

AGENDA ITEM No. 2

MINUTES of the Meeting of **BUDGET & POLICY COMMITTEE** held on **TUESDAY 16th JANUARY, 2024** at **6.30pm** in **THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, DRAKE ROAD, TAVISTOCK**

PRESENT

Councillor P Ward (Chairman)
Councillor U Mann (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors Ms M Ewings*, A Hutton, Mrs A Johnson
Councillors S Hipsey & P Squire (Ward Members)

*Arrived late at the Meeting

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

275. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence had been received.

276. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

RESOLVED THAT the Minutes of the Meeting of the Budget & Policy Committee held on Tuesday 24th October, 2023 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman (Appendix 1).

277. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following Declarations of Interest were made in respect of Agenda Item No. 5 'Grants' (Minute No. 279 below refers):

- Councillor Mrs A Johnson – Dartmoor Search & Rescue Team Tavistock, by virtue of relationship to the applicant;
- Councillor A Hutton – The Lions Club of Tavistock by virtue of being a member of the organisation;
- Councillor P Ward –
 - o Make a Difference by virtue of that having been a previous Mayoral Charity; and
 - o TaviHelps by virtue of being a volunteer with the organisation;
- Councillor U Mann –
 - o Citizens' Advice by virtue of employment;
 - o West Devon CVS by virtue of being a Trustee of the organisation;

- Tavistock Scrapstore by virtue of having assisted with the application form.

ITEMS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

278. BUDGET PREPARATION & PRECEPT SETTING 2024/25

The Committee considered the Report of the Town Clerk (Appendix 2), together with the associated documentation, in connection with the above (and enclosed Sub-Appendices) as follows;

- a Schedule of proposed Fees & Charges 2024-25 (Sub-Appendix 1);
- Rolling Capital Programme (RCP) 2022/23, 2023/24 and Provisional 2024/25 (Sub-Appendix 2);
- Proposed Budget Summary 2023/24 and Proposed for 2024/2025 (Sub-Appendix 3);
- Budget Detail by Centre 2022/23, 2023/24 and Proposed for 2024/25 (Sub-Appendix 4);
- Budget Detail by Combined Account Code for 2022/23, 2023/24 and proposed for 2024/25 (Sub-Appendix 5)

setting out the emerging draft Budget and Precept for the 2024/25 Financial Year.

It was noted that there remained some accounting adjustments to be made, however these were not anticipated to adversely impact the Precept level or revenue cost codes. More generally the main challenges anticipated over the next year were likely to include inflation, the retail environment (with potential for consequential impacts on commercial income streams), professional/legal costs, and the extent to which legislation regarding the energy performance of buildings might/might not impact the listed estate.

During the ensuing discussion, particular reference was made to:

- the proposed increase in the Council's Precept at 1.23% equating to an increase of 4.81pence per week for each Band D equivalent property;
- the Fees & Charges document, which was as previously agreed, subject to adjustment to reflect changes to pitch fees rates for the Pannier Market;
- that the Market Road re-surfacing works and Market Road retaining wall reinstatement works were subject to an accounting adjustment to reflect the consolidation of the two contracts.

Arising from consideration of the Report reference was further made to:-

- concerns regarding high street vitality. Most especially the significant number of businesses currently for sale in Tavistock, alongside businesses that were known to be closing/being marketed in the coming months. Some of which were the more iconic/better known ones in the town. It was hoped that at least some of these businesses would continue under new ownership, when sold;
- a change in national Planning Policy might need to be made to lead to improvements in high streets across the country, many of which were under considerable pressure.

RECOMMENDED THAT the Council endorse and approve the draft appended Budget for Tavistock Town Council 2024/25 incorporating the savings, assumptions and projections as previously submitted to/endorsed by Council, and the associated Precept in the sum of £999,718.00 or £207.23 per Band D equivalent.

Noted That the minimal increase in the Precept during a time of continuing cost pressures was welcomed.

279. GRANTS

The Notes of the Grants Panel Meeting held on the 21st November, 2023 were received and considered (Appendix 3).

During the discussion reference was made to the proposal to review the current Grant Scoring Process as it had been considered not to differentiate sufficiently between Applications received.

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council

1. agree to remove those funding requests which required 'in kind' funding (i.e. use of Town Council facilities, such as the Town Hall, as requested by Junior Life Skills and Tavistock Heritage Trust) from the budget allocations, to free up £ 1,250 of funding for other applicants*. To acknowledge the work of The New Tavistock Youth Café** with young people in the town, it was proposed that this amount be added to the allocation amount received based on the scoring of its application;
2. allocate Grant funding as follows, based on the scoring matrix as shown above;

	Organisation	Average score	Amount requested	Amount allocated
1	Citizens' Advice	11.80	£ 4, 000.00	£ 4, 000.00
2	Tavi Fringe	13.66	£ 460.00	£ 460.00
3	Tavistock Carers' Group	9.80	£ 650.00	£ 500.00
4	Debt Advice Tavistock	13.80	£ 500.00	£ 500.00

5	Tavistock Library	14.50	£ 240.00	£ 240.00
6	Tavistock Area Support Services (TASS)	14.25	£ 3, 580.60	£ 1, 500.00
7	Tavistock Cricket Club	11.20	£ 479.99	£ 479.99
8	Make a Difference	14.50	£ 2, 000.00	£ 1, 500.00
9	Mary Budding Trust	12.75	£ 1, 500.00	£ 750.00
10	Catalyst (Tavistock)	11.40	£ 1, 000.00	£ 500.00
11	Junior Life Skills*	12.80	£ 566.00	£ 0.00
12	Tavistock Scrapstore	14.20	£ 1, 000.00	£ 1, 000.00
13	West Devon CVS	13.25	£ 891.00	£ 750.00
14	Dartmoor Search & Rescue Team - Tavistock	15.80	£ 1, 000.00	£ 1, 000.00
15	NAS West Devon Autistic Women's Group	12.40	£ 789.00	£ 750.00
16	The New Tavistock Youth Café**	13.00	£ 5, 000.00	£ 1, 500.00
17	Tavihelps	13.75	£ 1, 150.00	£ 750.00
18	Tavistock Amateur Boxing Club	12.80	£ 2, 690.31	£ 750.00
19	The Lions Club of Tavistock CIO	12.50	£ 1, 090.10	£ 750.00
20	Tavistock Heritage Trust*	13.40	£ 1, 500.00	£ 0.00
Total allocated				£ 17, 679.99

NOTE In view of the number and range of interests arising, none of which were reported as prejudicial Disclosable Pecuniary Interests, and in view of the Committee's role not being determinative, it was mutually agreed that all Members of the Committee would remain in the room but not speak or vote on those applications in which they had an 'other' interest so as to maintain a working quorum. The voting accordingly took place application by application.

3. agree that the Grants Panel would reconvene in the New Year, to review the current scoring process and bring forward a more robust scoring process for the 2024 Grant Applications via the Budget & Policy Committee.

Noted That:

- i. In addition to the foregoing declarations of interests (Minute No 277 refers) the following additional declarations were received:
 - o Councillor Mrs A Johnson – The Lions Club of Tavistock by virtue of a close family member being a member of the organisation; and

- Councillor A Hutton – The Mary Budding Trust by virtue of a close family member being a member of the organisation.
- ii. Councillor Mrs U Mann reported the advice of the Monitoring Officer in connection with the treatment of employment matters (application 1 refers)
- iii. if the Recommendation at 1 above was approved, this would result in a Grant of £ 2,750.00 to The New Tavistock Youth Café;
- iv. the next Meeting of the Grants Panel (recommendation 3 refers), to review the scoring process, was scheduled on Tuesday 23rd January, 2024.

280. IN-YEAR VIREMENT OF FUNDS TO PROPERTY MAINTENANCE

The Committee received and considered the Briefing Note of the General Manager (Appendix 4) in connection with the above.

Subject to the addition of 'if/as necessary' (to reflect two potential accounting treatments, the other being from the General Reserve) it was:-

RECOMMENDED THAT if/as necessary, Tavistock Town Council approve the virement of £15,000 from the unspent line in Code 4036, as indicated, to the Property Maintenance Cost Code, in order to facilitate the necessary property maintenance, as detailed within the Briefing Note.

281. PROPOSED CHARGING FOR ON-STREET PARKING

The Committee received an oral update from the Town Clerk with regard to the current position on the County Council's proposal to introduce on - street parking charges in the town.

It was reported that;

- correspondence received to date had been circulated to Members;
- potentially, some form of demonstration could be undertaken in March 2024, when Devon County Council were expected to meet to decide on the proposal. This could include representation from other settlements similarly adversely affected by the proposals;
- it was understood Devon County Council was no longer considering any correspondence on this matter, following the closure of the Consultation Period on 7th January, 2024;
- representatives of Devon County Council had declined an invitation to meet with West Devon Borough Council;
- Tavistock BID Company was continuing to oppose the proposals. 4,000 leaflets, as produced by the Bid Company, objecting to the proposal had been distributed in the town during the Consultation

Period, with many members of the public also having been engaged with;

- the report which would be submitted to the DCC Meeting should be available 5 clear days prior to the actual Meeting to meet statutory requirements;
- if a peaceful demonstration was planned, then those representing the town, working with the BID Company and Chamber of Commerce, would be acceptable;
- it was understood that neither West Devon Borough Council's Heritage Officer, nor Devon County Council's Archaeologist, had yet received the information they would require to allow them to assess the proposals from a Heritage and/or Conservation prospective.

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council work with partner organisations, and the other affected communities, to make it clear to Devon County Council its continuing opposition to the proposals, in line with Tavistock Town Council's stance, thus far.

282. GOOSE FAIR 2023

The Committee received and considered the Briefing Note of the Town Clerk, together with a Goose Fair Income and Expenditure Report (Appendix 5) in connection with the operation and delivery of the Goose Fair 2023.

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council approve the payment of £ 2,000 to the Lions Club of Tavistock, in recognition of its support for the delivery of the Park & Ride service at Goose Fair 2023.

Noted That

- It was suggested that, to give a more reliable figure for costs, the (not wholly related/variable) figure for irrecoverable VAT be disregarded;
- a meeting was programmed with West Devon Borough Council in the coming weeks to seek a blended approach to cleaning costs between the two Councils, for Goose Fair 2024.

283. CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2024–2025

The Committee received and considered the draft Calendar of Meetings for 2024–2025, which would be formally considered and adopted at the Annual Meeting of Council in May 2024 and had been circulated for consideration, in principle, (Appendix 6).

RECOMMENDED THAT the Draft Calendar of Meetings, 2024-2025, as amended (see below) be adopted in principle subject to final consideration by the Annual Meeting of Council in due course.

Noted That:

- the following amendments were recommended and endorsed:
 - the Budget & Policy Committee Meeting previously scheduled for Tuesday 21st May 2024 be moved to Tuesday 28th May 2024; and
 - the Budget & Policy Committee Meeting previously scheduled for Tuesday 11th June 2024 be deleted;
 - the Council Meeting previously scheduled for 18th June 2024 be moved to Tuesday 11th June 2024; and
 - the Town Hall & Markets Consultative Group Meeting previously scheduled for Wednesday 12th June 2024 instead take place on Tuesday 18th June 2024.
- in view of the changes outlined above, the Assistant to the Town Clerk undertook to provide the revised Calendar of Meetings 2024 – 2025 to all Members of Council, prior to the next Council Meeting on Tuesday 6th February, 2024.

*Noted that Councillor Ms M Ewings arrived at the Meeting during consideration of this item.

284. DISTRIBUTION OF GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE

The Committee received and considered the Briefing Note of the Town Clerk (Appendix 7) in respect of a suggestion received to vary current arrangements for the distribution of external e-mails of a general nature from third parties (but not Council business) to Councillors.

Following discussion the prevailing view was that current arrangements were satisfactory and should be retained.

RECOMMENDED THAT no change be made to current arrangements.

Noted That Officers would continue to notate at the top of each redistributed e-mail the distribution list to whom the e-mail had been sent, as recently initiated.

ITEMS CIRCULATED FOR INFORMATION ONLY

285. CORNWALL & WEST DEVON MINING LANDSCAPE UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE – CLOSURE OF HEARTLANDS 'KEY CENTRE'

The 'Notice of Closure', as received from The Heartlands Trust and Cornwall Council, was received and noted (Appendix 8).

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

- that there had previously been only 3 Key Centres in the Devon and Cornwall area those being Tavistock, Geevor and Heartlands. This therefore left Tavistock as one of two such Centres remaining;
- disappointment was expressed at the closure which reinforced the opportunity/need for Tavistock to work closely with the World Heritage Site;
- The Town Council's own recent links to the World Heritage Site were outlined including:
 - The strength of the relationship and continuing positive collaboration;
 - Ongoing communications previously referenced in the General Manager's Reports to the Council;
 - Meetings and visits between the two organisations which had been undertaken;
 - Ongoing relationships with regard to an improved local website presence and social media sites;
 - a training day scheduled for Town Council staff - an invitation to which would be extended by the General Manager to include representatives of Tavistock Heritage Trust and the Guildhall Advisory Forum;
 - involvement in a World Heritage Site wide event to be planned to celebrate/commemorate the 20th Anniversary of Inscription in 2026.

286. PENNON SHARE HOLDING

The Council's holding of 519 Pennon Group plc Shares was noted.

BUSINESS BROUGHT FORWARD AT THE DISCRETION OF THE CHAIRMAN

287. WORKS ON THE HIGHWAY

The following Item of Business was brought forward at the discretion of the Chairman in view of the significant amount of traffic disruption arising in the Town, due to a series of works being undertaken simultaneously, in particular in the vicinity of Plymouth Road.

It was noted that:

- there being only two main routes for traffic through the town, major works on one route also seriously impacted traffic movements on the other;

- the disruption was having a material negative impact on businesses throughout the town;
- if there were going to be major works on the main Plymouth Road then these should be prioritised, with the works being completed in a timely manner. It was felt that 2 months to complete the works was unacceptable;
- there appeared to be no co-ordination between the County's Highways Department and utility companies, which could help avoid several different projects being undertaken at the same time;
- the local Highways Officer had been invited to the next Council Meeting to provide clarification on a series of highways matters. To date, no response had been received. If the Officer's work schedule did not allow for physical attendance at that Meeting, it was hoped that a daytime virtual meeting could be arranged with as many Councillors as possible in attendance;
- the Southern Links Meetings administered by the Borough Council, which had previously involved the attendance of Highways (and other County) Officers and provided a forum to discuss matters of local significance and co-ordination, seemed to have fallen away.

Noted That a Member undertook to liaise with the relevant Officer at West Devon Borough Council to ascertain the current status of the Southern Links Meetings, and whether or not these could be reinstated/revitalised.

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

288. 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

289. GUILDHALL GATEWAY CENTRE – OPERATING ARRANGEMENTS

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

The Committee received an oral update from the General Manager with regard to the operating arrangements for the Guildhall, which had been in place since 6th October, 2023 including that:

- progress was being made including through the work of the Heritage Alliance Group;

- there had recently been a meeting with partners from the 'Heritage Quarter' to consider co-ordination, branding etc. (this had included representatives from the Museum, Subscription Library, Policing Museum and Tavistock Heritage Trust);
- a Heritage Fair was due to take place on the 16th March 2024 in The Guildhall and on Guildhall Square where heritage partners would have stalls to promote what they were doing, and to encourage volunteers to come forward;
- Tavistock Heritage Trust indicated they currently had more volunteers than routinely needed, so it was hoped that some of these would support the Museum and Policing Museum, both of which were aspiring to be open at the same time as the Visitor Centre;
- the recently appointed Heritage Centre Duty Officer had started on 9th January 2024 and was settling well into the role;
- a positive meeting had taken place with the Chairman of the Museum;
- the Police Museum was looking to deliver an exhibition in The Guildhall on 'Women in Policing';
- A local historian was looking to undertake 9 talks in The Guildhall around Policing;
- The Town Council was now looking to generate income from some activities in The Guildhall;
- CCTV now provided coverage of the whole of The Guildhall via a tablet held in the reception area. This meant that there was no longer a need to have a physical presence at all times in the Courtroom.

290. CAPITAL WORKS & PROPERTY UPDATE

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

The Town Clerk provided an oral update on the following matters:-

Commercial Retail Premises – potential breaches of the terms of the lease by a tenant were reported and action arising to seek resolution. Should resolution by agreement not be possible proceedings, including by way of a S146 Notice of intention to forfeit and consequential actions, would be initiated to protect the interests of the Council.

The Meeting closed at 8.38pm.

Signed:

Dated:

CHAIRMAN