

MINUTES of the Meeting of **BUDGET & POLICY COMMITTEE** held on Tuesday 1st December, 2020 at 5pm conducted remotely via Zoom and YouTube

PRESENT

Councillor A Hutton (Chairman - Deputy Mayor)
Councillor Mrs G Parker (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Mrs A Johnson (Mayor)
Councillors Ms L Crawford, J Ellis, Mrs M Ewings*, Mrs U Mann, H Smith, P Williamson*.

Ward Members – Councillors J Moody, G Parker, P Squire (Observers)

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

*arrived late to the Meeting

151. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence had been received.

152. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

RESOLVED THAT The Minutes of the Meeting of the Budget & Policy Committee held on Tuesday 20th October, 2020 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman (Appendix 1).

153. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

ITEMS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

154. BUDGET PREPARATION & PRECEPT SETTING 2021-22

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 2021/22 financial year prepared pursuant to the Committee's previous deliberations as at October 2020, the recent finance workshop and subsequent consideration by Council. The report included the Rolling Capital Programme and Fixed Asset Register.

Attention was drawn, amongst others to:

- a) The impact of Coronavirus on Council income streams, consequences arising and accompanying mitigation measures;
- b) The wider background to the financial position of the Council, the limitations on its actions, mitigations undertaken to date and proposed, support provided by the Council to others/essential services maintained during Coronavirus, and related matters;
- c) The incorporation, within the report and accompanying budget documents, of the savings already agreed by Council in-year (£200,000), the potential for limited further in-year savings (at the January Meeting) and additional savings/mitigations recommended by officers for the next financial year;
- d) That (notwithstanding car parking fees in light of potential to align traffic Orders with the Borough Council), a draft schedule of fees and charges for 2021/22 would be brought to the next meeting;
- e) The potential to review the allocation of the reserve earmarked in connection with burial ground provision (£50,000), with a view to supporting the General Reserve in-year;
- f) An amendment regarding the allocation made to transfer in-year to the Rolling Capital Programme (£60,000 not £30,000 as originally envisaged arising from the demands upon capital resources;
- g) Appreciation for the work of the Council's accountancy service;
- h) Dependence on the success or otherwise of a grant application to 'Kickstart' in connection with the Guildhall Project, as well as potential support from other sources. More generally the position was expected to be somewhat clearer by the time of budget setting;
- i) The potential impact of the Government Covid Winter Plan;
- j) The potential that budgets relating to temporary staff/website maintenance might be revisited prior to January to support the operation by Tavistock Heritage Trust of the Guildhall Gateway Centre;
- k) That Guildhall Car Park Charges had not been revisited for more than 10 years - applying an inflationary uplift for just ten years would lead to fees of approximately 50p per half hour and £1.00 per hour (whilst retaining current concessionary arrangements);
- l) The changing skills sets that would be required within the organisation as it transitioned from capital delivery to other initiatives;
- m) Success in securing a Government grant of £3,000 toward the second 'lockdown' of the Pannier Market;
- n) Whilst in the past commercial income had been used to subsidise the ratepayer, the expectation that in current circumstances a precept increase would be necessary;
- o) Matters which would appropriately arise in 'part 2' of the Meeting.

RECOMMENDED THAT Council:

- a) endorse in principle the submitted draft Council Budget 2021/22 (and in-year adjustments) as prepared:
 - incorporating revenue budget savings identified previously by Council and the further adjustments arising as at the Finance Workshop together with the additional savings and adjustments as included;
 - on the basis of meeting the cost of lost income caused by Coronavirus and those accruing from new responsibilities (Guildhall Public Conveniences and Gateway Centre);
- b) endorse any cost centre surpluses available as at financial year end, and not otherwise identified, be carried forward to the General Reserve 2021-22;
- c) receive the Rolling Capital Programme and the Fixed Asset Register;
- d) agree to the release of the £50,000 earmarked reserve for a burial ground to apply against the impacts of lost commercial income in the current financial year;
- e) Endorse the proposed amendment of Car Park tariffs for the Guildhall Car Park to 50p per half hour and £1.00 per hour respectively;
- f) Consider a schedule of fees and charges at its next meeting.

Noted That Councillor Mrs M Ewings joined the Meeting during consideration of this matter.

155. STATEMENT OF INTERNAL CONTROL

The Committee considered and received the organisational Statement of Internal Control (Appendix 3).

RECOMMENDED THAT Council endorse and re-adopt the Statement of Internal Control.

156. GUILDHALL CAR PARK

The Committee received an oral report with regard to a request received from the Police for allocation of a parking space when the refurbished Guildhall Car Park was re-opened.

It was confirmed that due to changed configuration and capacity of the car park, and the varied use by the Police, an effective alternative location might be secured at the end of Market Road affording both visibility and ease of access. Enquiries would be made as to whether there were any consequential issues with such a designation on a private adopted highway.

RECOMMENDED THAT Council offer the Police Authority use of a designated car parking space at the end of Market Road (nearest the Post Office).

157. CORONAVIRUS & ANNUAL LEAVE

The Committee considered the report of the Town Clerk (Appendix 4), in connection with the impact of Coronavirus on staffing capacity, and some consequential issues arising in connection with the scheduling of annual leave during a period of reduced staffing presence. The options provided were premised on all staff being required to take 'in-year' the statutory minimum.

In the discussion arising reference was made to related matters including general policy and practice and, more particularly:

- the uncertain times staff had to work through, and additional duties arising from a reduced establishment;
- the current provision whereby staff could carry forward a maximum of 5 days' leave from one holiday year to the next;
- a preference for the first option set out in the report, together with an additional allocation of two days leave to be awarded by the employer at Christmas time, in recognition of the contribution made by staff during the Coronavirus pandemic.

RECOMMENDED THAT;

- subject to meeting the statutory minimum annual leave requirement staff be allowed, for the current year only, to carry forward up to an additional (i.e. on top of the 5-day provision already in situ) 2.5 days' annual leave to the next leave year;
- in view of the exceptional circumstances applying in the current year and the contribution made by staff to the work of the Council in most challenging times, and by way of appreciation, the Council allocate 2 days' additional holiday to each Member of staff to be taken on designated days at Christmas (for those Market staff whose services were not able to close at that time the two days to be taken before the end of January).

Noted That Councillor P Williamson joined the Meeting during consideration of this matter.

ITEMS CIRCULATED FOR INFORMATION ONLY

158. SUSTAINABILITY & ENVIRONMENT WORKING GROUP

The Committee received and noted the Notes of the Meeting of the Sustainability & Environment Working Group, held on 10th November, 2020 (Appendix 5).

In the discussion arising particular reference was made to:

- confirmation of the appointment of a Vice-Chairman of the Working Group at the November Meeting;
- the request the Chairman of the Working Group had previously sent regarding an update/presentation on the Borough Council's current environmental activities.

159. EXTERNAL AUDITOR CERTIFICATE 2019-20

The Committee noted that the Certificate of the External Auditor was available on the website, no matters of concern had been identified.

160. PANNIER MARKET UPDATE

The Committee received and noted the report of the Market Reeve, which set out an overview of the position regarding the operation of the Pannier Market (Appendix 6). It was reported that:

- the Pannier Market would re-open on Wednesday 2nd December, 2020 and operate on a 7-day per week basis until Christmas Eve (restrictions permitting);
- that Butchers' Hall would also be open for much of the same period;
- from the new year it was anticipated the Pannier Market would return to 5-day per week trading, the same as before the first lockdown;
- the matter of late night opening was being kept under review.

Noted That Councillor Mrs A Johnson Declared an interest by virtue of family association linking to trading in Butchers' Hall.

161. PENNON SHARE HOLDING

The Committee noted the Council's holding of 491 shares in the Pennon Group plc.

URGENT BUSINESS BROUGHT FORWARD

AT THE DISCRETION OF THE CHAIRMAN

162. TIME CAPSULE

A Member reported arrangements for a 'time capsule' to be located adjacent to the Statue of the Duke of Bedford and the consequential opportunity for the Council to decide which items it would wish to be placed therein. Other delivery partners included Tavistock Lions and St Rumon's School

Following a discussion on what might/might not be appropriate it was agreed that interested Members contact the Councillor concerned who would review the suggestions and make a recommendation to Council in December.

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

163. 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.

The Meeting then temporarily adjourned at 6.11pm.

The Meeting reconvened at 6.22pm attendance by Councillors and authorised Officers at the Confidential reconvened part of the Meeting was accessed via Zoom.

PRESENT

Councillor A Hutton (Chairman – Deputy Mayor)

Councillor Mrs G Parker (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors Ms L Crawford, J Ellis, Mrs M Ewings, Mrs A Johnson, Mrs U Mann, H Smith, P Williamson.

Ward Members:-

Councillors J Moody, G Parker, P Squire (Observers)

IN ATTENDANCE

Town Clerk, General Manager, Assistant to the Town Clerk.

DECLARATION on entering the Confidential section - each Councillor present was asked to declare to the Chairman that there were no other persons present, nor would be present, who were not entitled to be (hearing or seeing), and/or recording the Meeting. All Members made a positive Declaration.

CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

164. BUDGET PREPARATION & PRECEPT SETTING 2021/22 (TREATMENT OF EARMARKED RESERVES)

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

The Committee received an Addendum to the main Budget Report (Appendix 7).

In the discussion arising reference was made to;

- The extent which capital receipts might be capable of being repurposed if strict requirements were met and subject to limitations;
- the purpose of the Economic Support Earmarked Reserve;
- the projected shortfall in the budget (on the basis of current figures) and 'best case' scenario including dependence on outstanding grant applications;
- the additional savings which might be made at the next meeting, subject to the position of partner bodies;
- the use and value of various premises, cost of upkeep of some of the residential parts of the Council's estate, current Government policy and associated issues and options;
- a consensus that property matters and the treatment of capital receipts be considered in more detail early in the new financial year when the financial position of the Council was clearer.

RECOMMENDED THAT Council re-consider the potential use of earmarked sinking fund reserves, and the strategic 'fit' of Council premises, in the first quarter of the new Financial Year with a view to replenishment of the General Reserve.

165. TENANCY MATTER

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

The Committee considered the report of the Town Clerk (Appendix 8).

RECOMMENDED THAT Council endorse that the provisions of Minute No. 59(a) (as adopted by Council - Minute No. 77 refers) be dis-applied in connection with the identified premises which be treated as excluded from the application of the measure.

CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS FOR INFORMATION ONLY

166. GUILDHALL GATEWAY CENTRE

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

The Committee received a copy of the Guildhall Gateway Centre Progress Report, a copy of which had been submitted to the National Heritage Lottery Fund (NHLF) (Appendix 9).

It was anticipated that the next report would demonstrate substantial progress which would have been made at that time with the following residual areas due to be completed early in the new year being:

- bespoke joinery in the Courtroom;
- the glass doors to the entrance and other glazed doors/bronze linings;
- some re-decoration on the ground floor.

On completion of the main build project interpretation fit-out could then commence.

Noted That Councillor Mrs M Ewings left the Meeting

For information an outline was given of types and quantum of capital project costs arising in relation to Coronavirus.

The Meeting closed at 7.05pm

Signed:

Dated:
CHAIRMAN