

MINUTES of the Meeting of **BUDGET & POLICY COMMITTEE** held on Tuesday 31st August, 2021 at 5.30pm at **Tavistock Town Hall, Bedford Square, Tavistock**

PRESENT

Councillor H Smith – Chairman

Councillor A Hutton (Mayor)

Councillor Mrs A Johnson (Immediate Past Mayor)

Councillors J Ellis, Mrs M Ewings, Mrs G Parker

Ward Members – Councillors Ms L Crawford, B Smith, P Squire
(Observers)

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

136. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence had been received from Councillor Mrs U Mann (Vice Chairman & Deputy Mayor).

137. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

RESOLVED THAT The Minutes of the Meeting of the Budget & Policy Committee held on Tuesday 6th July, 2021 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman (Appendix 1).

138. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

ITEMS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

139. BUDGET PREPARATION & PRECEPT SETTING 2022-23

The Committee received and considered the Report of the Town Clerk (Appendix 2), which provided an opportunity to consider the basis for the next year's Budget.

It was confirmed that;

- the Council had been operating with substantially reduced staffing levels over the previous year and a half, largely in an effort to make cost savings to help offset the unprecedented impact on the Council's commercial income streams arising from the Coronavirus pandemic;

- as the budget setting process developed an informed view would be needed to assess potential income levels over the next financial year and the extent to which they might/not revert to the norm;
- a more detailed Report would be brought to a future Budget & Policy Committee Meeting when the half year figures for the current financial year were available.

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council adopt and endorse the Report and the associated principles to be applied in the development of the draft 2022/23 Budget proposal and associated Precept.

140. TAVISTOCK TOWN COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLAN (REVISION)

The Committee considered the report of the Town Clerk in connection with the above (Appendix 3), and proposed arrangements for the review/updating of the Councils Strategic Plan consequential on the impact of the pandemic and related factors.

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council endorse and adopt the amendments to the Strategic Plan as set out in para 3.5 of the report as follows:

- The title and subsequent references to the duration of the Strategic Plan within the document be amended from 2017–2021 to 2017–2023;
- To articulate same the third paragraph of the “Introduction” to the Strategic Plan be amended to read as follows:-
 ‘The Strategic Plan originally covered a four-year period, since extended to six following the unprecedented impact of the Coronavirus pandemic to enable the upcoming new Council to identify its own priorities informed by the position post pandemic in 2023. For completeness it should be read in conjunction with the annual Corporate and Community Services Plans which together form the basis from which operational activities and goals are agreed, identified, prioritised, resourced and delivered by the Council.’
- Policy EN6 new development – be amended to read “The Council will seek to inform and shape new development in the town to ensure sustainable and managed growth supported by appropriate infrastructure

including through the development and delivery, in collaboration with the community, of a Neighbourhood Development Plan for the Town.'

- The introduction of a new policy EN7 sustainability and the environment –
'The Council will collaborate with the community, stakeholders and statutory bodies to increase community resilience and/or sustainability and the mitigation of adverse impacts on biodiversity and climate caused by human activity.'
- The amendment of EC6 prudent financial management to read
'The Council will prepare a balanced budget and maintain appropriate levels of reserves (both general) (equivalent to not less than nine months' income) and capital (not less than £500,000 in view of its ownership of significant historical buildings in the town). It will maintain sufficient measures of financial assurance and control, and conduct due diligence on all projects and initiatives to ensure that they are affordable, deliverable, sustainable and appropriate.'
- The amendment of Ec2 Working Together, as follows
'The Council will work with the Chamber of Commerce, Business Improvement District Ltd and other representative bodies, partners and public authorities to promote a vibrant and healthy local Economy recognising a shared commitment to the special nature of the settlement as a traditional market (with livestock, pannier, open air, arts and ad hoc markets) and Stannary town, centre of an independent/artisan retail offer, World Heritage Site and Gateway to both Dartmoor and the Tamar Valley.'

141. A PLAN FOR WEST DEVON

A link to a consultation

<https://www.engagement.westdevon.gov.uk/planforwestdevon> on the West Devon Borough Council's website (Appendix 4) had previously been distributed to all Councillors. The document sought views on a proposed high level 20-year vision for the Borough.

The Committee was invited to consider if it wished to suggest responses by individuals or the body corporate.

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council respond to the consultation questions in connection with 'A Plan for West Devon' as follows:

Q1 – Yes

Q2 – Yes

Q3 – Is there going to be a Transport Hub for Tavistock?

Q4 – Yes, as long as it is not going to be used as a justification not to cut grass, and that for identified sites the designation is accompanied by an appropriate sowing/planting scheme of indigenous wildflowers and a maintenance programme appropriate to sustain them.

Q5 – No - non fossil fuel car use is to be supported but electric is only one of a potential range of technologies being developed and currently not all electric vehicles are compatible with all charging points

Q6 – No

Q7 – No the organisation already offsets its carbon footprint to a large extent and will continue to improve where it can.

Q8 – Yes however we would like to know how success will be measured, and how it will relate to disability?

Q9 – Not applicable for a Council

Q10 – No

Q11 – No

Q12 – Yes but it is important to know how this will be measured

Q13 – Yes

Q14 – Not applicable to a Council

Q15 – We are already in a high participation area for volunteering

Q16 – No

Q17 – No - it is unclear how these aspirations will be delivered

Q18 – Yes

Q19 – Yes

Q20 – Yes

Q21 – No

Q22 – Yes but there are concerns regarding digital connectivity and the loss of employment land in the Local Plan

Q23 – Yes, this should include improved highway signage to Tavistock

Q24 – Not applicable as a Council

Q25 – Not applicable as a Council

Q26 – Yes

Q27 – The importance of supporting the business community and partners

Q28 – Yes

- Q29 – Yes
- Q30 – Yes, by having appropriate regulatory and educational frameworks in place
- Q31 – No
- Q32 – Yes as a starting point. But there are concerns regarding service standards which need to be fit for purpose and met, including timely responses to communications, which is not currently the case
- Q33 – Not applicable for a Council
- Q34 – Timely response to communications
- Q35 – No
- Q36 – No due to lack of timely answers and a lack of clarity/accountability as to who is responsible for what (eg planning)
- Q37 – see above
- Q38 – Yes
- Q39 – No, there is an annual increase in charges accompanied by a reduction in services provided
- Q40 – Yes, there is no mention of provisions for the young, old and disabled
- Q41 – Yes, Tavistock Town Council info@tavistock.gov.uk

142. GRANTS PANEL

The Committee considered the Notes of the Meeting of the Grants Panel held on 23rd August, 2021 (Appendix 5).

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council adopt the new Grants process, as recommended by the Grants Panel as set out below, namely:

- 1 GRANT APPLICATION FORM - the current Grant Application Form be amended as follows;
 - i) The initial wording to be changed to – ‘Please answer all questions and provide all requested paperwork – failure to do so may affect the success of your Application’;
 - ii) At Q14 the words ‘or independently Inspected Accounts’ to be added after ‘Audited Accounts’ as this removes the necessity of only being able to submit Audited Accounts.
- 2 GRANT POLICY - the current Grant Policy remain unchanged.
- 3 GRANT RESPONSE FORM - the current Grant Response Form remain unchanged.

4 GRANT SCORING PROCESS

- i) the scoring of each application received be based on the following 8 questions. Points being awarded as follows – for a definite 'yes' 2 points, for a definite 'no' 0 points would be given, and for anything in between, 1 point.

For an Application to be considered for a Grant it must have a positive outcome for ALL questions (i.e. no zero scores) and have a total score of at least 12.

Question 1 – Is the application form fully and thoroughly completed, with all required evidence submitted i.e. Audited/independently Inspected Accounts? If a previous Grant has been received, was a Grant Response Form provided?

Question 2 – Is this a new project for Tavistock from an organisation that has not received funding in the last 3 years?

If the project is new but the organisation has received funding in the last 3 years score 1. Repeat applications score 0.

Question 3 – Has the need for spending been well explained and justified?

Is it absolutely clear how the money will be spent? Have estimates/quotes been provided, if relevant? Is there a clear understanding in the breakdown of costs?

Question 4 – Is the application for project/one-off funding rather than for running costs?

If for one-off spend/project, will the money be spent within the financial year? Are there clear outcomes? Ongoing running costs score 0.

Question 5 – Are there benefits to the wider community?

Will funding not only benefit the organisation and its members but also the public/community?

Question 6 – Will funding or resources be brought to the project from elsewhere?

TTC should not be the only stream of funding and organisations must be able to demonstrate a level of self-help through fundraising, or gaining Grants or in-kind support from elsewhere?

Question 7 – Does the spending represent good value for money?

Will a Grant provide long term benefit to the organisation and public, beyond the year it is granted?

Question 8 – Are there any negative implications for the town/community if the project is not funded?

Will not funding an organisation result in projects being cancelled/organisations not being able to provide a level of service?

- ii) the Citizen's Advice Bureau be taken out of the above process, and automatically be eligible for up to 20% of the overall Grant budget allocated to it, on the following basis;
 - an Application Form was still a requirement;
 - if the amount requested was less than 20% of the overall budget, then the full amount requested would be allocated;
 - if the amount requested was more than 20% of the overall budget, then 20% of the actual budget would be allocated, so it might be the organisation received less funding than requested.

- iii) members of the Grants Panel would individually evaluate each Application received, and would submit their scores to the Assistant to the Town Clerk to allow for collation and ranking of the scores received. Those Applications receiving an average score of less than 12 points would be removed from the process. A further Grants Panel meeting would be scheduled to review remaining scores and determine funds to be allocated, for recommendation to Council.

- iv) the existing Grants Panel members would meet in the new year to evaluate the new process, and determine if any further amendments were required, prior to the 2022 Grant Application period;

- v) the membership of the Grant Panel to continue into the 2022 – 2023 Civic Year to allow continuity.

ITEMS CIRCULATED FOR INFORMATION ONLY

143. GUILDHALL GATEWAY CENTRE – PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee received and noted an oral update from the General Manager, in connection with the progress on the Guildhall Gateway Centre with particular reference to:

- practical completion milestone on 17th August 2021;
- the Interpretation Centre fit out was approximately 50% complete, with an anticipated finish date by the end of September;
- the AV/Courtroom fit out should be completed end September/mid-October;
- there would be a 'soft launch' in due course and opportunity for Members to visit the building once the interpretation works were complete.

EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

144. 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.

145. ACTIVITIES/EVENTS & ASSOCIATED MATTERS

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

The Committee considered the report of the Town Clerk (Appendix 6) in connection with the above and, more especially, arrangements/issues associated with Goose Fair and also staffing matters.

In the ensuing discussion particular reference was made, amongst others, to:

- The current position regarding the pandemic, public health and safety – both nationally and in Devon since the Government had raised the designation of the area to enhanced/special measures;
- The balance of risk and benefit associated with delivery of large scale events during a pandemic together with practice elsewhere in the country;

- The extent of organisational/key partner capacity to deliver and related uncertainties;
- arrangements in connection with staffing matters.

RECOMMENDED THAT:

- a) Goose Fair - a final decision as to whether to proceed, and if so how to achieve safety and rigour, with the 2021 Goose Fair be made by the Council at its Meeting on 14th September, 2021.
- b) Staffing
 - i. the Works Department Support Officer role be increased from 32 hours per week, to 37 hours per week; and
 - ii. a 'casual contract' be agreed, for a period of up to 3 months from the date of leaving the post, to the outgoing post holder, to help provide support during the recruitment period and the 'bedding in' of any new post holder.

The Meeting closed at 7.40pm

Signed:

Dated:

CHAIRMAN