

MINUTES of the Meeting of **BUDGET & POLICY COMMITTEE** held on **TUESDAY 3rd SEPTEMBER, 2024** at **6.30pm** in **THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, DRAKE ROAD, TAVISTOCK**

PRESENT

Councillor S Hipsey
Councillor Mrs A Johnson

Chairman & Deputy Mayor ex-officio
Vice Chairman

Councillor P Ward
Councillor A Hutton

Mayor ex-officio
Immediate Past Mayor ex-officio

Councillors Ms M Ewings*, U Mann, R Poppe.

Ward Member - Councillor Mrs J Hughes

IN ATTENDANCE Town Clerk, Assistant to the Town Clerk

*Arrived late at the Meeting

127. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No Apologies for Absence had been received.

128. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

RESOLVED THAT the Minutes of the Meeting of the Budget & Policy Committee held on Tuesday 16th July, 2024 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman (Appendix 1).

129. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest made at this point in the Meeting. Note - please see Minute No. 130 below.

ITEMS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

130. PUBLIC SPACES PROTECTION ORDER CONSULTATION (PSPO)

The Committee considered the copy Draft Order and public consultation documentation issued by the Licensing Authority (West Devon Borough Council) in connection with the above (Appendix 2).

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

- that recent issues within the town had been caused by a small group of people, whilst the implementation of the Order would cover the majority;
- that the Order covered the whole of the town, and Whitchurch, and was not supported by evidence of need across locations nor did it specifically address (although it did cover) particular areas of concern such as The Meadows, Crowndale and the Town Centre;

- the powers the proposal afforded the Police, which could be perceived by some as “draconian”, also that the Police already had wide ranging ability under other powers to address anti-social behaviour and other matters, so the draft Order could be perceived as disproportionate;
- the potential for displacement of problem behaviour should any Order be on less than a town wide basis;
- the function of the proposal as a ‘secondary’ or backstop power affording Police the power (but not duty) to act in circumstances where action was required – in particular attention being drawn to section 4 (A) that provided a safeguard ie via the linkage of alcohol consumption to which the Order applied to accompanying anti-social behaviour/ public nuisance or disorder;
- the breadth of interpretation/discretion potentially applicable to para 4(E) and how that might be applied;
- the reported views of the Children’s Commissioner that such Orders disproportionately disadvantaged children and young people;
- the extent to which the proposal was/was not evidence based, targeted and proportionate;
- police resourcing;
- that the questions in the consultation survey could be perceived as weighted towards the Order being implemented, as it was contended it was difficult to say ‘No’ to any of them by virtue of the way they were worded;
- that there was an insufficient Police presence in the town to implement the Order in any event, and that a higher Police presence was needed;
- that if there were insufficient Police Officers available, the view that contracted security staff might be utilised instead;
- a view that the guidance provided by the Local Government Association (LGA) for the process of implementing PSPOs had not been followed by the Licensing Authority;
- that there appeared to have been a lack of engagement with local Schools to get their input into the consultation;
- the lack of clarity/evidence with regard to the effectiveness of the PSPO currently in situ.

CONSULTATION RESPONSE (see (a) below)

- i) in the absence of sufficient data/evidence, including a breakdown of the issues proposed to be addressed and attributable to different parts of the Town, Tavistock Town Council is unable to support the scope (both in terms of geographic designation and/or the definition of behaviour (para 4(E) refers)) of the proposed Public Spaces Protection Order for Tavistock as submitted;
- ii) the Town Council remains supportive of the application of a Public Spaces Protection Order to those areas with evidenced problems and where it has previously supported such measures - namely the Town Centre, Crowndale and The Meadows.

*Noted That

- a) An extension to the Consultation had been granted by the Licensing Authority to enable this Committee to respond on behalf of the Council (all Members of Council had been invited to attend the Meeting). Accordingly, as endorsed by Council previously the foregoing Consultation Response (para's (i)-(ii) refer) represents the de facto submission of the Town Council in order to meet the consultation deadline;
- b) Councillor Ms M Ewings arrived during consideration of the foregoing item;
- c) Councillor Ms M Ewings Declared a personal non-prejudicial Interest in the above item by virtue of serving on the LGA Safer Stronger Board and the Police and Crime Panel;
- d) Councillor Mrs U Mann noted a potential personal non-prejudicial Interest by virtue of employment association.

131. BUDGET PREPARATION & PRECEPT SETTING 2025/26

The Committee received and considered the report of the Town Clerk (Appendix 3) in connection with the above. It set out, inter alia, principles to be applied, or areas of change identified, for the development of the draft 2025/26 Budget proposal and associated Precept together with areas of material risk and/or uncertainty alongside matters pertinent to the in-year (current) position.

This represented the first in a series of reports which would be brought forward to assist in the preparation of the 2025/26 Budget. At a future meeting it was planned to submit half-year outturn (2024-25), together with a draft Budget 2025-26 incorporating more detailed information, alongside fees and charges, as informed by deliberations on the foregoing report.

In the discussion arising particular reference was made to:-

- Challenges facing commercial (rental and Market) income streams arising from the wider economic environment and related retail trends with potential for pressure on rental levels, voids and bad debts;
- The extent to which the legacy of the pandemic did/did not continue to influence different aspects of Council activity and the funding position;
- The continuing priority to rebuild reserves to normal operating levels.

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council receive the Report and endorse it as a basis for the development of the draft Tavistock Town Council Budget 2025-26.

132. COMMUNICATIONS & ENGAGEMENT WORKING GROUP

The Committee received and considered the Notes of the Communications & Engagement Working Party Meeting held on 29th July, 2024 (Appendix 4). In the discussion arising reference was made, in particular, to:

- Disappointment regarding low attendance at the Meeting;
- The benefits attached to now more actively progressing this workstream;
- An upcoming Community Wellbeing Fair scheduled to be held on 4th October in Butchers Hall;

- The outcomes of the Meeting with particular reference to the West Devon Community and Voluntary Service, introducing arrangements for Member feedback from organisations to which they were appointed (and reporting arrangements adopted by West Devon), and extension of the suggested gap analysis to include individuals (in addition to groups).

RECOMMENDED THAT subject to the inclusion of a reference to individuals in the gap analysis, Tavistock Town Council endorse and adopt the five courses of action as listed in the bullet points set out in the report of the Working Group.

133. MARKET ROAD PROPERTIES

The Committee received and considered the Report of the Assistant to the Town Clerk (Appendix 5), in connection with the above.

It was reported that neither the Veterans' Association nor the Ford Street Almshouse Charity, as previously suggested, were in a position to take on the properties as rental units.

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

- a) The operation of the prospective management scheme, any associated benefits and drawbacks;
- b) Scheme fees which were considered reasonable;
- c) The opportunity to trial any arrangement prior to considering whether it could be extended to other residential Council premises if/as appropriate;
- d) Potential to request preference being given to key workers and/or persons with local connection;
- e) Responsibility for bringing premises up to standard for occupation, and thereafter maintaining them to that standard, would continue to sit with the Town Council.

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council seek to contract the responsibility for letting the Market Road cottages to "SeaMoor Lettings Management" on the basis set out and subject to a trial period (to be agreed) and on the basis that preference be given for occupiers to be either key workers or persons with a local connection to the area.

ITEMS CIRCULATED FOR INFORMATION ONLY

134. LOCAL GOVERNMENT PAY SETTLEMENT 2024-25

An oral update was provided with regard to the current situation on the 2024 – 25 pay settlement negotiations.

The Committee was advised that the GMB Union had agreed to accept the Employers' pay offer, however Unison and Unite had rejected the offer and were understood to be balloting on industrial action.

Further updates would be brought forward, as available.

135. HERITAGE MEETING

The Committee received and noted the Notes of the Heritage Alliance Meeting held on 23rd July, 2024 (Appendix 6)

136. URGENT MATTERS BROUGHT FORWARD AT THE DISCRETION OF THE CHAIRMAN

The Committee were informed that the Council's appointed representatives were unavailable to attend the Devon Association of Local Councils' (DALC) AGM and Conference on 2nd October, 2024, at Exeter Racecourse. Members wishing to attend were requested to e-mail the Assistant to the Town Clerk, who would book places on their behalf.

It was noted that due to cost (£50 per person + VAT), potential attendees should be sure of their availability and share travel arrangements as appropriate.

Noted That

- i) Addendum – the Council may also wish to indicate which attendee will exercise its vote at the AGM.
- ii) The Committee was advised that the Casual Vacancy in the SW Ward was being advertised later that week.

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

137. 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

138. TENANCY MATTERS

(**CONFIDENTIAL** – by virtue of relating to matters of a legal and/or financial nature or the business affairs of persons other than the Council)

Noted That in response to a question attention was drawn to the role of the Information Commissioner in respect of requirements for/securing compliance with obligations for the proper use of CCTV.

The following oral updates were provided:

- a) Property (A) – the Committee was advised of recent developments, together with next steps to recover such monies as were due in accordance with the terms of the lease and

RECOMMENDED Tavistock Town Council endorse such further proceedings or actions as necessary to secure same subject to legal advice.

- b) Property (B) – the Committee was advised that the arbitration process was proceeding to time together with reference to documentation and costs.

Further updates would continue to be brought forward, as available.

- c) Council Land – in view of the new Government’s planned changes to the National Planning Policy Framework a discussion took place regarding a prospective disposal of land.

RECOMMENDED THAT the provisions of Minute No. 27 be placed in abeyance pending greater clarity as to the Government’s proposed plans to amend Planning Policy.

- d) Premises and Future Service Provision

The Committee received and considered the Briefing Note of the General Manager (Appendix 7) in respect of the above.

In the discussion arising particular reference was made, amongst others, to the case for/against the option identified including (but not limited to) projected cost, reserve levels, configuration, risk/reward, opportunity cost, scope – extent/limitations, usage and alternative options, location, accessibility, size, condition, works (desirable and/or required), potential phasing, the current economic climate, cost of borrowing, inflationary pressures, measures of due diligence and the importance attached to delivering positive outcomes for the ratepayer/community benefit. Reference was also made to issues and opportunities arising within the existing estate.

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council not progress this initiative and that no further action be taken.

The Meeting closed at 8.43pm.

Signed:

Dated:

CHAIRMAN