

MINUTES of the Meeting of **BUDGET & POLICY COMMITTEE** held on **TUESDAY 14th JUNE, 2022** at 5.30pm in **THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, DRAKE ROAD, TAVISTOCK**

PRESENT

Councillor J Ellis **Chairman**
Councillor H Smith **Vice Chairman**

Councillor P Ward (Mayor)
Councillor Mrs A Johnson

Ward Member – Councillor P Squire (Observer)

IN ATTENDANCE Town Clerk, General Manager, Assistant to the Town Clerk

68. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Ms M Ewings and A Hutton.

69. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

RESOLVED THAT the Minutes of the Meeting of the Budget & Policy Committee held on Monday 16th May, 2022 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman (Appendix 1).

70. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Prior to the consideration of further business the Committee was reminded of the applicable provisions of the Tavistock Town Council Members Code of Conduct including the requirement to consider items with an open mind, on their merits, and without pre-determination.

No Declarations of Interest were made at this point in the Meeting.

N.B. Councillor Mrs A Johnson made a Declaration of Interest at Minute No. 77 below.

ITEMS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

With the consent of the Meeting the Chairman agreed to bring forward the following item of business from the point listed on the Agenda.

71. FLAGS ON COUNCIL BUILDINGS

The Committee received and considered the report of the Town Clerk. (Appendix 2) in connection with the above.

The report incorporated a review of general Council policy on the flying of flags, occasioned by a request from the LGBTQ community in the Town to fly a non-national/municipal (rainbow) flag from the Town Hall on 25th June, 2022.

In the ensuing discussion, particular reference was made to:

- current policy arrangements;
- varying practices, both locally and elsewhere;
- the merits and drawbacks of different approaches;
- information from government, which was principally based on whether planning consent were required;
- the public sector equality duty;
- the extent to which the request at hand should/should not be distinguished from the wider policy issue of arrangements for the flying of flags.

Following consideration of the options available, and in order to both facilitate the request by the LGBTQ community, and also to promote a consistent and inclusive approach to it and all other prospective future applicants under revised arrangements, it was:

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council;

- a) endorse the current arrangements for the flying of flags from the town/municipal flagpole;
- b) permit the hanging of non-municipal flags, including those in group b of the Government's Planning Guidance, in the location presently reserved for banners on Bedford Square;
- c) investigate the acquisition of a secondary flagpole, and identify a suitable site for its erection. This would serve as a non-municipal flagpole for the purposes as described in the Report;
- d) where required, the final decision whether to agree, or not, to the flying of flags in the location at b) above, to be delegated to the Town Clerk in consultation with the Mayor and Deputy Mayor;
- e) the flying of non-municipal flags to be subject to the payment of a fee, that fee to be paid in full prior to the flying of the flag

Noted That a Member undertook to forward an e-mail received on this subject to all Members of the Committee.

72. SERVICE PLANS 2022-23

The Committee considered the draft Corporate Services Improvement Plan for 2022–23 (Appendix 3).

In the discussion arising particular reference was made to:

- current/anticipated finance/resourcing issues (revenue and capital) and associated impacts on Council workstreams;
- arrangements for the assessment of risk;
- issues associated with staff recruitment/retention and the wider jobs market;
- that in the circumstances the Council could not commit to unfunded expenditure/projects;
- the potential of a shortfall (that could be in excess of £150,000 pa) in respect of unbudgeted increased utility and insurance costs;
- acknowledgement the contents of the document represented the Council work programme for the ensuing year, which was fully committed.

The Committee proceeded to review the document in the round and, most especially including review and endorsement, project by project of the identified projects/tasks and appraisal/reappraisal of each risk in the risk register.

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council endorse and adopt the Corporate Service Plan (for Risk Register see below) as the basis for the delivery of Council Services 2022-23.

Furthermore, in relation to Risk Management:

RECOMMENDED THAT subject to the following amendments to the organisational Risk Register:

- i. 'C0' the 'likelihood' score being reduced from 3 to 2;
- ii. 'C3' the 'likelihood' score being increased from 3 to 4;
- iii. 'C4' the 'severity' score being increased from 4 to 5;
- iv. 'C4' the insertion of 'and/or' to replace '/' in the second paragraph of risk description;
- v. 'C8' the 'likelihood' score being reduced from 4 to 3;

the Council endorse and adopt the Tavistock Town Council Organisational Risk Register.

Noted That particular reference was made to the difficulty in accurately assessing severity in connection with (iii) above, also the tensions arising

in connection with cost of living pressures affecting recruitment/retention (iii refers).

73. COUNCIL FINANCES

The Committee considered the Report of the Town Clerk incorporating the Rolling Capital programme (RCP) (Appendix 4).

In the ensuing discussion particular reference was made to:

- the Council's developing financial position, most especially how the additional costs of insurance and utilities (energy) and general inflationary pressures could be met within the previously agreed Budget. Accordingly, in year dependence on a 'transfer out' from the RCP to meet unprecedented pressures on revenue expenditure;
- linkages between the report and that relating to properties also on the Agenda and the accompanying constraints which would apply to work on properties/projects;
- the extent to which (finance notwithstanding), some of the essential work was/not achievable, also the linkages to be made between current planning and the next (2023) new Council so as not to inhibit its discretion;
- priority areas, including amendment of recommendation (f) to reflect 'as soon as reasonably practicable';
- the financial pressures accruing, and associated discipline and prudence that would be required from the Council both in-year and over future years.

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council endorse the actions as set out in Section 3.2 (a – f) of the report as follows:-

- a) it endorse no new spend on works (other than routine necessary maintenance from the property and grounds maintenance budgets or those listed in para 1.10 of the report which are funded) until after a review of the prospective calls on revenue after letting the energy contracts;
- b) then at the next (September) Council Meeting review the revenue spend position, taking account of all known and anticipated inflationary and other pressures including any prospective savings;
- c) from that identify anticipated overall revenue costs projected to be incurred by the Council 'in year' and agree an appropriate transfer from the retained amount in the RCP to revenue to fund same;

- d) following on from (c) above, form an initial view on the anticipated quantum of future years increased revenue costs and how these could be met;
- e) identify which, if any, other works projects could proceed 'in year' on a funded basis;
- f) as soon as reasonably practicable, informed by the foregoing, and as part of the upcoming budget setting round, review the Councils asset base, associated income streams, issues and opportunities.

74. COUNCIL PROPERTY MAINTENANCE

The Committee considered the Report of the General Manager (Appendix 5), which had a direct relationship to, and dependency on, the previous 'Council Finances Report'.

In the ensuing discussion particular reference was made to:

- The sequential nature of works proposed and dependency on the financial position of the Council (Minute No 73 refers);
- the 'tender' exercise for repairs to the Town Hall and Museum being conducted up to procurement, but placed in abeyance at that point until the budget for repairs to Market Road was established;
- the potential availability of grant funding being investigated in an effort to offset costs and help support various repairs and projects.

RECOMMENDED THAT in accordance with Minute No 73 (above), Tavistock Town Council endorse the priority and let/committed/necessary categories of works as set out in the report, whilst acknowledging same are subject to the availability of funding.

Noted That

- an initial view on the availability of funding would be made in September (Minute No 73 refers);
- certain matters in connection with a lease were moved to the 'confidential' section of the Meeting, due to commercial sensitivity (Minute No. 76 refers);
- the confidential appendix to the Report also fell to review during the 'confidential' section of the Meeting in view of the commercial nature of the subject matter (Minute No. 79 refers).

EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

75. 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

76. TAVISTOCK MUSEUM

(**CONFIDENTIAL** - by virtue of relating to matters of a legal, financial or contractual or commercial nature affecting persons other than the Council)

Pursuant to Minute No 74 a discussion took place regarding the nature of works, both required and desirable, allocation of responsibilities, past maintenance matters, future arrangements and the potential for developing relationships within the 'heritage quarter' and importance attached to opportunities for grant funding.

77. TAVISTOCK GUILDHALL

(**CONFIDENTIAL** - by virtue of relating to matters of a legal, financial or contractual nature affecting persons other than the Council)

The Committee was advised that the anticipated meeting of the Guildhall Gateway Centre Advisory Forum had yet to take place.

In the ensuing discussion particular reference was made to the importance attached to understanding the financial position of both partners, now and in the future, to provide a managed base for the control of costs and co-ordinated delivery offer.

Noted That Councillor Mrs A Johnson Declared an Interest in the item above by virtue of being a past hirer of the venue.

CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS CIRCULATED FOR INFORMATION ONLY

78. STAFFING

(**CONFIDENTIAL** - by virtue of relating to matters of a legal, financial or contractual nature affecting persons other than the Council)

The Committee received oral updates from both the Town Clerk and General Manager, in respect of the current position as regarding the establishment.

The Town Clerk expressed appreciation to all staff for their commitment during a continuing and extended period of being significantly under-

staffed. An update was also provided in relation to extant (and anticipated) vacancies and challenges associated with recruitment in a very 'tight' jobs market. Also concerns regarding the current (and likely future) rate of inflation and associated potential impacts on staff wellbeing, recruitment and retention, particularly at the entry level grades.

79. COUNCIL PROPERTY MAINTENANCE

(**CONFIDENTIAL** - by virtue of relating to matters of a legal, financial or contractual nature affecting persons other than the Council)
(see Minute No. 74 above)

The Committee noted the confidential appendix to the prior Council Property Maintenance Report and ancillary matters.

The Meeting closed at 7.13pm

Signed:

Dated:
CHAIRMAN