

AGENDA ITEM No. 3

MINUTES

of the Special Meeting of the **TAVISTOCK TOWN COUNCIL** held at the Town Hall, Tavistock on **FRIDAY 20th MARCH, 2020 at 6.45pm.**

PRESENT

Councillor Mrs A Johnson (Mayor)
Councillor A Hutton (Deputy Mayor)

Councillors Ms L Crawford, Mrs M Ewings,
A Fey, Mrs U Mann, Mrs G Parker, G Parker,
B Smith, H Smith, P Squire, A Venning, P Ward
and P Williamson.

IN ATTENDANCE

Town Clerk, General Manager, Assistant to the
Town Clerk.

375. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors J Ellis and J Moody.

376. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

377. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

RESOLVED THAT the Minutes of the Meeting of Tavistock Council held on Tuesday 3rd March, 2020 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman (Appendix 1).

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

378. PUBLIC BODIES (ADMISSION TO MEETINGS) ACT 1960

Pursuant to section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, and having regard to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted it was:-

RESOLVED THAT the Press and Public be excluded from the Meeting for the following item of business.

CONFIDENTIAL ITEM REQUIRING A DECISION

379. CONTINGENCY PLANNING

(CONFIDENTIAL by virtue of relating to legal and/or commercial matters, staffing and/or the financial or business affairs of a person or persons other than the Council).

The Council considered the Report of the Town Clerk in respect of Emergency Planning/Business Continuity & Coronavirus (Appendix 2). Attention was drawn, in particular, to:-

- i) The outcome of a recent Meeting with Pannier Market Traders, introduction of a temporary ½ rate for pitch spaces and lock ups, together with the commitment of a majority of traders to continue to operate for as long as it was safe and legal to do so - plus a more recent update in view of developing Government guidance;
- ii) Town Hall – being to all intents closed to events and pre-existing events postponed or cancelled;
- iii) Commercial Tenants – a letter had been sent to let them know if they were in need of special consideration to contact the Council. Factors being reviewed with the advisors to the Council included deferred (but not waived) rent arrangements;
- iv) Projects – such as Britain in Bloom, Garden Festival etc were not expected to be able to proceed;
- v) Building Works and Projects were under close review;
- vi) Staff – the office would be closed to the public with effect from Monday. Activities that could be done via homeworking would be redirected accordingly, any presence in the workplace would comply with Government guidance. In the Works Department staff would be segregated into two groupings to reduce potential for contact;
- vii) Income, there was an as yet unquantifiable (but expected to be substantial) impact on commercial income streams which, in the normal course of events, provided the bulk of funding for Council services. This would require attention both short and long term, not least in view of the point reached in the current capital programme (full commitment and new reserves not yet established);
- viii) Priority services – priority was being attached to burials, open space management and Pannier Market operation;
- ix) Anticipated introduction by Government of arrangements for remote meetings;
- x) Mayoral arrangements (and other appointments – expected to be addressed by Government);

- xi) Anticipated extension of the deadline for the submission of the Annual Return;
- xii) The operation of arrangements for decisions to be validly made under delegated authority.

In the ensuing discussion reference was made to a wide range of factors including:

- o Health concerns for the community, the impacts of social isolation and community cohesion;
- o The extent of positive work being undertaken by a local volunteer group which was commended;
- o How the Council could support the emergency planning authorities (WDBC being the local responsible body as Category 1 Responder¹) and other bodies during the health emergency;
- o The potentially important role of parks and open spaces;
- o The importance attached to staff and Councillors working in the most appropriate and safe ways;
- o The potential for a grant scheme to be established to support the volunteer effort and how it might appropriately be funded/operate.

RESOLVED THAT during the state of emergency attaching to the Coronavirus outbreak, and in the event it is not possible or safe to hold Meetings, the Town Clerk (or in the event he is unable or otherwise not capable of acting the Deputy Town Clerk (General Manager), in consultation with the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and immediate past Mayor²) be authorised to take such action as necessary to discharge the obligations of the Council, make decisions, vary decisions, take proceedings or otherwise discharge the duties and powers of the Council which, for the avoidance of doubt, may include all decisions as could normally be made by the Council, other than those specifically reserved by law solely to the Council when Meeting in full assembly.

Furthermore it was:

RESOLVED THAT

- a) Should Government introduce temporary provisions enabling decisions to be made remotely by Committees:
 - i. The Budget and Policy Committee be designated to make such decisions as identified in the resolution above (subject to urgent decisions continuing to be made by the Clerk as set

¹ Civil Contingencies Act 2004

² Councillors Johnson, Hutton, Ward plus, if applicable, the successor Mayor

- out above) and authority be so delegated to the Committee for the duration of the state of emergency accordingly;
- ii. The Development Management & Licensing Committee be designated to consider and comment on planning applications under current delegated authority and, for the duration of the state of emergency, submit them to the Local Planning Authority without prior ratification by Full Council.
- b) In the interests of transparency any decisions made under the foregoing delegated authorities shall be:
 - o If of a non-confidential nature, posted on the Town Council website;
 - o If of a confidential nature, circulated to all Members of Council.
 - c) The Council establish a 'Social Fund' comprising the residual balance of the 2019-20 grant budget and the allocated 2020-21 grant budget³ to which applications can be made by community groups and organisations to support initiatives whose primary purpose is to support the most vulnerable in the community affected by the health emergency (to be administered on the same basis as set out under the delegations above as applicable).
 - d) The Council endorse the arrangements for business continuity as set out in the Report.
 - e) Additionally, and without prejudice to the above, specifically with regard to:
 - i) MARKET OPERATIONS
 - 1 Regarding Pannier Market opening/closure, and having consulted with the appointed representatives of the Market Traders in view of changed Government guidance regarding café's restaurants and similar together with the deteriorating public health situation the Pannier Market be closed until further notice and traders be informed accordingly.
 - 2⁴ Pursuant to the Town Clerk be authorised to vary any or all of the Market Rules and Regulations as they see fit including the

³ And replacing same for the 2020-21 financial year, ie suspending the ordinary grants process for 2020-21.

⁴ Note – whilst to some degree superseded by (1) above this resolution has been retained as it applies equally to potential arrangements when reopening arises.

power to alter, restrict, or determine any opening times of the Market Hall and any subsequent occupation requirements of the Market Hall. This may include the temporary or permanent closure of the Market Hall and its activities.

- Traders will be informed of any such action as soon as reasonably practicable.
- Any amendments to the Regulations will not be considered a breach of the Regulations and/or any other agreement between the trader and the Council and neither party shall be liable for delay in performing, or failure to perform, any of its obligations under that agreement if such delay or failure results from events, circumstances or causes beyond its reasonable control.

Pandemic / Epidemic

- In the event of a pandemic or epidemic health incident traders are required to take all steps as are reasonably necessary to reduce the risk of infection;
- In the event that a trader and or any of their employees or customers experience any adverse symptoms or has come into contact with anyone who has shown any adverse symptoms then they are required to notify, as soon as reasonably practicable, the Council and ensure they adhere to any advice subsisting at the time by the UK Government.

- ii) TOWN HALL/BUTCHERS HALL BOOKINGS/EVENTS & SIMILAR
Council endorse the approach as set out in Appendix 2 to the Report as regarding Town Hall/Butchers Hall Bookings and similar, and further authorise relevant officers as/if necessary to cancel or otherwise rearrange events where the organisation is unable to safely deliver same;
- iii) COMMUNICATION
Council agree the website/social media being kept updated.

iv) STAFFING

Wherever possible remote working principles be adopted and in view of the wide ranging officer delegation above specific measures be introduced to minimise physical proximity as between the Town Clerk and General Manager so as to preserve the highest possible level of integrity in the decision making process.

The Press and Public were re-admitted to the Meeting.

The Meeting closed at 7.55pm.

Signed.....

Dated.....

CHAIRMAN