

**TAVISTOCK TOWN COUNCIL  
BUDGET & POLICY COMMITTEE  
NOVEMBER 2018  
STAFFING ARRANGEMENTS – WORKS DEPARTMENT**

**A. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

For the Committee to consider, pursuant to the report considered by it at the informal Meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> September 2018 and subsequently by Council on 18<sup>th</sup> September, the outcome of consultations with the staff side regarding proposals for the reconfiguration of the Works Department. This report is intended to be read in association with that report.

**B. CORPORATE POLICY CONSIDERATIONS**

The effective management of resources and appropriate configuration of Council services contributes toward the delivery of value for money and the under-pinning goal of continuous improvement for the organisation. The Works Department is a key driver of the Council's capital programme, property and landscape maintenance and contributor to community/partnership initiatives.

**C. LEGAL AND RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES**

Associated legal issues principally relate to the obligations placed upon the Council as an Employer. Various related risks include failure to comply with statutory obligations, potential impact upon staff morale/capacity and/or service delivery.

**D. RESOURCE ISSUES**

The Resource issues associated with the recommendations included in this report are consistent with the existing budget arrangements (but see section 3 below).

**E. COMMUNICATIONS ISSUES**

This report has been developed following consultation with staff within the Works Department and their representatives as previously instructed and provides an outline of key issues raised.

**F. RECOMMENDATIONS**

That the Committee recommend to Tavistock Town Council

- a) In view of the situation outlined in para 3.2 below how it might appropriately proceed;
- b) Subsequent to the outcome of (a) above proceed with and implement the proposals for the restructuring of the Works Department (Minute No 138(b) refers) incorporating amended arrangements for work start times/Friday afternoon working with a view to the new operating structure coming into effect on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2019.

## **1. BACKGROUND**

1.2 The Committee will be aware that a review has been undertaken by the General Manager of the configuration and operation of the Works Department over the past 12 months. This led to the instructions of Council to consult upon proposed revised arrangements. That consultation period concluded on 7<sup>th</sup> November, 2018.

## **2. OUTCOME OF CONSULTATIONS**

- 2.1 Two consultation meetings were held for affected staff and their Union representatives and all affected staff received copies of the proposals and were afforded the opportunity to respond in the meetings, by post/email, in person or through their representative.
- 2.2 All but two staff took up the opportunity to attend the meetings – one of whom was/is on long term sickness absence, the other having had separate conversations with their line manager.
- 2.3 The consultations covered a range of topics including the allocation of responsibilities, continuation of the 'on-call' service, the mechanics of appointment and related matters. However, the two primary themes directly applicable to the reviews core elements were a broad consensus that:-
- a) the revised staffing structure offered potentially improved opportunity for development and progression both within and between roles within the service;
  - b) if working hours were to be varied to encompass Friday afternoon working there was a strong preference to continue with a standard (37 hours working week) and preference that this be through the variation of start times<sup>1</sup> (ie a revised standard working week of 8.00am-4.00pm Mon-Thurs and 3.30pm Friday<sup>2</sup>) as opposed to the introduction of seasonal annualised hours working which was not supported.
- 2.4 In the context of (b) above there was recognition on both the staff and employer side that flexibility would be required around certain activities (such as the West Devon grounds contract) regarding occasional earlier starting as well as that required for late/other working (eg Goose Fair, Christmas Lights etc).

*Note subsequent to the consultation period (7<sup>th</sup> Nov close) on 14<sup>th</sup> November a letter was received from staff in the Works Department requesting a Summer start time of 7.30am which, in the opinion of the Team, facilitated a range of work activities and practices.*

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<sup>1</sup> Note current arrangements are 7.30am-4.00pm Mon – Thurs and 12.00 noon Friday

<sup>2</sup> However see para 2.4 below regarding a subsequent response.

*As reflected in the above paragraph (2.4) the position is that the role requires a degree of flexibility in hours according to the tasks undertaken and different teams might, on some days, have different start times (8.00am or 7.30am or indeed occasionally other). From an organisational perspective the challenge around standardised 7.30am starts and the consequential shortening of the working afternoon every day til 3.30pm is in part the counter point of the argument for early starts. ie the case for is that the general public are not around early on and in some situations working may be easier and/or safer, the case against is that it shortens the period when staff are both visible and accessible to the public and stakeholders. It would also mean that there would almost never be a situation during term time when staff would be accessible in/around play areas when used by children after school hours.*

*Current contracts provide 37 hours are worked 'according to the requirements of the authority'. Having carefully considered the representations your Officers recommendation is that this provision be retained<sup>3</sup> and the matter of 'default' start times move to 8.00am as flowing from the previous consideration of Council. But, the importance of flexibility be recognised and respected and the arrangement be kept under review by the Properties & Open Spaces Manager in discussion with staff so as to maintain appropriate balance between activities benefitting from absence of the public and those which add value when present<sup>4</sup>.*

- 2.5 As part of the review staff were offered the opportunity of moving to a 45 minute lunch break (recognising that if working at out-stations should they travel back to Depot or Town for lunch their travel time reduced their break) but the consensus was to keep lunch breaks to the existing 30 minutes.

### **3. NEXT STEPS**

- 3.1 The positive and pragmatic approach demonstrated by the Works Team and their representatives to the proposals is to be welcomed. Given that an arrangement can be secured, by consensus, for the key goal of Friday afternoon working your Managers recommend that the Council adopt this approach and not progress the alternative seasonal annualised hours option. As regards the seasonal variation to start times subsequently proposed by staff (para 2.4 refers) it is suggested that whilst the default time of 8.00am be adopted it be made clear that where the task imperative suggests an earlier start that can and will be accommodated flexibly as appropriate and the matter be kept under review.

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<sup>3</sup> As it clearly supports a range of partnership and collaborative activities eg Goose Fair, Dickensian, Britain in Bloom etc

<sup>4</sup> If staff wished to receive a longer lunch break so as not to disrupt the 4.00pm finish (Mon-Thurs) this could potentially be accommodated.

3.2 There is one additional matter that needs to be brought to Members attention by way of correction to the last report. Namely, that in assessing the budget envelope for the Works Department previously a General Hand post located in another service area was incorrectly included in this calculation. The effect of this (with on-costs) is to raise the cost of the proposed new structure by iro £20,000 over existing budgets. The Committee is therefore invited to consider whether in the circumstances it wishes to recommend either:

- a) Endorsing the additional spend now identified as being associated with the proposals previously submitted (the General Manager will address this at the Meeting); or
- b) Revise the number of landscape and maintenance operatives in the proposal down from 5.5fte to 4.5fte<sup>5</sup>

3.3 The Committee will be aware that the Council is presently advertising for a Properties and Open Spaces Manager.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

4.1 A positive consensus has arisen around the core of these restructuring proposals (albeit with some focussed feedback regarding start hours), which suggests a welcome constructive and collaborative partnership between employer and staff sides. The Committee is invited to recommend to Council how best to proceed.

**GENERAL MANAGER/TOWN CLERK  
NOVEMBER 2018**

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<sup>5</sup> Note – this does not bring any new redundancy situation into play.