

MINUTES

of the Meeting of the **BUDGET & POLICY COMMITTEE** held at the Council Chamber, Drake Road, Tavistock on **TUESDAY 19TH NOVEMBER, 2019 at 6.30pm**

PRESENT

Councillor A Hutton (Chairman)

Councillor P Williamson (Vice Chairman)

Councillors Ms L Crawford, Mrs M Ewings, Mrs A Johnson, H Smith, P Ward.

Councillors J Ellis, J Moody Mrs U Mann, Mrs G Parker, G Parker, B Smith, P Squire (Ward Members).

IN ATTENDANCE

Town Clerk, General Manager.

240. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence, all Members were present.

241. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

RESOLVED THAT the Minutes (Appendix 1) of the Meeting of the Budget & Policy Committee held on Tuesday 15th October, 2019 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

242. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- a. Councillors A Hutton, J Moody and B Smith declared a personal non-prejudicial interest in Minute No. 251 by virtue of membership of an organisation concerned;
- b. Councillors G Parker and H Smith declared a personal non-prejudicial interest in Minute No. 255(b) by virtue of being a Trustee and Member of the organisation;
- c. Councillor P Williamson declared a personal non-prejudicial interest in Minute No 251 by virtue of being a Landowner associated with the event.

ITEMS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

243 BUDGET PREPARATION AND PRECEPT SETTING 2020/21

The Committee considered the Report of the Town Clerk (Appendix 2) in connection with the above providing an opportunity to consider the emerging draft budget for the 2020/21 financial year prepared pursuant to the Committee's previous deliberations as at October 2019, and subsequent consideration by Council.

Attention was drawn, in particular, to provision which had been made in respect of Public Conveniences (Code 4120), Guildhall running costs (Code 402), grant funding to Tavistock Heritage Trust (THT) (Code 4099) together with other areas of adjustment in preparation of the draft budget. Also those arrangements, as agreed by Council, for the funding of loan repayments in connection with the capital cost of the Guildhall Gateway Centre without recourse to the need for an increase in the Precept.

In the ensuing discussion reference was made to a range of issues, including in particular:-

- a. Concerns regarding the extent to which decisions of the Borough Council (public conveniences divestment, localisation of council tax support, withdrawal of grounds maintenance contract) had a potentially substantial impact (in the order of £100,000pa) upon Town Council services and funding levels in the forthcoming financial year and beyond, together with associated options available to the Council regarding funding;
- b. Current areas of uncertainty in the budget setting process including the outcome of value engineering work in connection with the Townscape Heritage Initiative Guildhall Public Realm, possible capital costs associated with a need to refurbish public conveniences being released by the Borough Council, potential for altered spend in relation to capital projects and possible draw down of resources by the Tennis Club;
- c. The prospective benefits associated with reinstating a Localism Reserve in order to enable a modest (perhaps £20,000 per annum) provision to be made to support applicable in year initiatives (such as in connection of the progression of a Neighbourhood Development Plan, ecological/ environmental initiatives etc);
- d. The importance attached to maintaining sufficient funding levels for the Rolling Capital Programme and reserves to meet reasonable projected future needs;
- e. That notification was yet to be received from the Billing Authority in respect of the Council Tax base 2020/21;
- f. The potential impact, if West Devon Borough Council were to proceed with the introduction of a Community Infrastructure Levy, through a Neighbourhood Development Plan and associated funding;
- g. An exercise currently being undertaken by the Council's Surveyors to establish an approximate value attributable to in-kind benefits made available to Community organisations by the Town Council;
- h. Costs and benefits associated with alternative ways of working;
- i. The level of, and importance attached to effective operation of, the General Reserve;

- j. Consensus that, in 2020/21 active consideration would be given to reviewing the fees and charges levied in connection with the Pannier Market for the next financial year. It being inappropriate to review same at the current time given recent works both to the Pannier Market and Surround;
- k. Attention being drawn to, and explanation given in relation to, various discretions as identified in the relation to the application of fees and charges for the Town Hall and Butchers' Hall.

It was acknowledged that there were a higher number of uncertainties at the current stage in the budget setting process (as outlined above) than was normally the case. These would therefore be addressed for the presentation of a final Draft Budget to the Committee at its January Meeting.

RECOMMENDED THAT the Council endorse

- i. The submitted draft Council Budget 2020/21 subject to Officers being tasked with undertaking further due diligence in relation areas of uncertainty/potential calls on resources to identify the options available to the Council;
- ii. Reinstatement of an earmarked Localism Reserve with funding of £20,000 to provide support to new locality based Council initiatives;
- iii. Any surpluses available as at year end, and not otherwise identified, be carried forward into the Rolling Capital Programme;
- iv. The Schedules of Fees and Charges for Council services to apply in 2020/21;
- v. The Council Fixed Asset Register.

244. AUDIT

The Committee considered the Report of the Internal Auditor to the Council in connection with both the application of the Council's VAT partial exemption calculation and the configuration of Rolling Capital Fund documentation (Appendix 3).

RECOMMENDED THAT

- i. VAT partial exemption calculation – the Accountants to the Council re-compute the amount repayable;
- ii. Rolling capital fund – the suggestions of the Auditor be submitted to the Accountant to the Council with a view to securing a more simple and holistic representation of the availability of reserves.

245. GUILDHALL GATEWAY CENTRE – COLLABORATIVE WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

The Committee considered arrangements for the nomination of up to 3 Councillors to represent the Council in delivery and development meetings with Tavistock Heritage Trust pursuant to the terms of the Service Level Agreement and Lease.

RECOMMENDED THAT

- a. The appointment of Councillors H Smith (Guildhall Lead Member) and P Ward (Townscape Heritage Lead Member) be confirmed; together; with
- b. The appointment of one other Member (Councillor G Parker indicated he wished his name to go forward).

246. TOWN HALL LIFT

The Committee considered the Report of the General Manager (Appendix 4) in connection with how best to proceed regarding recent failures of the Town Hall Lift.

It was advised of recent maintenance spend (in the order of £7,000) and ongoing issues. Supplier quotations for an upgrade of the existing lift had been received at in the order of £39,000. In the circumstances it now appeared that the only appropriate way to proceed, if the Council were to meet its obligations to provide access, was replacement. Preliminary enquiries suggested that a budget of in the order of £40,000 was appropriate which could be sourced from the Emergency Maintenance Reserve which had been put in place to cover eventualities such as this.

In the ensuing discussion reference was made to the importance attached to providing adequate and appropriate access arrangements to the premises, supplier warranties, the need for appropriate assessment of running costs and lead times for delivery (realistically anticipated March 2020).

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council

- a. Seek tenders for the replacement of the Town Hall Lift;
- b. Agree to make available up to £45,000 from the Extraordinary Maintenance Reserve Budget.

Noted That reference was also made to the operation of the Town Hall heating system and discussions with maintenance engineers indicating necessary upgrades.

247. REQUESTS FOR SUPPORT

The Committee considered the following requests for support:-

- a. Rural/Market Towns Group

Correspondence had been received (Appendix 5) from the Rural Services Network which was seeking to establish Rural/Market Towns Grouping within its network. The annual subscription cost for a Town with a population 10,000 or more was £150.00 per annum to provide both a rural voice and resource to market towns and their hinterlands.

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council subscribe to the Rural/Market Towns Group for a period of 1 year and review the benefits of membership at that time.

b. Request for a Letter of Support

The Committee considered a request (Appendix 6) from a representative of a Registered Social Landlord inviting the Council to consider writing a letter of support in connection with a grant application being made in connection with a play area/community space in Greenlands.

In the ensuing discussion reference was made to a range of issues including the background to the application, the history of the estate, respective roles of West Devon Borough Council and LiveWest, the outcome of Officer level meetings/correspondence and the potential for the Council, through a Neighbourhood Development Plan, to adopt a co-ordinated and strategic approach in connection with open spaces and play.

RECOMMENDED THAT the Council write a letter indicating its support in principle for the provision of a play area/open space at Greenlands.

ITEMS CIRCULATED FOR INFORMATION ONLY

248. PROGRESS REPORT (GUILDHALL GATEWAY CENTRE)

The Committee received an update Progress Report (Appendix 7) on the Guildhall Gateway Centre Project.

249. SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENT WORKING GROUP

The Committee considered the Notes of the Meeting of the Sustainability and Environment Working Group (Appendix 8) held on 16th October, 2019.

RECOMMENDED THAT the Minutes of the Meeting of the Sustainability and Environment Working Group held at the Council Chamber, Drake Road, Tavistock, on Wednesday 16th October, 2019 be received and the recommendations contained therein endorsed.

250. PENNON SHAREHOLDING

The Committee noted the Holding of the Council (472) in respect of shares held in Pennon Group PLC.

URGENT BUSINESS

In the interests of expediting the business of the Committee the Chairman agreed to take the following item as a matter of urgency.

251. GOOSE FAIR PARK AND RIDE INCOME AND EXPENDITURE 2019

The Committee considered the Briefing Note of the Town Clerk (Appendix 9) in connection with the above arising from which it was:-

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council recognise the contribution made by the Tavistock and Tamar Lions Clubs by way of Grant as in previous years – thereby making an award of £1,000 per Lions Club.

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

252. 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 FOR RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

253. TAVISTOCK TOWNSCAPE HERITAGE INITIATIVE (GUILDHALL CAR PARK)

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

The Committee considered the Report (Appendix 10) of the General Manager in connection with the above prepared pursuant to the opening of Tenders on 11th November, 2019.

The General Manager outlined the position following the return of Tenders together with value engineering work which was in the process of being undertaken. In view of the lead times associated with the proposals and related mobilisation periods it was proposed to bring a report the next Meeting of Council to enable it to agree the basis on which to proceed.

RECOMMENDED THAT the Committee endorse "in principle" the continuation of the "value engineering" exercise and further consider its options to deliver the project at the Meeting of Full Council on 3rd December including whether or not to allocate additional funding to deliver the project as a whole or in part.

254. PUBLIC CONVENIENCES SUB-COMMITTEE

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

The Committee considered the Minutes (Appendix 11) of the Meeting of the Public Conveniences Sub-Committee held on Monday 11th November 2019.

In the ensuing discussion reference was made to condition surveys which were shortly to be undertaken and the suggestion that, in the circumstances, the next Meeting be arranged at a date and time which would enable it to consider the report in connection with same.

255. COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS – LEASE/LICENCE MATTERS

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

The Committee considered the following:-

- a. Tavistock Museum Trust – request in relation to an existing lease (Appendix 12).

RECOMMENDED THAT consideration of the request be deferred to the next meeting of the Committee pending the outcome of a report from the Council's Surveyors in connection with the treatment of all Council premises let on non-market terms.

- b. Tavistock Sensory Garden – the Committee was advised that the Licence Agreement was substantially complete. In order to meet the prospective requirement of funders of the applicant concerned attention was drawn to a non-standard clause (namely that if during the term of the licence the Council were to require relocation of the facility it would be at the Council's expense).

RECOMMENDED THAT the inclusion of the proposed term be endorsed.

256. FLEXIBLE RETIREMENT – STAFF REQUEST

(**CONFIDENTIAL** by virtue of relating to personnel matters).

The Committee considered the Report of the Town Clerk (Appendix 13) in connection with the above.

RECOMMENDED THAT in the circumstances, and subject to the General Manager submitting the business case in the normal way in relation to cost and service delivery confirming the position outlined above, the Council accede to the request.

Noted That a question arose in connection with continuous service which would be reported back on.

CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS
CIRCULATED FOR INFORMATION ONLY

257. PROGRESS REPORT (TAVISTOCK TOWNSCAPE HERITAGE INITIATIVE)

(**CONFIDENTIAL** by virtue of relating to contractual, financial and/or legal matters or information relating to the financial affairs of persons other than the Council)

The Committee received and noted an update report (Appendix 14) on the Tavistock Townscape Heritage Initiative Scheme.

The Meeting closed at 8.40pm.

Signed.....

Dated.....

CHAIRMAN