

MINUTES of the Meeting of **BUDGET & POLICY COMMITTEE** held on Tuesday 6th July, 2021 at 5.30pm at **Tavistock Town Hall, Bedford Square, Tavistock**

PRESENT

Councillor H Smith – Chairman

Councillor Mrs U Mann (Vice Chairman & Deputy Mayor)

Councillor A Hutton (Mayor)

Councillor Mrs A Johnson (Immediate Past Mayor)

Councillor Mrs G Parker

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

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

73. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors J Ellis and Mrs M Ewings.

74. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

RESOLVED THAT The Minutes of the Meeting of the Budget & Policy Committee held on Tuesday 25th May, 2021 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman (Appendix 1).

75. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest made at this point in the Meeting (see Minute No. 86 below).

ITEMS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

76. FINANCE UPDATE

The Committee received and considered the report of the Town Clerk (Appendix 2) in connection with the above including an outline of the current position and proposed actions.

Attention was drawn, in particular, to:

- whilst the Council continued to be in a challenging financial position the situation was better than had at one stage been anticipated, due to the remedial measures and mitigations previously implemented;

- consequently, the previously adopted 5-year recovery programme to replenish the General and Capital reserves and return the Council to safe operating arrangements was now expected to be achievable within 3 years;
- the recommendations contained within the report provided a safer and more sustainable basis for future operations;
- in the areas of Property and Grounds Maintenance technical underspends had occurred in the previous financial year due to projects not being completed (or indeed committed, but not commenced), due to the pandemic.

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council;

- a) Endorse the adoption of a minimum General Reserve, equating to nine months' income, in the interests of prudent financial management;
- b) Replenish the 2020 emergency drawing from the Burial Ground Earmarked Reserve in the sum of £50,000 so as to provide a basis for the continuing commitment to opportunity for the community to be interred locally;
- c) Agree that, in view of positive progress in connection with the General Reserve, and to provide a safe basis to manage its historic property and estate management responsibilities, the replenishment of the Council's capital reserves to acceptable levels (£500,000) now be rescheduled from achievement by financial year 2025-26 to the end of financial year 2023-24 including funding at each year end from any underspending budget heads;
- d) Endorse the carry-forward of residual underspends in the Property Maintenance and Grounds Maintenance Budgets from the 2020-21 financial year to the 2021-22 financial year to enable outstanding and upcoming commitments to be met.

77. SYSTEM OF INTERNAL CONTROL

The Committee received and reviewed the Council's System of Internal Control document (Appendix 3) which had been amended in recognition of the continuing impact of the pandemic.

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council endorse and adopt the System of Internal Control as submitted.

78. QUIET REFLECTION AT COUNCIL MEETINGS

This matter had been brought before the Committee at the request of Councillor A Hutton. In the discussion arising reference was made, amongst others, to the background to the practice of quiet reflection

prior to the commencement of Council Meetings, recent developments arising from pandemic related measures, the benefits/drawbacks of the practice in particular (and others more generally) and the associated views of individual Members.

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council continue with the practice of having Quiet Reflection prior to the start of Council Meetings.

79. TAVISTOCK TOWN COUNCIL MEMBER E-MAIL ACCOUNTS

The Committee considered the Report of the General Manager and Assistant to the Town Clerk in connection with the above (Appendix 4). In particular, the solution proposed sought to address issues of security, capacity and efficiency of operation which was welcomed.

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council proceed on the basis as outlined in the Report transferring Councillor mailboxes to Microshade VSM system.

80. TENNIS CLUB

The Chairman of the Committee confirmed that whilst this matter appeared on the Agenda in the public session, it would be deferred to the confidential session of this Meeting due to its confidential nature relating to one of the Council's tenants (Minute No 86 refers).

ITEMS CIRCULATED FOR INFORMATION ONLY

81. GOOSE FAIR & TOUR OF BRITAIN

The Committee received and noted an oral update from the General Manager, in connection with the foregoing.

- a) Tour of Britain – it was noted that Tavistock would host a 'sprint' leg of the Tour along Plymouth Road, on 6th September 2021 (timings not yet available), which would involve rolling road closures by the organisers consistent with past practice. Notwithstanding that participants would pass quickly through the town it was anticipated that the event would attract numbers of spectators. More information would be provided as it became available.
- b) Goose Fair – plans were currently proceeding in anticipation that the event could take place. However, it was noted that there were substantial variable factors which could impact on viability, not least:

- Government health requirements and/or guidance;
- The fluid state of the pandemic aligned to October which had previously proven a challenging period in relation to Covid infection rates;
- Notwithstanding the foregoing event planning might in any event require additional safety/mitigating measures such as:
 - reducing the depth of pitches to allow for increased space for visitors;
 - reducing the trading footprint in certain areas;
- staffing shortages - considerable difficulties were being encountered with recruitment in a particularly 'tight' labour market;
- availability of 'park and ride' sites, one had been lost and another used on only one occasion

It was further noted that the Tamar Lions, a longstanding supporter of the event (through delivery of park and ride at Yelverton) had also, with regret, withdrawn from providing the park and ride service in 2021 (Tavistock Lions had kindly offered to take their place).

RECOMMENDED THAT the uncertainties around Goose Fair 2021 be noted and a letter be sent to the Tamar Lions Club thanking them for their many years of support to Goose Fair, and they be invited to nominate three or four previous group members to attend at the Goose Fair Lunch 2021.

82. GUILDHALL PROJECT – PROJECT TIMELINE

The Committee received the recently updated version of the Project Plan (Appendix 6).

In particular it was noted:

- There continued to be current outstanding issues in the construction phase;
- practical completion was anticipated in the week commencing 19th July enabling some of the Council's Officers to relocate to the premises, with consequential adjustments to public access at the Drake Road offices;
- works had commenced on the Interpretation Centre 'fit out'.

83. PUBLIC SPACES PROTECTION ORDER (PSPO)

It was noted that, in accordance with the instructions of Council, a request had been submitted to West Devon Borough Council for a PSPO for an area in and around The Meadows, so as to give the Police increased powers to address the level of anti-social behaviour which had been occurring for a protracted period of time.

West Devon Borough Council had yet to confirm arrangements for either the completion of the analysis stage or, if/as appropriate, the timetable for consultation and implementation. Consequently, the originally agreed (in the spring) indicative timetable of implementation by August was not achievable. In view of the continuing concern at anti-social behaviour it was:

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council reiterate to West Devon Borough Council the importance of expediting the Order as soon as possible and it be requested to confirm the associated timelines.

EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

84. 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.

85. TENNIS CLUB (DEFERRED FROM EARLIER IN THE MEETING)

(**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 with reference to a funding request associated with the terms of the extant lease.

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

- extensive negotiations which had been undertaken 3 years previously, when a new Lease had been granted and associated financial support had been agreed;
- maintenance obligations arising under the lease;
- whether the organisation should be suggested to, on a 'without prejudice' basis, submit a grant request in the Autumn during the usual Grant Application period, to be considered along with all other Grant requests received at that time (and related timelines for determination);
- that the Grants Panel was due to meet shortly to review the current process;
- potential availability of other sources of grant funding to the organisation.

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council confirm that the financial support available to the Tennis Club in connection with Courts 1 & 2 remain as set out in the Lease and that no new/additional grant was available.

Noted That Councillor A Hutton Declared an Interest in this item by virtue of membership of the organisation concerned and remained in the Meeting taking no part in the discussion or voting.

86. TENANT REQUEST (LEASE RENEWAL)

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

The Committee received the report of the Town Clerk (Appendix 7) in connection with a request relating to Lease renewal.

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council proceed on the basis set out in paragraphs 2.3 and 3.1 of the Report.

CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS CIRCULATED FOR INFORMATION ONLY

87. GUILDHALL GATEWAY CENTRE – PROGRESS REPORT

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

The Committee received the most recent Progress Report in connection with the above (Appendix 8).

The Meeting closed at 6.39pm

Signed:

Dated:
CHAIRMAN