

MINUTES of the Meeting of **BUDGET & POLICY COMMITTEE** held on **TUESDAY 30th AUGUST, 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)
Councillors Ms M Ewings, Mrs A Johnson, B Smith.

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

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

156. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence had been received from Councillor A Hutton.

157. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

RESOLVED THAT the Minutes of the Meeting of the Budget & Policy Committee held on Tuesday 12th July, 2022 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman (Appendix 1).

158. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

ITEMS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

159. BUDGET PREPARATION & PRECEPT SETTING 2023/24

The Committee received and considered the report of the Town Clerk (Appendix 2) in connection with the above. It set out, inter alia, principles to be applied, or areas of change identified, for the development of a draft 2023/24 Budget proposal and associated Precept together with areas of material risk and/or uncertainty alongside matters pertinent to the in-year (current) position.

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

- This being the first in a series of reports which would be brought forward to assist in the drafting of the 2023/24 Budget;

- The challenging position (most especially as regarding revenue), as outlined in the report in which the Council found itself due to circumstances outside of its control;
- The importance attached to holding safe levels of reserves;
- Uncertainty over future inflation rates and the economy, and associated challenges in setting a balanced Budget;
- potential impacts on different parts of the Councils operations;
- a grant recently received to support designated elements of the Neighbourhood Development Planning process;
- a 1% increase in the Precept equated to a little over £8,000 in income for the Council.

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council receive the Report and Endorse it as a basis for the development of the draft Tavistock Town Council Budget 2023-24.

Noted That:

- the 2022-2023 staff pay settlement negotiations were ongoing;
- as previously agreed when more information became available a provisional transfer out would be made from the Rolling Capital Programme to meet projected increased revenue costs – most especially of insurance, energy and utilities.

160. SERVICE PLANNING 2022-23

The Committee received and considered the Service Plan for Community Services 2022-23 (Appendix 3), as provided by the General Manager.

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council endorse and adopt the Service Plan for Community Services as the basis for delivery of related Council Services 2022-23.

161. VEHICLE/EQUIPMENT

The Committee received and considered the report of the General Manager (Appendix 4), seeking authority to dispose of the 'Box Truck' and 'Flatbed', and acquire replacements, together with other disposals of equipment.

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

- anticipation that, as set out in the report, in due course the Council would be able to include more environmentally friendly vehicles in its fleet;
- the investigations currently being undertaken to look at specific types of vehicles, cost, utility and associated factors;

- that any funds received following the disposal of a Council vehicle would be credited to the Vehicle Replacement EMR.

RECOMMENDED THAT That the Committee and Council:

- Agree to the disposal at any residual commercial (or scrap) value of the box truck and flatbed (any consideration arising being returned to the vehicle replacement reserve) – unless constituting part of a 'trade in'.
- Agree to the purchase of two equivalent second hand replacement vehicles in the sum of not more than £25,000 each, and funded from the vehicle replacement reserve.
- Agree to the disposal of a trailer, ride on mower, three street lights, woodchipper and push-hoover as referred to in the report for best consideration.
- Agree the consequential amendments to the fixed asset register.
- Endorse a review by the Works Department of vehicle replacement needs and related matters including for the remainder of the fleet as per P16 in the Commercial/Community Service Improvement Plan 2022-23.

162. SUSTAINABILITY & ENVIRONMENT WORKING GROUP

The Committee received a briefing note, together with a report from the Sustainability & Environment Working Group, detailing past and future operating arrangements as recommended by the Group (Appendix 5).

RECOMMENDED THAT

- The Sustainability and Environment Workgroup, having completed the tasks assigned by Council, now be wound down, and in future work to help the Council improve sustainability and biodiversity continue as a whole Council responsibility;
- That the final report of the Working Group be received and endorsed;
- To take the workstream forward, and commencing with the Budget & Policy Committee Meeting on August 30th, 2022, and thereafter at 6 monthly intervals (ie each year typically in September and March), Tavistock Town Council's environmental and sustainability programs, policies and priorities be reported to the Budget and Policy Committee for review, including the identification of possible funding streams that may be available to Council to action priorities;
- Each Year as part of the Budget setting process the Budget & Policy Committee consider the priorities in the report so that where resource and funding allow, Tavistock Town Council is

able to progress environmental and climate actions in an effective and supported manner.

- e) The Committee and Council express its appreciation to the Members of the Working Group for the work undertaken and endorse the new arrangements.

Noted That: -

- A Councillor was thanked for their work in drafting the detailed report, and the view expressed that annual review would assist in keeping stakeholders informed of Council actions;
- The extent to which solar panels were/were not an option to the Council was referenced and the General Manager undertook to review same as part of the service planning process 2023-24 alongside potential arrangements to generate income from EV charging points.

163. WYNNE MAP (COPYRIGHT) – REQUEST TO LODGE WITH THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF SCOTLAND

The Committee received a Briefing Note of the Town Clerk following a request received from Tavistock Heritage Trust for the Wynne Map, the copyright of which was held by Tavistock Town Council, to be shared with the National Library of Scotland (Appendix 6).

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council endorse the request in principle, subject to reserving its final position as to whether/how to proceed pending clarification, from the National Library of Scotland, of the options available in respect of copyright protection.

164. BUS SHELTERS

The Committee received the Report of the General Manager (Appendix 7) following a recent meeting held in respect of the bus shelters under the responsibility of the Town Council, and a subsequent review of the Council's Contract with Fernbank Advertising which included maintenance responsibilities by the company.

In the discussion arising particular reference was made to:

- the condition of the bus shelters in Green Lane and Tavy Road due to overgrown vegetation and roof damage, which had initiated an original meeting with Devon County Council, Livewest, the Greenlands' Residents' Association and the Town Council;
- if the Contract with Fernbank Advertising were updated and extended, then any works required to the bus shelters within the Contract would fall to the company and, as each shelter fell to be replaced, so would ownership;
- a view that it might be preferable for the company not to install anti rough-sleeper bars.

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council:

- a) endorse the approach outlined in para's 2.3.1.1 to 2.3.1.4 of the report;
- b) extend the existing term for a further 11 years to 2041, adopting the format used with DCC;
- c) authorise the General Manager to agree the installation schedule, advertising programme and to sign the contract on behalf of TTC.

Noted That the agreement with Fernbank would recognise its ongoing insurance/maintenance responsibilities for the shelters and, as replaced, future ownership of same.

ITEMS CIRCULATED FOR INFORMATION ONLY

165. GUILDHALL GATEWAY CENTRE PROJECT EVALUATION

The Committee received for information, and noted, the final Evaluation Report in connection with the above project, which was available to view at <https://www.tavistock.gov.uk/your-council/council-initiatives/guildhall-project>

166. TOWN MARKETING

The Committee received for information the following reports, as commissioned by Tavistock Heritage Trust, in connection with the above (Appendix 8):

- award of grant form,
- accessibility report and destination audit for Tavistock; and
- Strategic Marketing Plan for World Heritage Town
- Tavistock Guildhall Marketing Plan

During the ensuing discussion particular reference was made to:

- how the 'next steps' might be developed, and who might deliver the aspirations and plans as detailed within the documents;
- what level of input would be required from partner bodies (eg Tavistock Town and West Devon Borough Councils, Tavistock BID Company, the Chamber of Commerce) to help deliver those aspirations and plans;
- how far matters had been progressed to date and Council representation on the co-ordinating group.

167. GUILDHALL GATEWAY CENTRE – OPERATING COSTS

The Committee received and noted the briefing note of the Town Clerk, together with the 'Annual Running Costs Estimate – Guildhall 2022/23 and 2023/24' documents (Appendix 9), in respect of the above. These provided a basis, alongside THT costs (to be provided), for future

budgeting both for the building as a whole, and the Gateway Centre Project in particular.

168. MARKET ROAD UPDATE

The General Manager provided an oral update in respect of the above. It was reported that:

- the plans were ahead of schedule with the Planning Application in preparation and an ecological survey in hand;
- provisional timings for tendering, noting the seasonal dependency of associated works;
- in relation to costs some works could be dis-aggregated, if necessary, and deferred to a later period;
- in view of the challenges posed by the project potential grant funding/support from the Environment Agency was being investigated.

169. PUBLIC CONVENIENCES UPDATE

An oral update was provided by the General Manager in respect of the current position with regard to the anticipated transfer of the Guildhall Toilets from West Devon Borough Council to Tavistock Town Council with particular reference to:

- Prospective timelines for transfer;
- The importance attached to well maintained sanitary facilities;
- Any funding from the donor would be applied to refurbishing/improving the toilet offer;
- The challenges associated with service provision, including the potential performance of contractors.

Noted That following a query raised regarding the condition of the public toilets in the Pannier Market, the General Manager confirmed that the contractors responsible for the previous refurbishment of the facilities would be undertaking remedial works shortly to rectify issues with regard to:

- flooring lifting;
- leakages in both the gents' and ladies' toilets;
- the failure of hand dryers;
- problems with toilet flushes not being fit for purpose.

EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

170. 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

171. TENANCY MATTERS

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

The Clerk reported that, together with the Assistant to the Town Clerk, a meeting had recently taken place with one of the Council's tenants who was experiencing rental difficulties.

The following discussion points were reported;

- the plans that the tenant had already put in place to reduce costs were outlined;
- the criteria by which it had been agreed the tenant would continue trading i.e. a revised repayment plan which the tenant agreed to meet on a weekly basis to ensure the debt did not increase;
- that there was no intention by the tenant to renew the existing Lease when it expired in June 2024;
- the confidence the tenant had that they could meet their obligations.

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council endorse the approach as agreed between the tenant and Officers of the Council.

CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS CIRCULATED FOR INFORMATION ONLY

172. GUILDHALL GATEWAY CENTRE ADVISORY FORUM

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

The Committee received and noted the Agenda for the Meeting of the Guildhall Gateway Centre Advisory Forum to be held on 31st August, 2022 (Appendix 10).

URGENT ITEM

In the interests of expediting the business of the Committee, and in view of the timelines for action, it was agreed that the following item be taken as a matter of urgency.

173. TOWN HALL WORKS

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

The General Manager drew attention to matters in connection with the letting of the Contract for professional services required in connection with repairs to the Mayor's Parlour, and other areas, in the Town Hall.

It was confirmed that it was planned to 'let' the Contract for professional services on 31st August, 2022. Normally this was within the scope of delegated authority. However, because of the circumstances – taking into account unavailability of other providers and familiarity with the premises (thereby managing cost), it was proposed to do so on a single-tender basis (ie in accordance with Financial Regulation 11.1 (a)(ii) and it had been brought to the Committee accordingly. The details were as follows:

- Le Page Architects £7, 000
- Preston Engineering £ 2, 500
- £ 9, 500

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council accede to the request of the General Manager to 'let' the Contract, as detailed above in accordance with Financial Regulation 11.1 (a)(ii).

The Meeting closed at 6.30pm

Signed:

Dated:
CHAIRMAN