

**MINUTES** of the Meeting of **BUDGET & POLICY COMMITTEE** held on **TUESDAY 8<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER, 2022** at **5.30pm** in **THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, DRAKE ROAD, TAVISTOCK**

**PRESENT**

Councillor H Smith      **Vice Chairman (in the Chair)**

Councillor P Ward (Mayor)

Councillors Ms M Ewings, A Hutton, Mrs A Johnson, B Smith

Councillors Mrs U Mann, P Squire (Ward Members).

**IN ATTENDANCE** Town Clerk, General Manager, Assistant to the Town Clerk, Financial Administrator

**256. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence had been received from Councillor J Ellis (Chairman and Deputy Mayor).

**257. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES**

RESOLVED THAT the Minutes of the Meeting of the Budget & Policy Committee held on Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> October, 2022 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman (Appendix 1).

**258. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The following Declarations of Interest were made;

- Councillor Mrs A Johnson in respect of Agenda Item 6 (Goose Fair 2022), by virtue of having a close family association with an office holder of the community organisation;
- Councillors A Hutton and B Smith also in respect of Agenda Item 6, by virtue of both being members of Tavistock Lions.

**ITEMS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL**

**259. BUDGET PREPARATION & PRECEPT SETTING 2023/24**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Town Clerk (Appendix 2) together with associated appendices (Appendices 3 – 8 including the Fixed Asset Register (FAR) and Rolling Capital Programme (RCP)) in connection with the above. Read alongside prior reports and decisions of the Council it provided opportunity to consider and agree/recommend to Council, in principle, the emerging draft Budget for the 2023-24 Financial Year.

Attention was also drawn to:

- in view of the overall financial situation it was anticipated that, at the most, up to three priority capital projects might be able to proceed (subject to availability of funding);
- A final draft Schedule of Fees and Charges would be brought before the next Meeting.

In the ensuing discussion reference was made, variously, to:-

- Uncertainties arising from the financial challenges facing the public sector in general, Devon County Council in particular, and the impact(s) same might have on local Councils and their cost base;
- In response to a question, and notwithstanding the title, the Council's Rolling Capital Programme currently contained funds derived from revenue - the monies held therein were not therefore restricted to use solely for capital purposes;
- the control of heating within the Guildhall sat with the Council, and usage was being monitored by the Works Department alongside more general inspections of the premises;
- monthly energy usage readings in main Council premises were being taken to provide timely data regarding usage and costings;
- the options available in respect of reviewing tolls and an upcoming consultation with stakeholders;
- the challenges associated with re-tendering insurance services in the current market place;
- heating and ventilation in the Museum, which were the subject of ongoing discussions.

RECOMMENDED THAT the Council endorse, in principle (i.e. subject to final determination in January) as appropriate: -

- i. The submitted draft Council Budget 2023/24 enclosed as prepared:
  - Incorporating adjustments arising from the previous deliberations of the Council;
  - Incorporating the Fixed Asset Register and Rolling Capital Programme;
  - Providing for any surpluses available as at Year End, and not otherwise identified, being carried forward into the Rolling Capital Programme (RCP) to support priority works to public buildings/premises;
  - Agreement that
    - For the 2023/24 financial year the Council's contribution to the Rolling Capital Programme be resourced, on a temporary basis, from any increase

arising from positive changes in the underlying Council Taxbase; and

- Thereafter, and for future years, any increase in Precept arising from increases in the Council Tax base being applied to the Rolling Capital Programme until such time as the Council is able to return to an annual allocation of not less than £60,000 per annum.

- ii. In accordance with Minute no 73(c) the proposed transfer of £65,585 from the RCP to meet the unbudgeted revenue budget shortfall in the current financial year;
- iii. Authorise the purchase of a ride-on mower in a sum not exceeding £5,000 from the vehicle maintenance reserve (with a corresponding adjustment in the funds previously allocated for vehicle maintenance);
- iv. Same subject to consideration of a schedule of proposed fees and charges at the next meeting.

## **260. TO REVIEW POTENTIAL START TIMES FOR COMMITTEE/COUNCIL MEETINGS**

The Committee received and considered the Briefing Note (Appendix 9), as provided by the Assistant to the Town Clerk, in respect of the above. Minute No. 296 (b) from the Council Meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> April, 2021.

During the ensuing discussion particular reference was made to:

- That any decision of Council at this time would necessarily be indicative (insofar as the Annual Meeting of Council in May would make the final decisions in relation to the Calendar of Meetings);
- Whether the current early Meeting time of 5.30pm (introduced to facilitate virtual meetings during the pandemic) might deter new Councillors standing at the Election in May 2023, especially those who might work outside of the town;
- the difficulty some current Councillors had in arriving at the commencement of Meetings due to work and family commitments.

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council adopt a start time of 6.30pm for all standing Committee and Council Meetings, with effect from the 2023/2024 Civic Year.

## **261. GOOSE FAIR 2022**

The Committee received and considered the Briefing Note of the Works Manager in respect of the above (Appendix 10).

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council endorse the payment of

£ 2,000 to Tavistock Lions Club in recognition of their support in delivering the Park & Ride sites (£1,000 Yelverton, £1,000 Gulworthy/Whitchurch Down) at the 2022 Tavistock Goose Fair.

### **ITEMS CIRCULATED FOR INFORMATION ONLY**

#### **262. BRITAIN IN BLOOM**

The Committee received and noted the Briefing Note of the Works Manager in respect of the above (Appendix 11).

In response to a question it was confirmed that the Tavistock BID Company had decided not to enter the competition in 2023.

### **EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

#### **263. 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 CIRCULATED FOR INFORMATION ONLY**

#### **264. PROPERTY, LEGAL & FINANCE MATTERS**

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

An oral update was provided in connection with an ongoing property matter. Following a meeting between designated Members and the Councils Solicitors the matter was being progressed in accordance with the prior instructions of the Council. Updates would be brought forward as/when further instructions were required.

The Meeting closed at 5.58pm

Signed:

Dated:

CHAIRMAN