

MINUTES of the Meeting of **BUDGET & POLICY COMMITTEE** held on **TUESDAY 13th DECEMBER, 2022** at **5.30pm** in **THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, DRAKE ROAD, TAVISTOCK**

PRESENT

Councillor P Ward Mayor (**in the Chair**)

Councillors A Hutton and Mrs A Johnson

Councillors Mrs U Mann, P Squire (Ward Members).

IN ATTENDANCE Town Clerk (remotely), General Manager and Assistant to the Town Clerk

290. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence had been received from Councillor H Smith (Vice Chairman).

In the absence of the Vice Chairman, and in view of there not currently being a Chairman in situ, Councillor P Ward (Mayor) was appointed as the Chairman for this Meeting.

291. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

RESOLVED THAT the Minutes of the Meeting of the Budget & Policy Committee held on Tuesday 8th November, 2022 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman (Appendix 1).

292. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following Declaration of Interest was made at this point in the Meeting - Councillor P Ward in respect of Agenda Item 7 (Tavistock Twinning Association – Request for Financial Assistance), by virtue of being a member of the organisation.

ITEMS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

293. BUDGET PREPARATION & PRECEPT SETTING 2023/24

The Committee considered the Report of the Town Clerk (Appendix 2) and accompanying papers, including Budget Summary, Summary by Income and Summary by Expenditure, in connection with the above incorporating the emerging Budget for the 2023/24 Financial Year/associated Precept and reflecting the previous deliberations of the Committee and Council. Detailed reports variously by cost centre and code had been submitted to

the previous meeting and, with the exception of a minor adjustment as set out in the Report (LGPS contribution refers), were unchanged.

The report also included proposed changes to Fees & Charges (Appendix 3) across the organisation, the Rolling Capital Programme having previously been endorsed.

In the ensuing discussion particular reference was made to:

- a) Fees and Charges - changes proposed to Council Fees and Charges including, in particular, a proposed increase in the fee for pitches in the Pannier Market by 5% (and consequential adjustments) following consultation with Market Trader representatives (any further consultation responses to be reported to the subsequent Council Meeting);
- b) Disappointment in needing to set an increase, as balanced against the exceptional challenges faced in setting a balanced Budget arising from extreme revenue pressures, together with extensive related measures of mitigation and control to keep that increase to the minimum considered safe;
- c) Continuing funding uncertainty, both facing the Council and the wider public sector, in an inflationary environment;
- d) The extent to which the full extent of demands on the Council for emergency/essential repair works remained unclear pending the outcome of grant seeking/tender exercises;
- e) Compliance with the core requirements set by Council of addressing revenue issues in the year in which they occurred, and setting a Precept at below the rate of inflation, to provide a sustainable basis for services to the community and equity to the ratepayer;
- f) Notification of the Council tax base, which was expected shortly;
- g) Linking to (f) above, and in accordance with the prior decisions of Council, a recommended Precept of £204.72 per Band D equivalent property (equating to an increase of 9.75% or 34.87p per week).

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council endorse and approve:

- i. the draft Budget and Precept for Tavistock Town Council for 2023/24 as set out in the Report, and also incorporating the savings, assumptions and projections as previously submitted to/endorsed by Council; and

ii. the draft Schedule of Fees & Charges for Council Services 2023-24 as appended to the Report.

294. GRANTS PANEL MEETING

The Committee received and considered the Notes of the Meeting of the Grants Panel held on 16th November, 2022 (Appendix 4).

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council endorse and approve the Schedule of Grant Payments to Community organisations as listed.

Noted That

- a) Councillor Mrs U Mann (Ward Member) declared an interest in the Grant Application submitted by Citizens' Advice by virtue of employment and took no part in the discussion or voting thereon.
- b) Particular reference was made to an application received from Our Lady of the Assumption Roman Catholic Church for grant funding to replace the Church's audio system hearing loop. It was acknowledged that the Local Government Act 1894 'prohibits expenditure by local councils on property relating to the affairs of the church or an ecclesiastical charity'. However, recognising the range of interpretations applied to the legislation, and as the installation would benefit other users from the community (of all denominations and none), and that the installation of a hearing loop did not represent a permanent part of the building fabric, it was considered the application could be deemed eligible.

295. PRE-CANDIDATURE (LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS 2023-24)

The Committee received and considered the Report of the Town Clerk (Appendix 5) in respect of the above, together with a draft leaflet for prospective councillors to both provide information about the role and encourage interested and eligible persons to stand for public office.

In the ensuing discussion, particular reference was made to:

- the desirability of Members pro-actively encouraging able community minded citizens to stand for election to public office;
- for publicity to start early in the New Year, to give prospective candidates sufficient time to consider whether or not they wished to stand for office;
- whether a Working Party be appointed to pro-actively support the initiative, engage with the community, and raise awareness of the 2023 local government elections (to town/parish councils);
- the potential amendment of the leaflet to include sections regarding:

- what the Council does/does not do and what falls to other tiers of Council,
- the Committee structure/councillor role;
- a review of photo's deployed.
- the importance attached to retention of the General Power of Competence;
- various ways in which candidacy in the election could be publicised;
- ensuring clarity of understanding of the role and scope of the office of Town Councillor – both breadth and limitations, to avoid misunderstandings.

Furthermore, the time 'criticality' of the work was noted in view of electoral timetables, purdah and related matters.

RECOMMENDED THAT subject to the amendments listed above, the Council endorse the indicative pre-candidature information leaflet and approach as laid out in para 2.2 of the Report.

Noted that The Mayor undertook to liaise with those Councillors who had an interest in being part of an informal working group to progress/scope additional arrangements.

296. TAVISTOCK TWINNING ASSOCIATION – REQUEST FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE - ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING

A brief adjournment took place in order to facilitate the informal consideration of the above item, in view of quorum requirements arising from declarations made.

The Chairman (Mayor) declared an interest in the above item, by virtue of Membership of the organisation and left the room during consideration thereof.

In the absence of the Chairman the Chair was taken by the most recent past Mayor, Councillor A Hutton.

Those present reviewed the Briefing Note of the Town Clerk (Appendix 6) in respect of a request from the Twinning Association for the current year's Twinning budget allocation of £250 to be given as a one-off donation to the Twinning Association, to enable the activities of the Association to be reinstated following the pandemic and the next years allocation to be allocated toward hosting a May twinning event.

The indicative view of those present, as commended to Council, was that the request be endorsed.

297. RE-COMMENCEMENT OF MEETING - DALC CONFERENCE

The Mayor re-joined the Meeting and took the Chair.

The Committee received and considered the Briefing Note of the Town Clerk (Appendix 7) in respect of a suggestion that the invitation to the Devon Association of Local Council's (DALC) Annual General Meeting and Conference be extended to other Members of Council, and not just the Council's appointed representative(s).

RECOMMENDED THAT the Council agree to the annual invitation being extended to other Members of Council, subject to:

- a) the sharing of transport to mitigate costs; and
- b) all bookings being made via the Office in advance of the event, and subject to the terms of the Council's Training Policy.

298. INTERIM INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT

The Committee received the interim report of the Council's Internal Auditor (Appendix 8).

It was noted that the report was favourable in the round and the comments section set out the actions as agreed with the Auditor.

RECOMMENDED THAT the report be received and recommendations endorsed.

Noted That a report in connection with the Cemetery matters listed would be brought back to a future Committee Meeting following review by the Works Department.

EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

299. 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.

CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS CIRCULATED FOR RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

300. GUILDHALL GATEWAY CENTRE ADVISORY FORUM

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

The Committee considered the Notes of the Meeting of the Guildhall Gateway Centre Advisory Forum held on 25th November, 2022 (Appendix 9), together with a copy of Tavistock Heritage Trust's Business Plan 2023/24 (Appendix 10).

In the ensuing discussion reference was variously made to:

- the messaging volunteers and others were receiving from THT regarding changes being implemented by the Trust;
- the higher than anticipated level of financial assistance which the Town Council was providing on an exceptional basis to support the Trust in the Guildhall Gateway Centre Project which had been welcomed by THT;
- that a copy of the Trust's 2022 Annual Accounts would be circulated shortly;
- the inclusion of various matters to which the Forum had agreed in principle subject to the partners (Council and/or Trust) endorsing same (the Forum being solely advisory in nature).

RECOMMENDED THAT the indicative 'decisions' listed in the Report be received and endorsed, as/where applicable to Tavistock Town Council.

301. BAR STOCK AUDIT REPORT

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

The Committee received the Briefing Note of the General Manager (Appendix 11) which had been drafted following the conclusion of the Bar Stock Audit (appended) conducted on 16th November, 2022.

The Committee was informed that:

- when the Town Hall returned to normal operations in April 2023, the level of wastage identified should cease, notwithstanding there would always be some wastage, especially when there was a gap between bar-led events;

- some of the wastage could be attributed to the current supplier's policy of not accepting the return of goods. Due to this, other suppliers who did accept returns would be considered in the next quarter, to try and offset the issue.

RECOMMENDED THAT the Bar Stock Audit Report be received.

CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS CIRCULATED FOR INFORMATION ONLY

302. PROPERTY, LEGAL & FINANCE MATTERS

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

No new matters brought forward.

The Meeting closed at 6.33pm

Signed:

Dated:

CHAIRMAN