

C.A.R.
Camelford Association of Residents
7.30pm 22nd September 2005
Darlington Inn, Camelford

This meeting was arranged following a suggestion from our local M.P. Dan Rogerson and is in direct response to the Town Council's undemocratic comments following the recent referendum on charging for the use of Churchfield Car Park by way of the installation of Pay and Display ticket machines.

Due to the conflict between the current Chamber of Commerce and the current Town Council it was requested that a committee be formed which does not contain members of either body, but their presence at this meeting and subsequent meetings will be welcomed. Residents were invited to stand or nominate other residents for the following positions and individuals duly nominated and seconded by residents present were:-

Chairperson – Melanie Baber
Vice Chairperson – Eddie McCormick
Secretary – Ada McCormick

Melanie Baber duly took over the Chair of the meeting and asked that the discussion be kept to the main issue of democracy not just the Churchfield Car Park.

T. Tague – The issue has gone beyond the Car Park. The Council have chosen to ignore the democratic issue of the referendum. What can we do about it?

J. Hough – endorsed Mr Tauge's comments – The Town Council are doing what they want and not taking notice of public opinion.

B. Ireland – The referendum over joining the EU returned only 40%.

P. Jordan – 31% of residents turned out to vote, the same as the last council election.

B. Oliver – Why were residents from Victoria Gardens unable to vote when they could vote in the General Election?

Caroline.– I live 3 miles outside Camelford, but use the town most days, I was unable to vote due to my post code.

T. Tague – The Car Park is essential to Camelford and people in nearby areas. The Council have 'wound back the clock' with the idea we should pay for everything rather than looking at what is good for the town. It is an insult to the democratic principle.

J. Hough – This is degeneration rather than regeneration.

C. Courtney-Wilde – Would like to ask the Town Council why the Car Park is not full.

E. McCormick (vice Chairperson) – How many of the charges have been paid by residents visiting the Medical Centre? Residents are being penalised for being ill or infirm. The notice boards are very unclear and many locals are paying £2.00 if they feel they are likely to be using the Car Park for over an hour.

Chairperson – What can we do with regards to the Council ignoring the vote?

J. Harman – Looked into the Road Traffic Act, the Council did not have to introduce the charge prior to the referendum. When asked “Why?”, the Council said they had to, which is incorrect. The Act also states that signs must be clear and understandable which the ones in the car park are not, the wording is very misleading.

J. Andrews – We need to look closely at the issue of a vote of no confidence and what is needed. If we lose the Town Council we need to have people willing to stand in their place. Many people do not want to take on the responsibility, we need to take care in how we handle it.

T. Tague – I feel we have a prospective Town Council waiting to take over the role. The real issue in Camelford is for people to take notice of how the town council works, they should resign and bring in a new Council.

F. Samuel – You need to have enough people to stand.

Chairperson – Call for names of residents who would be willing to stand.

F. Samuel – If we don't have sufficient people to stand we will be back to how we are now.

J. Harman – I have the name of at least 1 person who will be standing for election to the current vacancy on the Council.

J. Hough – Are NCDC aware of the position – I have applied for a rebate on Council tax and local Council say I need to go to NCDC. Residents should write to NCDC to make them aware of what is going on.

J. Holt – NCDC cannot do anything.

B. Ireland – Called for a vote of No Confidence in the current Town Council

35 for
0 against
1 abstention

E. McCormick (vice chairperson) – We need to get the Council to return to democracy, we are too busy concentrating on just the car park.

J. Harman – Proposed we call a Public Meeting and invite the Town Council to attend to answer resident's questions regarding the Car Park and the referendum. Seconded. 35 for, 1 abstention.

B. Oliver – It's a matter of integrity, cost of the referendum first said to be £2,000 actual cost about £900.

J. Hough – Council said that polling cards would be sent out, they did not arrive.

J. Andrews – You can only invite the members of the Council to attend a Public Meeting, we have no legal clout to make them attend.

Chairperson – It would look bad if they did not attend.

T. Chipp (second-home-owner from Kidderminster) – A new body of politicians came from the fight to save a local hospital and took control of the local and county Council. The independent MP was then re-elected on his own merits and the people who stood for election are still on the council, you get strong people come up on issues like this.

T. Tague – Should we consider direct action, provided no criminal damage is caused, to render the parking meters unable to take money, as a political act, the Council cannot claim that this would stop income as the upkeep has already been paid by the precept. Direct action would draw attention to the fact that the people voted for a free car park.

Chairperson – Concerned that people would then be issued with tickets.

C. Timothy – This would be counter-productive to issues of democracy.

Chairperson – The legality of this type of action would need to be thoroughly looked into.

C. Courtney-Wilde – How much did the installation of the parking meters cost?

F. Samuels – In the region of £6,000.

J. Hough – If the meters are taken out would the Council members be liable for the cost?

E. McCormick (vice Chairperson) – It has been mentioned that NCDC may be willing to purchase the machines if we return the car park to its free status.

J. Harman – The Council are set to review the situation in April, the precept for next year will be set in October so the cost of upkeep of the car park will be included then when the precept is set. The Council is ahead of itself so has enough profit to cover what it has spent.

Chairperson – We need to return to Mr Tague's proposal.

J. Holt – I have spoken to a solicitor who says that as long as no damage is done the only thing the Council can do is ask for an injunction.

J. Andrews – This would be a counter-productive act, this is the 1st meeting and direct action at this point would be negative.

C. Timothy – Direct action could alienate other residents.

M Tague – Placing sacks over the meters would not be an act of vandalism.

J. Holt – I second T Tague's proposal for direct action.

T. Chipp – Machines were installed in a free car park in Kidderminster, the land had been gifted to the Council and in law could not charge for its use.

B. Oliver – Churchfield car park was gifted to the town but it appears that the covenant only covers people attending church services. Dr Nash and the church considered taking action to go to the Land Commission but did not due to financial costs. The Church warden and the rector met with Cllr Williams, the Mayor, the ex Mayor and Town Clerk Ron Hart and in a heated meeting it was agreed that people attending Church services would not be charged.

Vote on T Tauge's proposal for direct action: 10 for, 23 against, 2 abstentions

A. Harman – What are we doing in the meantime?

Chairperson – I do not believe there will be any quick fix to this situation.

B. Ireland – Would the Councillor who resigned consider standing for re-election?

F. Samuels – No, unless there were sufficient names for a proper election.

C. Ireland – The notice re the vacancy on the Town Council after the resignation of F Samuels will be given on the 26/09/05. Application forms available from Wadebridge. Names must be received at Wadebridge by 07/10/05 (submitted in person). The election for the post of Town Councillor will take place 03/11/05.

B. Oliver – There was a large silent majority which we need to get on board.

Apologies given for this meeting being called at such short notice and not all the residents of Camelford being aware of it.

J. Harman – The election in November will not make much difference at this time.

F. Samuels – It could put someone in as a protest.

J. Harman – I know of two residents who will be standing, unfortunately neither are able to attend tonight, one is in hospital and the other had a prior engagement and was unable to attend at such short notice.

The issue has been reported in local and national press and an opinion was voiced that the press be kept informed of progress.

The meeting applauded the comments that ex-Cllr Samuel had acted ethically in relation to the issue of the Car Park charges being implemented. Mr Samuel had originally voted against the purchase of the Car Park by the Town Council with a view to keeping it free of charge. When, 2 years on, the Council decided to implement charges, Mr Samuel resigned.

C. Ireland – Council can rescind any decisions after 6 months.

N. Connolly – They will say that they had misjudged the cost.

F. Samuel – There is a process to oust the Council, it's called the Election of 2007.

C. Ireland – request that more public attend Council meetings to keep watch on the actions of the Council.

J. Hough - Where do the Councillors park – they have a free car park at the Council offices.

The Vice-Chairman asked if Mr Samuel would be willing to liaise with the residents committee, Mr Samuel will be happy to do so.

Chairperson – We need to arrange for another meeting which will be publicised, do we have any suggestions for a venue.

B. Oliver offered the use of St. Thomas Church Hall for the Public meeting.

Next Meeting
29th September 2005
7.30 p.m.
St. Thomas, Church Hall,
Churchfield
Camelford

The Vice-Chairman mentioned a letter that had been read out at the last Town Council meeting which said that Cllr Lush had “brought the Council into disrepute”. Mr McCormick said that rather than bringing the Council into disrepute, Cllr Lush was the only Councillor who retained any honour by remaining true to the principles of democracy.

This was greeted by a hearty round of applause.

The Chairperson closed the meeting.