

MINUTES

of the Meeting of the **BUDGET & POLICY COMMITTEE** held at the Council Chamber, Drake Road, Tavistock on **TUESDAY 7TH JANUARY, 2020 at 6.30pm**

PRESENT

Councillor A Hutton (Chairman)
Councillor P Williamson (Vice Chairman)

Councillors Ms L Crawford, Mrs M Ewings, Mrs A Johnson, H Smith, P Ward (immediate past Mayor).

Councillors J Ellis, Mrs U Mann, P Squire (Ward Members)

IN ATTENDANCE

Town Clerk, General Manager

296. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence, all Members were present.

297. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

RESOLVED THAT the Minutes (Appendix 1) of the Meeting of the Budget & Policy Committee held on Tuesday 19th November, 2019 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

298. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

ITEMS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

299. BUDGET PREPARATION AND PRECEPT SETTING 2020/21

The Committee considered the Report (Appendix 2) of the Town Clerk in connection with the above providing an opportunity to consider and review outstanding budget pressures (Appendix 3) identified pursuant to the Committee's previous deliberations as at November, 2019 and subsequent consideration by Council.

It was noted that the Budget/Precept could not be set until the outcome of the Council application for borrowing approval (a Special Meeting to be arranged), together with the extent and nature of the outstanding budget pressures and such options as might be available by way of mitigation and related matters.

In the ensuing discussion reference was made to a range of matters including: -

- i. The substantial impact upon Council funding (representing a loss of approx. £100,000) directly flowing from decisions of the Borough Council to withdraw services supporting the local community;
- ii. The importance attached to decisions being affordable, representing value for money and based upon informed and objective data;
- iii. The nature of the collaboration with Tavistock Heritage Trust (THT) for delivery of the Guildhall Gateway Centre;
- iv. How the operation of the position of THT Visitor Centre Manager might appropriately operate, with support in principle for the THT request to upgrade, on the basis of a shared collaboration on contribution toward the role;
- v. The funding shortfall arising in connection with the Guildhall Project after failure to secure a Grant from Viridor and appropriate next steps, linking to aspects of the Guildhall Project which could potentially be cut, varied or deferred (such as the audio visual system) in order to deliver without increase in budget;
- vi. Receipt of a recent request from West Devon Borough Council for the Town Council to make a contribution of £1,000 towards the re-opening of a disabled toilet unit at the Bus Station;
- vii. In addition to (i) above the proposed withdrawal, by the Borough Council, from a contribution towards some of the Goose Fair costs;
- viii. The wider nature of the relationship as between Borough and Town Councils in terms of services supported and/or delivered;
- ix. Options available to the Council in connection with the delivery of Public Conveniences (see also Minute No. 302) and how best to secure the public interest in co-ordinating delivery of same;
- x. The challenging financial environment facing the Council over the next 1-2 years caused by decisions of the Borough Council, together with the importance attached to providing cost effective and sustainable services to the Community.

In connection with the supplementary points reviewed it was further: -

RECOMMENDED THAT pursuant to the draft Budget considered in the last round of Meetings the Council: -

- a. Localism Budget – endorse the reinstatement of a Localism Budget in the sum of £20,000 to support locality and community based initiatives within the Town;
- b. Guildhall Project Funding – that in order to address the funding shortfall of £18,000 arising from failure to secure a grant from

Viridor (and thereby avert a consequential increase in Precept funding requirements) the Council:-

- i. instruct the Capital Team to identify areas of potential savings (or contingencies/provisional sum repurposing) equivalent to the shortfall; and
 - ii. agree that, if possible, a grant application be made in connection with the audio visual commitment for the January deadline; and
 - iii. an application be made for funding for the fit out of the Visitor Information Centre for the April deadline
- c. Tavistock Heritage Trust: request for grant support/underwriting to fund additional THT staffing resource – the Council agree, on a without prejudice basis, to underwrite a sum of up to £7,300 for one year (i.e. representing half of the estimated maximum additional unbudgeted cost), contingent on THT as a minimum meeting the other half of the additional costs and subject to review of the sustainability of the operation of the new arrangement after a period of 12 months;
- d. Council Website – provision of an improved website being deferred so as to reduce expense and the Council undertake the minimum works necessary to secure compliance with new Regulations in the estimated sum of £1,000;
- e. Public Conveniences – the Council adopt the approach as set out in Minute No. 302(a);
- f. Insurance – the Insurance budget head be increased by £2,500 reflecting increased premium;
- g. WDBC request for Grant towards Bus Station toilet – a grant of £1,000 be made for the 2020/2021 financial year on a without prejudice basis subject to the Borough Council confirming that
- i. it will not withdraw from making its longstanding 20% contribution towards certain Goose Fair costs (inc ambulance and communications);
 - ii. the unit will be available for use by the general public and access will not be restricted;
 - iii. it will approach the Tavistock BID Co seeking a contribution toward operating costs.
- h. WDBC Dog Bin Collection – fees increase* - an additional £800.00 be set aside;

- i. Agree to bring forward a final proposal in respect of the Budget and Precept 2020/21 to a Special Meeting of Council to be arranged after confirmation of the position in relation to the Council application for borrowing approval.

*Note it was acknowledged that the increase in dog bin collection charges were yet to be ratified by the Borough Council

300. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

The Committee considered the Report (Appendix 4) of the Town Clerk and RFO setting out, for discussion, the basis upon which a Medium Term Financial Strategy for the Council might be developed and more particularly the assumptions and principles potentially underpinning same.

RECOMMENDED THAT Council endorse the Report, in particular the assumptions which should appropriately underpin a Medium Term Financial Strategy, as a basis for the preparation of a draft Medium Term Financial Strategy for the Council.

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

301. 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

302. PUBLIC CONVENIENCES SUB-COMMITTEE

(**CONFIDENTIAL** by virtue of relating to contractual, financial and/or legal matters)

The Committee considered the Minutes (Appendix 5) of the Meeting of the Public Conveniences Sub-Committee held on Tuesday 17th December, 2019.

In the ensuing discussion reference was made to a range of factors including accessibility, cost, long term vs short term drivers, how best to serve the public need and risk, more particularly as addressed in confidential Minute No. 302(a).

RECOMMENDED THAT the recommendation of the Committee, as set out confidential Minute No. 302(a) be endorsed.

Noted That Councillor Mrs M Ewings declared an interest in the above item by virtue of Membership of the Borough Council and left the room during consideration thereof.

303. TENANCY MATTER

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

The Committee considered the Report (Appendix 6) of the Town Clerk in connection with the above.

Arising from the foregoing, and following due consideration of the related legal advice, it was:-

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council initiate proceedings for the forfeiture of the lease of the identified premises, together with such further legal proceedings in view of the breach of the relevant terms of the Lease.

304. OBLIGATIONS IN RELATION TO MAINTENANCE/REPAIR

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

The Committee considered the Report (Appendix 7) of the Town Clerk in connection with the above.

Having considered the issues and options associated with the Report it was:-

RECOMMENDED THAT the Council authorise arrangements to surrender the right of way it enjoys over the identified structure.

The Meeting closed at 8.40pm.

Signed.....

Dated.....

CHAIRMAN