

**MINUTES** of the Meeting of the **BUDGET & POLICY COMMITTEE** held on **TUESDAY 4<sup>th</sup> MARCH, 2025** at **6.30pm** at **THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, DRAKE ROAD, TAVISTOCK**

**PRESENT**

Councillor S Hipsey Chairman & Deputy Mayor (ex-officio)

Councillor Mrs A Johnson Vice Chairman

Councillor P Ward Mayor (ex-officio)

Councillors Ms M Ewings, A Hutton, U Mann, R Poppe.

**IN ATTENDANCE** Town Clerk, General Manager, Assistant to the Town Clerk, Financial Administrator (part Meeting).

**324. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no Apologies for Absence received as all Members were present.

**325. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES**

RESOLVED THAT the Minutes of the Meeting of the Budget & Policy Committee held on Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> January, 2025 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman (Appendix 1).

**326. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The following Declarations of Interest were made:-

Councillors Ms M Ewings, Mrs A Johnson and U Mann in respect of Agenda Item 7 – Devolution/Reorganisation Working Group by virtue of all being elected Members of West Devon Borough Council.

**ITEMS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL**

**327. COUNCIL FINANCIAL POLICES AND PROCEDURES**

The Committee considered the Report of the Town Clerk (Appendix 2), together with related financial policies and procedures for periodic review and adoption.

RECOMMENDED THAT subject to any amendments as listed below/drafts or otherwise listed in the report:

**a) Tavistock Town Council Financial Regulations**

**b) Tavistock Town Council Schedule of Suppliers**

**c) Tavistock Town Council Direct Debit List**

#### **d) Tavistock Town Council Internal Control System**

#### **e) Tavistock Town Council Treasury Management Policy**

and also:-

- i) Agree for the 2025-26 Financial Year the continuing waiver of the % provisions of section 5.2 (first bullet point) in view of the absence of suitable alternative accounts and the distributed nature of the CCLA cash account (second bullet point) til the end of the next (2025-26) financial year;
- ii) Endorse a revised Minimum Operating Balance (previously £500,000) of £300,000, subject to review at the half financial year mark, in view of the reduced capital/works commitments attaching to the Council post THI and Guildhall projects.

#### **f) Members' Scheme of Basic Allowances and the Travelling and Subsistence Allowance Scheme**

In order to clarify that legislation precluded a Co-opted Council Member receiving the Basic Allowance - at Item 2 the following wording to be added:

'Current legislation did not allow for a Co-opted Councillor to receive the Basic Allowance'.

#### **g) Tavistock Town Council Pension Discretions Policy**

the foregoing documents be received, endorsed and adopted by the Council.

### **328. INTERNAL AUDIT**

The Committee received, considered and noted the Interim Internal Audit Report as provided by the Council's Internal Auditor (Appendix 3).

### **329. INDICATIVE PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS 2025-2026**

The Committee considered an indicative Calendar of Meetings 2025-2026 (Appendix 4).

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council endorse, in principle (and subject to formal consideration in due course), the appended indicative Calendar of Meetings.

#### Noted That

- a) formal consideration and determination of the Calendar of Meetings would take place, as required by Standing Orders, at the Annual Meeting of Council in May 2025;

- b) officers undertook to investigate the possibility of an electronic version of the Programme being automatically or otherwise uploaded to Councillors electronic Calendars on adoption in due course.

### **330. DEVOLUTION/REORGANISATION WORKING GROUP**

The Committee received the Notes of the Devolution/Reorganisation Working Group Meeting held on 3<sup>rd</sup> March, 2025 (Appendix 5).

During the ensuing discussion, reference was made, in particular, to:-

- that the Council did not want the community to lose those services it currently received and valued, nor for the ratepayer to face additional costs for those services should they in future be assumed by the Town Council from extant principal authorities;
- whether or not the Borough and County Councils would be open to reviewing the assets they currently held, and which might come to be offered to Town/Parish Councils;
- that the County Council, which was due to hold Elections in May 2025, would shortly be entering the purdah/pre-election period which might delay communication on such matters with them;
- that West Devon Borough Council had indicated it would be willing to meet with Tavistock Town Council in due course;
- emerging options for principal Councils in Devon to combine to form larger unitary authorities, and working practices presently being adopted to that end;
- that it was understood the minimum population levels for any new unitary authorities had been revised to 350,000;
- disappointment at the apparent decision of Devon County Council to utilise the additional funding it would receive for the '2<sup>nd</sup> Homes Premium' for general revenue purposes, rather than housing or other strategic priorities;
- that it was helpful to set a date for the next Working Group meeting once the position with information from other authorities was clearer, in order that momentum was not lost.

RECOMMENDED THAT the Budget and Policy Committee and Council endorse:

- a) the overall approach as set out in the Report to the Working Group and, in particular, the next steps as included in para 3.1; together with
- b) the operating principle set out above, namely 'to seek to avoid the community losing what it already had and valued, whilst avoiding the rate payer being required to pay for it twice (i.e. to avoid "double taxation")'.

### Noted That

- the Town Clerk undertook to liaise with the Borough Council in connection with the above;
- Councillors Ms M Ewings, Mrs A Johnson and U Mann declared a personal non-prejudicial interest in the above by virtue of also being elected Members of West Devon Borough Council.

## **ITEMS CIRCULATED FOR INFORMATION ONLY**

### **331. COMMUNICATIONS & ENGAGEMENT**

The Committee considered and received, for information, the Notes of the Communications & Engagement Working Group Meeting, held on 3<sup>rd</sup> February, 2025 (Appendix 6).

Reference was made to the background to prior arrangements to incorporate the work of this group, and the prospective children and young people working group, within the reorganisation work stream in view of the substantial areas of overlap and organisational capacity. In the ensuing discussion attention was drawn, in particular, to the latter initiative – activities already in hand/proposed, the potential for interested persons to progress initiatives in an individual capacity, facilities in other settlements, the background to current/past provision within the town and linked present activities.

### **332. GOOSE FAIR FEE SETTING MEETING**

The Committee received the Notes of the Goose Fair Fee Setting Meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> February, 2025 (Appendix 7).

Arising therefrom attention was drawn, in particular, to:

- a) the proposed 3.5% increase in pitch fees which had been agreed at the Meeting, but would now need to be agreed at The Showmen's Guild Meeting which had been due to take place on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2025, the outcome was awaited;
- b) the proposal to increase Park & Ride fees for:
  - Yelverton Park & Ride, an increase from £2.50 to £3.00 for adults, and from 50p to £1 for children
  - Whitchurch Down and Gulworthy Park & Ride sites, an increase per car from £5 to £6.

The above (item (b) refers) being an addition to the agreed Budget envelope it was:

RECOMMENDED THAT the proposal to increase Park and Ride Fees, as outlined above, be endorsed.

Noted that: it was confirmed that:

- a) a discussion was due to take place with Tavistock Lions Club (which operated the Park & Ride sites on behalf of the Council) as to whether all three sites could appropriately be subject to a 'per car' pricing structure, rather than there being different arrangement depending on the site (see above);
- b) enquiries would be made, in liaison with Tavistock BID Co Ltd, to explore potential options to encourage local businesses to participate in the Goose Fair. Support given to the Livestock element via the Council's Grant's Panel was noted.

## **URGENT MATTERS BROUGHT FORWARD AT THE DISCRETION OF THE CHAIRMAN**

### **333. CAR PARKING TARIFFS**

The above matter was brought forward at this time in view of information received from the off-street parking authority since publication of the Agenda and associated timeframe.

The Town Council had previously agreed an increase in the parking charges in Guildhall Car Park pending a Car Parking Places Order. Confirmation had just been received from West Devon Borough Council that it was proceeding with same and affording the opportunity to the Town Council to participate.

In accordance with the prior decision of Council a request had therefore been submitted to the Borough Council to vary the car parking tariff in the Guildhall Car Park through the Order, the fees previously agreed being as follows:

- i. ½ hour 50p to 70p;
- ii. 1 hour £1 to £1.30;
- iii. Disabled bays - ½ hour 70p, with facility for an additional ½ hour's free parking

### **334. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND 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**

### **335. GUILDHALL/WORKS DEPARTMENT STAFFING**

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

The Committee received the Briefing Note of the General Manager (Appendix 8), in connection with the above. No additional costs arose as the proposal was funded from an unfilled role elsewhere in the organisation.

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council agree to a 12-month extension for the current temporary arrangements regarding the posts of Community and Compliance Officer, Cemetery and Communications Officer and Administrative Assistant starting from June 2025.

### **336. TENANCY MATTERS**

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

The Town Clerk provided the following verbal update;

- a) Tenancy Matter (Debt) - a Court date was awaited;
- b) Land at Sandy Park – a rent review would be undertaken to determine current market level rent and review provisions were being implemented – the Committee was advised of the overall position and prospective quantum.

### **CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS FOR INFORMATION ONLY**

#### **337. MARKET ROAD PROPERTIES**

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

The General Manager advised that works were progressing well on both properties, with the internal re-decoration and window repairs being undertaken in-house. New carpets were due to be laid shortly. More specifically:

- 1 Market Road – all works were scheduled to be completed on time, with the cottage being available 'for let' by end of March;
- 2 Market Road – there might be a slippage of in the order of 2 weeks on this cottage, due to necessary refurbishment works in the bathroom.

Both properties were due to be viewed by SeaMoor Lettings on 20<sup>th</sup> March, 2025, prior to being marketed.

The Meeting closed at 8.05pm.

Signed:

Dated:

CHAIRMAN