Community Area Partnership (CAP)

The latest meeting of the Penwith CAP took place on 15th January 2025, with representatives from most of the towns and parishes in attendance.

CAP members were given a presentation by Michelle Billing from the Cornwall Council Affordable Housing Team, followed by a very interesting Q&A session.

A key question was the impact of the significant increase in government-imposed housing targets on affordable housing provision. Several members expressed concerns that the overall effect would be a green light for large-scale open-market led developments around Penwith, with most of the homes largely unaffordable to local people given the level of average wages.

Currently the affordable provision quota for open-market led developments in the Penzance parish is 30% (the quota varies within Penwith, from 25% in St Erth to 40% in St Ives). These quotas were set in the Local Plan, which was adopted in November 2016 – when the housing market in Penwith, and the affordability situation, were very different from what they are today.

It was therefore agreed that representations be made to the Cornwall Council Planning Policy Team, currently working on the new Local Plan, to request that evidence be compiled that would support a reassessment of the affordable provision quota in the parishes within the Penwith CAP.

I also attend the regular monthly online meetings of the Penwith CAP Transport and Connectivity Sub-Group. The most recent meeting included a presentation and Q&A with Ian Findler, Principal Road Safety Officer at Cornwall Council, focusing mainly on the 20mph rollout and demonstrating some sophisticated online tools that demonstrate how effective the new 20mph limits are in reducing average vehicle speeds. These tools will be able to give us feedback on the new zones within the Penzance Parish once we have a sufficient time series of data. It was also confirmed that in principle, data from the new Vehicle Activated Signs procured by Penzance Council – to be rotated around a list of locations within the parish, due to be finalised by the end of March – would be able to feed into future decisions around enforcement and potentially, the need for physical traffic calming interventions.

Councillor Stephen Reynolds

Penzance BID

As Town Mayor, I am a member of the Penzance BID Board of Directors and attend the monthly Board meetings, although the Town Clerk holds more regular working meetings with the BID Manager (Sarah Shaw) to discuss operational matters such as anti-social behaviour, community safety, etc.

A key initiative being undertaken by the BID in 2025 is to finally make progress on the long-awaited town centre wayfinding project, with work being kick-started using the remaining Section 106 funds from the Sainsbury's superstore development (around £15,000).

The Town Clerk and BID Manager are working in conjunction with other stakeholders and organisations such as the Newlyn Art Trail group, and Penzance Old Cornwall society (who are looking to relaunch the old Town Trail to coincide with their 100th anniversary next year). The aim is to deliver a combination of traditional wayfinding (signage, plaques, etc) with digital layers (QR codes and interactive panels).

Councillor Stephen Reynolds