

MINUTES of the Virtual Meeting of the **BUDGET & POLICY COMMITTEE** held on **TUESDAY 2nd JUNE, 2020 at 5.00pm** conducted remotely via Zoom and Youtube

PRESENT

Councillor A Hutton (Chairman)
Councillor P Williamson (Vice Chairman)

Councillors Ms L Crawford, Mrs A Johnson, H Smith,
P Ward (immediate past Mayor).

Ward Members - Councillors J Ellis, Mrs U Mann,
J Moody, G Parker, Mrs G Parker and B Smith
(Observers)

IN ATTENDANCE

Town Clerk, General Manager, Assistant to the Town
Clerk

389. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence, all Members of the Committee were present.

390. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

RESOLVED THAT the Minutes (Appendix 1) of the Meeting of the Budget & Policy Committee held on Tuesday 18th February, 2020 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

391. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

ITEMS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

392. CORONAVIRUS ACT 2020 – CONDUCT OF MEETINGS

The Chairman took the above item out of the order as listed on the Agenda.

The Committee considered the report (Appendix 2) of the Town Clerk in connection with the above setting out arrangements to give effect to recent temporary legislation regarding democratic governance and associated clarification on various points arising including regarding:

- Status of the Annual Meeting,
- The role of the Committee vis-a-vis Council and relationship of this topic to an item listed prior to this on the Agenda (Minute No. 393 refers);

- Consequential matters.

In the ensuing discussion reference was made to the options available to the Council, regarding holding (or not) an Annual Meeting, Council terms, 'hybrid' meetings and related matters including applicable temporary legislative provisions.

In response to a question the Proper Officer advised that, for the purposes of Member notices as listed under Standing Orders, and for the duration of the health pandemic, emails from the Town Council email address of a Councillor would be acceptable in lieu of signed copies.

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council endorse the report and adopt Appendix 1 to the Report 'Amendments to Standing Orders' as a temporary variation to its Standing Orders.

393. CALENDAR OF MEETINGS

The Committee considered the report of the Town Clerk (Appendix 3) and associated:

- a) provisional Calendar of Meetings for the Civic Year 2020-2021 including recurring (but not ad-hoc) Meetings of the Council (Appendix 4);
- b) whether or not to return to the Committee reporting to Council;
- c) future arrangements for the Civic Ball.

In the discussion arising reference was made variously to:

- public conveniences in the ownership of the Borough Council;
- matters consequential on the Annual Meeting of Council;
- issues affecting the viability of the Civic Ball and associated matters;
- Council terms and the reported practice of other authorities (such as a suggestion of 18 months¹).

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council:

- i. resume its normal role as decision maker of the organisation (i.e. the Budget and Policy Committee forego the emergency delegation made to it);
- ii. adopt the draft Calendar of Meetings 2020-2021, (subject to any future amendments as required by the health pandemic or changes to legislation);
- iii. agree cancellation of the 2020 Civic Ball with the next scheduled Ball taking place in Spring 2021.

¹ INFORMATIVE a resolution to adopt an 18 Mayoral month term is not legally possible. Appointments can only be made to subsist to the next Annual Meeting of Council (May 2021) and may not extend beyond that.

- iv. Consider whether to hold an Annual Meeting under the emergency legislation and, if so, whether to seek a normal Council term to May 2021/ such other options as might be available².

394. CORONAVIRUS: HEALTH & SAFETY & RISK MANAGEMENT

The Committee considered the report of the Town Clerk (Appendix 5) in connection with the above setting out the current position, recommended practice and the principles and practice which the Council might follow going forward.

In the ensuing discussion reference was made, in particular, to:

- work being and to be undertaken,
- the operation of the organisational risk management matrix/process;
- risk related factors consequential upon Coronavirus;
- current operating practice, and practice undertaken to date during lockdown;
- staff involvement/engagement, tasked management actions.

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council;

- a) include a new risk on the Corporate Register, as outlined in Section 3 of the Report, as necessitated by the Coronavirus Pandemic; and
- b) endorse the approach set out in the Report
 - i. for the development of risk assessments and safe systems of work pursuant on the impacts of the Coronavirus health emergency;
 - ii. also to inform the principles to be adopted in the managed and phased re-opening of Council services, and the Health & Safety Policy to the Council be temporarily amended accordingly.

395. CORONAVIRUS HEALTH EMERGENCY SOCIAL FUND

The Committee considered the report of the Town Clerk (Appendix 6) in connection with the above.

In the discussion arising particular reference was made to;

- awards made to date;
- current arrangements for the making of awards under the scheme;
- delegation arrangements more generally;
- the legal parameters attaching to decision making in the sector;
- the cohort – size and composition engaged as consultees in the decision making process.

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council

- a) note awards made to date under the Scheme;

² Note in original form the above words 'such other options as might be available' were substituted with 'an 18 month term til May 2022'. This is not reflected in the Minute as it is not capable of lawful implementation (see footnote above) See also accompanying supplementary report/appendix.

- b) endorse the continuation of the operation of the Scheme under the current delegation (subject to, in the event there is not unanimity, any application being brought before the Budget and Policy Committee or Council (as appropriate)) for determination;
- c) endorse the continuation of existing general pandemic emergency officer/member delegation arrangements in the event that decisions are required at short notice which cannot practicably be secured through the normal meeting process.

Noted That Councillor Mrs U Mann declared a personal non-prejudicial interest as author of an application under the Grant Scheme.

396. COMMERCIAL TENANCY MATTERS

The Committee considered the report of the Town Clerk (Appendix 7) in connection with the above setting out the current position including the extensive range of measures introduced by the Council to support its commercial tenants.

In the discussion arising reference was made, in particular, to:

- the depth of financial (which substantially exceeded Government recommended practice) and other support provided to Council tenants and equivalent stakeholders to alleviate distress and support businesses during the pandemic;
- the utilisation of professional services to provide good practice advice to enable the Council to properly discharge its responsibilities as responsible commercial landlord and public sector body respectively;
- the keeping under review of local and national circumstances, support and challenges;
- the commitment of the Council to supporting its tenants in particular, and the business sector more generally, as a basis for a vibrant local economy supporting the local community and developing community/economic resilience;
- close collaboration and communication with the BID Co and other stakeholders.

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council endorse the course of action, as set out in the Report, with the matter being further considered by not later than the Budget setting process.

397. TAVISTOCK BID CO – APPOINTMENT OF REPRESENTATIVE(S)

The Council had been requested to nominate;

- a) **Tavistock BID Company Town Recovery Plan** – appointment of
 - o a Councillor; and
 - o an Officer.

In the ensuing discussion, reference was made, in particular, to;

- the relationship between this nomination and the existing BID Co (Director) nomination and associated matters;

- acknowledgement that appointees to outside bodies were under an obligation to represent fairly and accurately the views of the Council, and not personal views;
- appreciation for the work of the Council's current representative on the BID Co;
- that, in the interim between this Committee Meeting and ratification any nominee would operate, on behalf of the Council, on an informal basis.

RECOMMENDED THAT

- Councillor A Hutton be appointed to represent the Council (Councillor representative) on the BID Town Recovery Plan Group;
- The Clerk and General Manager (i.e. either according to subject matter, but not both) be appointed to represent the Council (Officer representative) on the BID Town Recovery Plan Group.

Reopening the High Street Safely

Arising from consideration of the above, and in view of the pressing timescale, it was reported that West Devon Borough Council (WDBC) had been designated by Government as accountable body/administering authority for £49,000 ERDF funding to support the reopening of high streets following coronavirus.

This was only available for those activities WDBC was not already undertaking in its various statutory duties/roles including Category 1 Responder, Environmental Health Authority and Economic Development Authority.

In view of the Government decision to reopen the high streets to non-essential retail on 15th June, it was a matter of utmost urgency that WDBC clarify what it was doing already and how it would operate the Scheme given that such would need to be delivered over the next two weeks.

In the circumstances it was:

AGREED THAT the Town Clerk write to the Acting Chief Executive of the Borough Council, as a matter of utmost urgency to seek to establish the foregoing in order that WDBC (as responsible body) supported by the Town Council and BID Co could put in place effective arrangements for the safe reopening of the high street in Tavistock on/by 15th June.

b) **BID Co Business Survey (and Tavistock & District Chamber of Commerce Business Survey)**

Nominations were sought for 3 Councillors to collectively complete, on behalf of the Council in its capacity as a BID Levy payer and business operator (ie not as local Council), the above surveys.

RECOMMENDED THAT the Mayor, Councillors J Ellis and Mrs U Mann be nominated to complete both the BID Company and Chamber of Commerce surveys on behalf of the Council.

Noted that arising from consideration of the above reference was made to a range of factors including survey timing, take-up, publication and format.

ITEMS CIRCULATED FOR INFORMATION ONLY

398. COUNCIL OPERATING ARRANGEMENTS

The Committee noted the report of the Town Clerk (Appendix 8) detailing how Council services had been delivered during the current pandemic and associated support given and offered to the pandemic relief effort by the Town Council.

In the discussion arising reference was made to communications, lockdown/unlocking arrangements and related matters.

399. COUNCIL FINANCES

The Committee noted the phased Budget Report as at year end (Appendix 9). It was acknowledged this represented a 'snapshot' of the position and the accounts, when available, would provide a more detailed analysis.

In due course it would be necessary to review the position more deeply including:

- loss of income due to Coronavirus – direct and indirect;
- income deferred and associated risk levels;
- impact on community services and capital projects;
- General and earmarked reserves;
- Consequential challenges around prioritisation and allocation of available resources;
- future funding.

Noted That the Mayor had written to the local MP to raise these issues and others. The Council anticipated a first quarter reduction in income of in the order of £230,000-£260,000.

400. CAPITAL PROJECTS – PROGRESS

The Committee was advised, inter alia, that

- Capital project works had recommenced following lockdown;
- Safe systems of work had been implemented and there was a necessary reduction in work force on-site with consequential impact on the duration of projects;
- Regular virtual project meetings were taking place to monitor progress;
- There were now no known material/supply delays associated with the public realm project.

401. UNLOCKING THE LOCKDOWN

The Committee received, for information only:

- a) the Tavistock BID Recovery Plan (Appendix 10)

Noted That reference was made, amongst others, to public convenience provision, an anticipated update to the circulated version and the positive role of the BID Co.

- b) Tavistock BID Company Survey Results (see Minute No. 397b above) (Appendix 11)

- c) Individual councillor views in connection with the future of the Town.

402. SCHEDULE OF DELEGATED DECISIONS

The Committee noted the Schedule of Decisions taken under emergency delegation as publically listed on the Council Website.

URGENT BUSINESS BROUGHT FORWARD AT THE DISCRETION OF THE CHAIRMAN

The Chairman agreed to take the following item as a matter of urgency.

403. CONDOLENCES

The Mayor reported the sad loss of Mr Ian Harley of Raynet. Mr Harley had been a member of Raynet for 50 years and coordinated communications at Goose Fair for 40 years. He had been a good friend to the Town Council and undertaken a key role in both Goose Fair and other major events in the Town down the years.

The Committee extended its sympathies to Mr Harley's family and the Mayor undertook to convey the Council's condolences to his family.

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

404. 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 7.22pm.

The Meeting reconvened at 7.32pm attendance by Councillors and authorised Officers at the Confidential reconvened part of the Meeting was accessed via Zoom.

PRESENT

Councillor A Hutton (Chairman)

Councillor P Williamson (Vice Chairman)

Councillors Ms L Crawford, Mrs A Johnson, H Smith,
P Ward (immediate past Mayor).

Ward Members:-

Councillors J Ellis, Mrs U Mann, J Moody and G Parker (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
CIRCULATED FOR INFORMATION ONLY

405. PERSONNEL MATTERS

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

The Committee received an oral report outlining the current position in relation to the staffing establishment, number of vacancies and anticipated timeline for re-appointments (subject to Covid).

406. COMMERCIAL TENANCY MATTERS

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

The Committee received an oral report outlining the current position in relation to commercial tenants, pricing, opening and other arrangements potentially contingent on Pannier Market staged re-opening together with other matters relating to the commercial activities of the Council.

Reference was also made to communications, signage, signposting, usage of outside areas, public conveniences, potential operating footprints, pedestrian management systems on Town Council property, risk and hygiene management, applicable guidelines and related matters.

The Meeting closed at 8.07pm.

Signed.....

Dated.....

CHAIRMAN