

AGENDA ITEM No. 5

MINUTES of the Meeting of the **BUDGET AND POLICY SUB COMMITTEE** held at the Council Chamber, Drake Road, Tavistock on **MONDAY 19th SEPTEMBER, 2016** at **6.38pm.**

PRESENT Councillors Mrs M Ewings, Mrs A Johnson, P Sanders, H Smith, P Ward, P Williamson.

IN ATTENDANCE Town Clerk, General Manager

98. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

Nominations were invited for the election of Chairman of the Sub-Committee for the ensuing civic year.

A nomination was received in respect of the Mayor, Councillor Mrs M Ewings.

RESOLVED THAT Councillor Mrs M Ewings be elected Chairman of the Sub-Committee for the ensuing civic year.

99. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

RESOLVED THAT the Minutes of the Meeting of the Forward Planning, Policy and Programme Sub-Committee held on Monday 15th February 2016 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

100. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence had been received from Councillor P Palfrey.

101. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor P Sanders declared a personal non-prejudicial interest as Leader of the Borough Council in connection with arrangements in respect of the localisation of Council Tax.

102. BUDGET PREPARATION AND PRECEPT SETTING 2017/18

The Sub-Committee considered the report of the Town Clerk outlining related current and anticipated future issues and providing an opportunity to consider the basis upon which the draft 2017/18 Budget and Precept should be developed.

In the ensuing discussion particular reference was made, inter alia, to:-

- i) the development of the updated Council Strategic Plan (which would be advanced further toward the end of the year).
- ii) Recent developments (para 2.1(a) of the Report & Minute No 104 refer). Consultation by Government was presently underway in connection with the prospective "capping" of precepts for larger councils in the sector.
- iii) The extent to which adequate provision could/ should be made in respect of potential future bad debts.
- iv) The continuing impact of reductions in income arising from the "localisation of council tax" (expected to be in the order of 8% for the next financial year).
- v) The importance attached to adequately estimating the full range of prospective changes in staff costs (e.g. impact of the National Living Wage, incremental uplifts, pension payments, annual pay settlement etc).
- vi) The growth of partnership working and, in particular, recent developments in connection with the organisation of Tavistock Heritage.
- vii) The long term commitments associated with, and prospective liabilities attaching to, delivery of the Townscape Heritage Initiative both as Landlord and, in particular, as accountable body for the scheme.
- viii) Recent progress with works to the Butchers Hall.
- ix) The importance attached to the appropriate development of the Pannier Market Scheme in close liaison with Traders and Tenants to minimise disruption and seek continuity of business operation. It was acknowledged that there were also linkages to work scheduled for Duke Street and, because VAT was broadly not re-claimable for the Pannier Market, costs would be a point of issue.
- x) Challenges associated with the timelines relating to the Guildhall Gateway Centre Project which were acknowledged.
- xi) Neighbourhood planning – the consensus was that the Council should set aside a sum in the order of £60,000 to support this piece of work.
- xii) Precept level – a consensus that, as a minimum, precept should increase by sufficient to cover reductions arising from the localisation of Council Tax.

- xiii) Future maintenance to the Council Estate – A clear view that (whether or not on a discounted cash flow basis) the Council should look to put in place arrangements for sinking funds in respect of key buildings to provide both visibility and support to their continuing maintenance and productive usage.

Noted That the Sub-Committee noted that HLF projects such as Butchers Hall, Pannier Market and (prospectively) Guildhall requirements included such provision in relation to same.

- xiv) General repair and commitments – In addition to those listed in para (f) of the report reference was further made to a crack requiring attention in the Museum, leaks in the Town Hall roof and the possible need for lift replacement and/ or heating renewal within the Town Hall.

Noted That arising from the discussion in connection with the above

- the Clerk undertook to make enquiries as to the position regarding energy performance certificates for Council properties in light of upcoming changes in legislation; and
 - the Works Manager would review options in respect of radiator replacement (taking into account any existing listing requirements in the Town Hall).
- xv) The potential for legal costs arising in connection with the regularisation of arrangements in respect of long leases from the Council was acknowledged.
- xvi) The requirements of funding through the Greater Dartmoor Leaf in connection with the Butchers Hall were outlined including phased introduction of themed market arrangements and commitment to relevant staffing support.
- xvii) In response to a question reference was made to grading arrangements in respect of managers, a current job evaluation process for certain posts and the anticipated overall review of the job evaluation scheme scheduled for 2017. In connection with staffing within the office a view was expressed that there was an opportunity to improve

organisational coordination and review contracted hours in relation to service requirements. Arising from discussions regarding staff retention within certain posts within the office the Clerk undertook to put in place arrangements for a review of retention issues.

xviii) It was acknowledged that organisational capacity could be impacted up by unforeseen factors (such as in connection with the delivery of the "Man Engine" event).

Arising from consideration of the above it was

RECOMMENDED THAT the report be received and the requests/ references made above be incorporated into the emerging draft 2017/18 Budget as appropriate.

Noted That there was brief adjournment of the Meeting at 8.25pm to facilitate provision of information relating to the above.

103. PLYMOUTH ROAD CEMETERY – FUTURE CAPACITY

The Sub-Committee considered and received the report of the Cemetery Administrator pursuant upon the previous instruction of Council. The Report had been prepared in accordance with the guidelines of the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management and reviewed by same.

In the ensuing discussion particular reference was made to past estimates of capacity, current and projected future usage, and fees and charges (with particular reference to non-parishioners).

Arising from consideration of the above the Works Manager undertook to arrange a review of fees and charges for non-parishioners in relation to a representative sample of other services to inform the fee/ charge setting process at the next meeting.

URGENT ITEM

The Chairman agreed to take the following item as a matter of urgency.

104. 2017/18 LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE SETTLEMENT – TECHNICAL CONSULTATION PAPER

Reference was made to a recent Government consultation including, inter alia, consultation on prospective principles for the application of 'precept capping' of the local council sector.

Arising from consideration of the above there was a consensus that concerns be conveyed regarding the criteria proposed. If Government remained minded to introduce capping it should, in the first instance, be applied to those Councils falling within the NALC "super councils" grouping.

The Meeting closed at 9.15pm

Signed.....

Dated.....

CHAIRMAN