

AGENDA ITEM No. 6

MINUTES

of the Meeting of the **BUDGET & POLICY COMMITTEE** held at the Council Chamber, Drake Road, Tavistock on **TUESDAY 15TH OCTOBER, 2019 at 6.30pm**

PRESENT

Councillor P Williamson (in the Chair)
Councillors Ms L Crawford, Mrs A Johnson, H Smith, P Ward

Councillors J Ellis, Mrs U Mann, P Squire (Ward Members)

IN ATTENDANCE

Town Clerk, General Manager.

195. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence had been received from Councillor A Hutton.

196. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

RESOLVED THAT the Minutes (Appendix 1) of the Meeting of the Budget & Policy Committee held on Tuesday 3rd September, 2019 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

197. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillor Ms L Crawford considered whether or not it was appropriate to declare an interest in connection with Minute No. 200.

198. ITEMS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

The Committee considered the Report of the Town Clerk (Appendix 2) providing an opportunity to consider the basis upon which the draft 2020/21 Budget and Precept should be developed.

Attention was drawn, in particular, to:-

- a. Pannier Market & VAT, that arising from the capital works and appropriate due diligence by the Accountant and Auditor to the Council, an obligation to make payment to HMRC in a sum not exceeding £15,581 had been identified;
- b. The implications of national pay awards over recent years on the operation of job evaluation schemes (the operation of the TTC Scheme was under review) arising from wage compression at the lower end of the grade scale;
- c. Co-location. Discussions being undertaken on a without prejudice basis by officers regarding the possibility that Town and Borough Council

- might be able to co-locate at Kilworthy Park with associated benefits for both organisations and improved customer service;
- d. Localism budget head. The possibility that the allocation of a fixed and affordable amount to this budget head might provide otherwise unbudgeted initiatives (such as in connection with support to outside organisations, environmental and sustainable initiatives etc.) to be supported on a flexible and sustainable basis;
 - e. Arrangements were in hand for application to be made, as previously agreed by the Council, to the Public Works Loan Board for a loan in the sum of £400,000 in respect of the Guildhall Gateway Centre Project;
 - f. Tavistock Heritage Trust. It was noted that a request had been received from Tavistock Heritage Trust for a meeting in connection with the proposed operation of the Service Level Agreement;
 - g. Neighbourhood Plan – a correction to the report (i.e. although there was no earmarked reserve in connection with the provision of a Neighbourhood Development Plan there was a budget line);
 - h. The contents of para 3.4 – sections (e) and (g) in particular.

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

- i. The gravity attached by the Council to the challenges to Council finances, processes & capacity;
- ii. The balance as between risk and reward, stability and uncertainty, in delivering an unprecedented Council work programme to benefit the town;
- iii. The practical reality that, at this point, it was either impractical or inappropriate to seek to bring additional human resources into play in key areas given the time critical stage projects had reached;
- iv. The historical reliance of the Council upon commercial income, alongside the extent to which (in the future) that relationship to Precept might need to change in order to fund community initiatives and associated potential year-on-year impacts on the Precept;
- v. Potential areas of spend where uncertainties existed and/or the Council might fall under other obligations to undertake same;
- vi. Recognition that major projects carried a necessary level of risk – both general and financial (not least arising from the possibility of contract variations arising from unavoidable in-scheme adjustments);
- vii. The ongoing liability of the Council for revenue support to its anchor partner for delivery of the Guildhall Project, alongside the necessary cost of capital works;
- viii. The challenges placed upon staffing resource by the work programme of the Council and associated measures to best support staff;

- ix. Acknowledgement that the current list of unfunded projects and priorities was not affordable in its entirety, and therefore difficult decisions around prioritisation and timing would need to be made;
- x. Timing and arrangements for the replacement of the Properties and Open Spaces Manager role (as amended);
- xi. The impact upon finances of the removal of the Precept Support Grant and upcoming obligations arising from the decision of West Devon Borough Council to cease the operation of public conveniences within the Town;
- xii. Options to generate capital or other receipts including that, whilst for good reasons not appropriate to raise Market tolls at this time, traders be given notice that an increase was highly likely in the following financial year;
- xiii. The challenges associated with delivering a particularly hectic work programme over the past 12 months, alongside future work;
- xiv. Acknowledgement that, in previous years, it had been recognised the new Council would not have resources available to take on all the projects it might wish to;
- xv. The commendable work of Officers in delivering across a wide ranging and demanding set of projects and initiatives.

RECOMMENDED THAT:-

1. In response to the statement and the report to this Committee, on 15th October, 2019, that Council projected activities may cause our staffing resource to be overstretched or harmed, the following should be applied immediately. The budget setting process should, as a matter of principle, identify to Members the need to consider additional resources and all projected costs of that additional resource required to meet all Council agreed objectives within the budget and such matters be reviewed further in the spring;
2. The settlement of the obligation, as identified at para (a) above, be endorsed if/as necessary from reserves;
3. A draft Budget be prepared taking into account:-
 - a. the known factors as outlined within the Report; and
 - b. identifying, insofar as it can, unclear or unfunded factors in order that the Council might review their funding, viability and prioritisation.

199. PROPERTY MAINTENANCE BUDGET

The Committee considered the Report of the Town Clerk (Appendix 3) in respect of the above and received an oral update from the General Manager regarding next steps, arising therefrom it was:-

RECOMMENDED THAT the Council vire £10,000 from the current Grounds Maintenance budget, and £10,000 from the reserve for the resurfacing of the Guildhall Car Park Public Realm, to the Property Maintenance budget in order to meet the shortfall.

200. FAIR TRADE TOWN SIGNAGE

The Committee considered the Report of the Town Clerk (Appendix 4) in connection with the above.

In the ensuing discussion reference was made to a wide range of related issues including the operation of Fair Trade status, past decisions, obligations and opportunities.

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council indicate its support for signage for promoting Tavistock as a Fair Trade Town and a letter of support be written accordingly.

Noted That Councillor Ms L Crawford confirmed that, having reviewed the matter, membership of the Tavistock Fair Trade Steering Group did not constitute either a disclosable pecuniary or "other" interest under the Tavistock Town Council Code of Conduct.

ITEM CIRCULATED FOR INFORMATION ONLY

201. APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODY

The Committee noted the appointment, by the Devon Association of Local Councils, of a representative to the Cornwall and West Devon Mining Landscape World Heritage Site Partnership - Councillor (Mr) G Parker.

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

202. 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 items of business.

URGENT BUSINESS

The following three items of business were considered with the consent of the Chairman.

CONFIDENTIAL ITEM
FOR RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

203. PANNIER MARKET - PUBLIC REALM

(**CONFIDENTIAL** by virtue of relating to contractual, financial and/or legal matters)

The Committee was advised by the General Manager of the outcome of recent exchanges with the Contractor regarding contract variations. In the opinion of both the General Manager and Contract Administrator variations amounting to £10,203 were reasonable, the remainder representing costs which should appropriately be borne by the Contractor.

RECOMMENDED THAT the General Manager be authorised to proceed upon the basis outlined, the additional sum to be met from a virement from the reserve set aside for the Guildhall Car Park Public Realm Project.

CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS
CIRCULATED FOR INFORMATION ONLY

204. LANDLORD'S OBLIGATIONS

(**CONFIDENTIAL** by virtue of relating to matters of a personal, financial or legal nature)

The Committee was advised of a recent incident with potential for insurance claim, together with an extant matter previously reported.

205. TAVISTOCK GOOSE FAIR

The Committee was advised of an incident involving a member of the public which had required the timely intervention of Town Council staff, subsequently supported by the Police. It was understood charges were being brought.

The actions of those Council staff involved in both mitigating and controlling the situation, and timely assistance of the Police was commended.

206. PUBLIC CONVENIENCES SUB-COMMITTEE

(**CONFIDENTIAL** by virtue of relating to contractual, financial and/or legal matters)

The Committee received, for information, the Minutes of the Meeting of the Public Conveniences Sub-Committee (Appendix 5) held on Monday 30th September, 2019.

The Meeting closed at 8.43pm.

Signed.....

Dated.....

CHAIRMAN