

MINUTES of the Meeting of the **BUDGET AND POLICY COMMITTEE** held at the Council Chamber, Drake Road, Tavistock on **TUESDAY 3rd October, 2017** at **6.30pm.**

PRESENT Councillor P Sanders (Mayor),
Councillor P Ward (Deputy Mayor)
Councillors Mrs M Ewings, Mrs A Johnson,
P Williamson.

IN ATTENDANCE Town Clerk, Assistant to the Town Clerk.

146. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors P Palfrey and H Smith.

147. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

RESOLVED THAT the Minutes of the Meeting of the Budget & Policy Committee held on Tuesday 29th August, 2017 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

148. BUDGET PREPARATION AND PRECEPT SETTING 2018-19

The Committee considered the report of the Town Clerk outlining related current and anticipated future issues and providing an opportunity to consider the basis upon which the draft 2018/19 Budget and Precept should be developed.

In the ensuing discussion particular reference was made, inter-alia, to:-

- i. The potential impact a case currently being heard (brought by HMRC) might have upon the VAT regime for markets and the extent the Council could/should make contingency arrangements;
- ii. The extent to which the acquisition of the Molly Owen Centre did/did not affect future plans for the siting and operation of other (non Depot) Council services;
- iii. Having regard to the projected (both capital and revenue) budget deficit - options for the future of the Drake Road Offices including sale and/or relocation;
- iv. The extent to which the developments listed above might/might not impact upon proposals for the future use of the Guildhall complex by the Council and related bid to Heritage Lottery Fund;

- v. The potential impact of increasing costs upon Council resources. In particular building price inflation at a time when a significant capital programme was to be delivered, increases in the retail price/consumer price indices and projected increases in employment costs;
- vi. Arrangements for the operation of the Works Department following the retirement of the Works Manager;
- vii. The recent appointment of the Cemetery Administrator, on a secondment basis, to the role of Market Development Officer and associated arrangements for backfilling;
- viii. Arrangements to budget for projected new expenditure in areas such as a Neighbourhood Plan;
- ix. The levels at which the Precept would need to be set in order to meet existing projected commitments;
- x. The potential impact of the ongoing/continuing impact of reductions in income arising from the "localisation" of Council Tax (expected to be in the order of 8-9% for the next financial year);
- xi. The potential that Government would re-visit the prospective "capping" of precepts for larger Councils in the sector;
- xii. The potential shortfalls for the existing:-
 - o capital programme (notwithstanding projected loan/grant applications this being in the order of £340,000)
 - o and revenue (in the order of £60,000 pa).
- xiii. The extent to which a review of the potential immediate/future uses of the Molly Owen Centre could be undertaken;
- xiv. Projected additional future running costs of the Guildhall in the order of £60,000 per annum;
- xv. The current level of council tax precept-in the order of £124.00 per band D property.

Arising from consideration of the above the Committee reviewed existing and proposed financial commitments and associated avenues available to mitigate same.

RECOMMENDED THAT the report be received and a further report be brought before the next Meeting of the Committee outlining how best to manage projected spend and any necessary Precept increases within prudent thresholds.

Noted That

- a) in response to item (i) above the Clerk undertook to write, on behalf of the Council, to the Member of Parliament expressing the Council's concerns that

should the HMRC case succeed it would have a significant/substantial impact upon the Council Precept, and in any event, should not be retrospective (or if it were accompanied by a significant period of grace).

- b) The General Manager would bring a report to the March meeting of the Committee regarding future staffing/operating arrangements for the Works Department/Town Hall/Pannier Market.
- c) The appointment of the Cemetery Administrator, on secondment, to the role of Market Development Officer to be reported to Council.

149. TAVISTOCK TOWN COUNCIL GRANTS POLICY - REVIEW

The Committee considered the report of the Assistant to the Town Clerk outlining the current Tavistock Town Council Grant Policy and Application form and seeking views on whether or not amendments should be made.

RECOMMENDED THAT the current Tavistock Town Council Grants Policy and Application form be endorsed subject to the inclusion of provisions regarding:-

- a) Grants to religious organisations should only be made where the funded purpose was open to those of all denominations (and not for any works to buildings precluded by law).
- b) The Policy with regard to applications from the same organisation received in successive years (or indeed every year) be amended such that
 - applicants be advised they cannot rely upon awards being made every year:
 - a grant may only be made for a maximum of three consecutive years, after which no grant shall be eligible the following year.

150. CAPITAL SCHEMES – PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee received an oral update in connection with progress of Council contracts for major works, a written report to be submitted by the General Manager to the next meeting of Council.

151. NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The Committee noted progress in connection with the Neighbourhood Plan for Tavistock, Lead Members having met with representatives of other bodies and scheduled to be

attending training shortly. In addition a meeting of the Member leads was to take place later in the week.

URGENT ITEMS

The following items were considered as a matter of urgency.

152. ANNUAL RETURN FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31st MARCH 2017

Pursuant to Minute No. 119 the Committee noted the response of the External Auditor who had made a recommendation for endorsement by Council. Arising from same it was duly:-

RECOMMENDED THAT the Council pass a resolution to endorse and ratify the decision previously that it:

'endorses and ratifies the prior award of the Butchers' Hall contract to the lowest tenderer'.

Noted That the receipt of an unqualified audit report was welcomed.

153. COUNCIL VACANCY

The Committee noted arrangements to advertise the recently arising North Ward vacancy on the Council. Notice would be placed in the Tavistock Times on 26th October inviting residents to call a by-election.

RECOMMENDED THAT in the event an election was called Poll Cards be issued.

154. 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 INFORMATION ONLY

155. MOLLY OWEN CENTRE

(**CONFIDENTIAL** by virtue of relating to information of a commercially sensitive nature)

The Committee was advised that arrangements for the purchase of the premises were at an advanced stage and were expected

to be completed prior to the meeting of Council. Satisfactory valuation/survey reports and due diligence had been received.

156. MEADOWLANDS

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

The Committee received an oral update in connection with the above - a response still being awaited in relation to proposals put forward by the Town Council to meet the needs of the Tenant.

CONFIDENTIAL URGENT ITEM

The following item was considered as a matter of urgency.

157. TENNIS CLUB

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

The Committee was advised, in outline, of discussions which had taken place at Officer level with the Tenant of the premises. In view of some of the issues arising it:

RECOMMENDED THAT a Report be brought to the next Meeting of the Budget & Policy Committee providing an update on the position reached and seeking instructions as to next steps.

The Meeting closed at 8.25pm

Signed.....

Dated.....

CHAIRMAN