

**AGENDA ITEM No 4(c)**

**MINUTES** of the Meeting of the **FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE** held at the Council Chamber, Drake Road, Tavistock on **TUESDAY** the **8<sup>th</sup> JULY 2014** at **7:09pm**

**PRESENT** Councillor Mrs A Johnson (Chairman)  
Councillor P Sanders (Vice Chairman)

Councillors D Eberlie, Mrs J Metcalf, J Sheldon,  
D Whitcomb

Councillor H Smith (Mayor)  
Councillor Mrs S Bailey (Deputy Mayor)

**IN ATTENDANCE** Town Clerk, General Manager.

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**107. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Mrs M Ewings, A Fleet, and J Moody.

**108. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**109. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES**

RESOLVED THAT the Minutes of the Meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> May, 2014 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**110. MEETING OF THE PROPERTIES COMMITTEE HELD EARLIER THAT EVENING**

The Chairman of the Properties Committee advised of five items arising from that meeting with a potentially significant financial implication, namely - acquisition of the Guildhall, audio equipment for the Council Chamber, usage of Council properties, the initiation of legal proceedings and progression/endorsement of Dog Control Orders.

**111. GENERAL FINANCE**

a) **Schedule of Payments**

The Committee considered the monthly accounts, as at 30<sup>th</sup> May, 2014 for submission to the next Council Meeting (Appendix 1).

b) **Budget Monitoring Report**

The Committee received and considered a copy of the Budget Monitoring Report as at 30<sup>th</sup> May, 2014 (Appendix 2).

c) **Members Allowances**

The Committee was advised, by a Member, that the Borough Council was in the process of appointing a new Independent Remuneration Panel.

It was anticipated that this would meet early in the New Year which would afford the Town Council the opportunity, should it wish to do so, to make representations for consideration in due course.

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council consider the matter of Members Allowances and make representations accordingly to the Borough Council in order that the new Independent Remuneration Panel may consider same in due course.

d) **Local Government Pension Scheme Discretions**

The Committee considered the report of the Clerk (Appendix 3) in connection with the above.

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council

- i) adopt the submitted Pensions Discretions Policy to meet the requirements of Regulation 66 of the Local Government Pension Scheme (Administration) Regulations 2008, and Regulation 60 of the Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations 2013
- ii) authorise the Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Finance and General Purposes Committee, to make any necessary changes as to accuracy as might arise from consultation with the Pension Authority.

**112. GUILDHALL & FORWARD PLANNING POLICY AND PROGRAMME SUB-COMMITTEE**

The Committee proceeded to consider the Minutes of the Meeting of the Forward Planning, Policy and Programme Sub-Committee (FPPP) held on 19<sup>th</sup> June, 2014 and the report of the Town Clerk and General Manager in connection with the above (Appendices 4/5 refer).

During consideration of the above particular reference was made to:-

- a) The previous consideration of the Council and earlier (that evening) deliberations of the Properties Committee which had endorsed the recommendations outlined in the above documents,
- b) The ongoing importance attached by the Town Council to the retention of the Guildhall Complex in a single public ownership and providing public/community use;
- c) Notwithstanding the significant factors , including capacity and resources potentially associated with acquisition the extent to which the benefits (both for the community and the wider hinterland) of acquiring the premises outweighed the drawbacks,
- d) The importance attached to acting promptly in all the circumstances.

Arising from a consensus it was therefore:

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council

- i) reaffirm it's continuing support for the retention of the Guildhall Complex in public ownership for the benefit of the community and in public use.
- ii) endorse the principle for use as set out by the FPPP Sub-Committee and approve the delivery of a proposal for a reasonable sum upon the lines of that outlined previously by the General Manager and further articulated in the report so as to provide a basic scheme for the development of the premises to provide services for the community
- iii) Subject to (i) above, authorise The Town Clerk/General Manager (through the Council's Surveyor) and in consultation with the membership of the FPPP Sub-Committee to negotiate the acquisition of the Guildhall (whilst reserving any final decision to the Council).

Noted That

- It was confirmed that, should it be necessary, a Special Meeting of the Council could be convened to expedite matters,

- following consideration of the foregoing the Committee received an update regarding a review meeting with the Heritage Lottery Fund. Indications were that, with amendments, an improved bid was achievable in relation to the Guildhall which, if successful, could enable an enhanced scheme to be delivered. Specialist consultant costs for same were anticipated in the region of £2,000 plus any related professional fees. In the circumstances it was therefore further:

RECOMMENDED THAT subject to Tavistock Town Council successfully acquiring the Guildhall Complex, a further application for support be submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund and expenditure from reserves be authorised in connection with same.

### **113. REQUESTS/OTHER ITEMS REQUIRING A DECISION**

The Committee proceeded to consider the following requests/items requiring a decision.

#### **a) Destination Okehampton**

The Committee considered the report of Councillor Trew in connection with the above (Appendix 6 refers).

In the discussion arising it was noted that there was a degree of uncertainty regarding the level of spend the Council was invited to undertake and arrangements for discharging same. Reference was further made to the anticipated publication of the related report by Network Rail the following week.

RECOMMENDED THAT

- i) Tavistock Town Council fully support Destination Okehampton and Okehampton Town Council who are the lead body, in any way it can.
- ii) All Councillors quietly encourage organisations and businesses, within the council area who may benefit from the project to make it clear to Destination Okehampton or through Tavistock Town Council to Destination Okehampton,

that they would like their name to be used in support of it.

- iii) That no press releases or intimate details of the activities of Destination Okehampton be widely provided, without the consent of Destination Okehampton, as this would create a situation where the crossing of lines of authority might occur and make the Southern route proponents aware of the strategy being adopted.

Noted That it was anticipated there would be opportunity at Council for the Report author to clarify matters in relation to cost and associated arrangements.

**b) Council ICT Infrastructure**

The Committee considered the report of the General Manager setting out progress in connection with the development of a proposal for Council ICT Infrastructure (Appendix 7 refers).

In the discussion arising from consideration of the above particular reference was made to:

- the Wokingham Town Council Website as an example of good practice (which members were invited to visit),
- the importance of delivering a well configured and up to date website for and on behalf of the Council, and, in particular,
- the importance attached to assessing and including the associated additional staffing/resource costs in the budget for any proposal for Council ICT.

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council

- i. endorse the process, as set out in the report, in principle;
- ii. recognise the potentially enhanced financial/capacity implications with the extent of the scope of the review, with an understanding that post assessment of ICT operational resilience, a balance will need to be met with in-house and external sustainability support

**c) Tavistock Heritage Festival**

No request for financial assistance had been received.

**d) Town and Parish Council Charter for Councillor Development**

The Committee considered the Report of the Town Clerk in connection with the above (Appendix 8 refers).

In the discussion arising particular reference was made to the benefits accruing from a coordinated approach to Councillor training development and support. More particularly with regard to the upcoming 2015 elections and the value attached to being involved at the commencement of a new national scheme which would enable the Council to inform and shape sector standards.

The importance of Councillors engaging and participating in the process (for example individual learning and development plans) together with appropriate resourcing arrangements was recognised arising from which it was

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council

- i) Reaffirm it's commitment to Councillor development and commit to achieving the Charter.
- ii) Offer to act as pilot authority for the Town and Parish Council Charter for Councillor Development
- iii) Appoint a (lead Councillor or Councillors) for Councillor Development.

**114. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

The following items had been circulated for information only:-

- a) Strategic Leisure Review – correspondence from West Devon Borough Council (Appendix 9)
- b) Industrial Action – the Committee noted anticipated Industrial Action scheduled for 10<sup>th</sup> July, 2014.
- c) Report of the Assistant to the Town Clerk (Appendix 10)
- d) Devon Association of Local Council's Newsletter – 2014 (Appendix 11)

Noted That arising from consideration from the above particular reference was made to the extensive training programme offered to Councillors by DALC and, more specifically, the Budget and Precept training scheduled for 21<sup>st</sup> October, 2014.

- e) Tavistock Townscape Heritage Partnership – Minutes of the Meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> March, 2014 (Appendix 12).
- f) Delivering Differently Update - the Committee was advised of recent meetings attended by representatives of the Council and the scope and timescale of arrangements in connection with same.
- g) Chamber of Commerce – Minutes of the Meetings held on 12<sup>th</sup> May and 2<sup>nd</sup> June, 2014 (Appendices 13-14 refer).

Noted That arising from consideration of the above (Appendix 14 refers) The Chamber of Commerce be advised that The Town Council Representative was Councillor Mrs J Whitcomb and not Councillor A Fleet.

- h) Tavistock Business Improvement District – Minutes of the Meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> May, 2014 (Appendix 15).
- i) Tavistock Matters – Notes of the Meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> May, 2014 (Appendix 16).

Noted That arising from consideration of the above reference was made to issues arising in and around Pitts Cleave.

- j) Future Agendas
  - i. Southern Link Parishes Committee - no items were suggested
  - ii. West Devon/Tavistock Consultative Group – no items were suggested.
- k) Updates received from Council Representative's serving on other Council bodies.

Noted That the Committee was advised of a change in the Chairmanship and Vice Chairmanship of the National Park Authority arising from unforeseen circumstances.

### **URGENT ITEM**

The Chairman agreed to take the following item as a matter of urgency in view of the timescale involved.

#### **115. LOCAL GOVERNMENT BODIES REGULATIONS 2014- POLICY CONSULTATION**

A copy of the new Policy Consultation and Draft Statutory Instrument (Appendix 17) was circulated.

In particular concern was expressed regarding the provisions associated with the recording of decisions and the importance attached by the Council to the Government adopting a pragmatic and proportionate approach when identifying those decision to which the provisions should apply. If thresholds were set too low a significant adverse effect could be had upon the ability to deliver public services such as the Pannier Market, Bedford Square, Goose Fair, Garden Festival etc.

In view of the deadline for responses occurring prior to Council it was the consensus that the Clerk respond to the consultation on behalf of Council as a matter of urgency.

#### **116. 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.

#### **117. TOWN HALL BAR STOCK AUDIT**

(**Confidential** – by virtue of relating to commercially sensitive information)

The Committee received the Stock Report of the previous two quarters.

#### **118. DEBTORS**

(**Confidential** – by virtue of relating to commercially



sensitive information).

The Committee considered and noted the lists of all those with debts to the Council dating from earlier than from the last quarter day and received updates, where appropriate, in respect of same.

**119. GUILDHALL**

(**Confidential** – by virtue of relating to commercially sensitive information)

Pursuant to previous deliberations the Committee considered how best to proceed in relation to the possible acquisition of the premises. Arising therefrom a discussion took place including reference to:

- factors associated with the current situation,
- the price range likely to represent a realistic fair market value following a market testing exercise by the owners,
- the position of the Council vis a vis that of other potential prospective purchasers together with the reported views of the vendor

It was agreed that in the circumstances the Council should do all it could do to expedite the acquisition of the unencumbered freehold of the premises in accordance with Minute No's 102 and 112 (ante).

Noted That arising from consideration of the above, and following discussion by the Committee, the Clerk would undertake appropriate action to seek/protect the Council's position without prejudice to its final decision in due course.

The press and public were readmitted to the meeting.

The meeting closed at 8.40pm

Signed.....

Dated.....

CHAIRMAN

