

AGENDA ITEM 3a

MINUTES of the Meeting of the **TAVISTOCK TOWN COUNCIL** held on **TUESDAY 4th FEBRUARY, 2025 at 6.30pm** at **THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, TOWN COUNCIL OFFICES, DRAKE ROAD, TAVISTOCK**

PRESENT Councillor P Ward (Mayor)
Councillor S Hipsey (Deputy Mayor)

Councillors R Edlmann, Ms M Ewings, Mrs J Hughes, Mrs A Johnson, A Lewis, U Mann, N Martin, Mrs B Moody, J Moody, T Munro, G Parker, B Smith, A Venning.

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

Prior to the commencement of the Meeting there was opportunity at: **6.25pm** – for Members to receive a few moments of Quiet Reflection as provided by Reverend Matthew Godfrey of St Eustachius' Church, Tavistock.

COMMENCEMENT OF MEETING

299. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for Absence had been received from Councillors A Hutton and R Poppe.

300. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest made at this point in the Meeting, however please see Minute No. 306 below.

301. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

a) RESOLVED THAT the Minutes of the Meeting of Tavistock Town Council held on Tuesday 7th January, 2025 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman (Appendix 1).

302. PUBLIC REPRESENTATIONS & QUESTIONS

No public representations or questions had been received prior to the Meeting.

In response to an invitation a Member of the Neighbourhood Development Plan Steering Group expressed appreciation to the Council for its support for the initiative.

ITEMS REQUIRING A DECISION

303. NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN (NDP)

The Council received the Report of the Town Clerk in connection with the above, and the accompanying Independent Examiners Report on the Tavistock Neighbourhood Development Plan (Appendix 2), with particular reference to the role and responsibilities of the Local Planning Authority going forward and the opportunity afforded to the Town Council to make comment at this stage.

During the discussion arising reference was made, in particular, to:

- appreciation for the dedication and diligence of the Neighbourhood Development Plan Steering Group in the preparation, drafting and timely delivery of the document which had been welcomed by the Independent Examiner;
- a potential addition, by way of amendment, to the recommendations included in the Report;
- acknowledgement of recent changes arising nationally in the planning arena and, more locally, as regarded 5year Housing land supply and associated matters;
- the role of the Council's Development Management & Licensing Committee in connection with monitoring against the Plan (subject to moving toward adoption following referendum) which represented a 'living' document;
- the role of the Local Planning Authority in making strategic housing land allocations/identifying land supply over the local plan area accompanied by the potential for consultation/collaboration with the Town Council in relation to development within the Parish;
- views in connection with the prior decision not to make site allocations within the Plan.

RESOLVED THAT Tavistock Town Council:

- a) welcome the Report of the Independent Examination of the Tavistock Neighbourhood Development Plan and associated documents;
- b) advise it accepts the modifications recommended by the Examiner and commend same to the LPA for acceptance and progression to Referendum;

- c) Request that the Development Management and Licensing Committee, in collaboration with the Local Planning Authority, to advise the Council on the likely requirements for housing in Tavistock during the lifetime of the Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan area, and to advise on the options for meeting these requirements.

Noted That:-

- A Councillor Member of the Steering Group:
 - thanked both the Steering Group Members, and all those others who had helped get the Plan to its current stage;
 - noted the scope for the Plan to help shape future development in Tavistock;
 - acknowledged constructive reference to the provisions of the document by the Council's Development Management & Licensing Committee when commenting on a recent planning application;
 - noted the positive nature of the Examiner's comments.
- appreciation was conveyed to the Chairman of the Steering Group together with her team, for getting the Plan to its current stage, in good order and to time;
- it was reported the Plan would next be considered at the West Devon Borough Council Meeting in March.

304. COUNCIL BUDGET & PRECEPT 2025-2026

a) Schedule of Fees & Charges 2025–2026 & Guildhall & Town Hall–Option to Tax and Treatment of VAT.

Reference was made, in particular, to:-

- deliberation on the foregoing, serving to discharge the provisions of Minute No 277(b)-(c) of the Budget and Policy Committee;
- the background to current arrangements regarding the operation of the Council's option to tax/not to tax;
- that where a decision to opt to tax was agreed, it would remain in situ for 20 years, so required careful consideration and appropriate advice;
- the implications of both scenarios (opt to tax or not);
- the matter would be brought forward for further review, in light of advice received, at a later date.

RESOLVED THAT Tavistock Town Council:

- i) adopt the Schedule of Fees and Charges for the Town Hall 2025-26 as set out in the Report to the Budget and Policy Committee;
- ii) with regard to the Guildhall, grant authority to the General Manager, in consultation with the Mayor and Deputy Mayor, to set a Schedule of Fees and Charges for the use of the Guildhall 2025-25;
- iii) not opt to Tax the Town Hall or the Guildhall for VAT purposes at the present time, but continue to keep the matter under review as more information became available.

b) Draft Budget and Precept for 2025 – 2026

The Council considered the Draft Budget and Precept 2025-26 and Rolling Capital Programme (Appendix 3).

In response to questions it was reported that:

- o the proposed increase of 7.32% to the Council’s Precept amounted to an extra 29p per week on a Band D property;
- o the figure was made up of an agreed 4.82% increase plus a necessary additional 2.50% to address the recent Government increase in National Insurance payments for Employers (for which unlike principal authorities the Council received no relief from Government);
- o deliberation on the foregoing served to discharge the provisions of Minute No 278 of the Budget and Policy Committee.

RESOLVED THAT the draft Tavistock Town Council

- i) Budget 2025-26 as submitted;
 - ii) Precept 2025-26 as submitted, in the sum of £1,088,850 (or £222.39 per Band D property equivalent);
 - iii) Rolling Capital Programme 2025-26 as submitted;
- be approved and adopted.

305. GENERAL FINANCE

The Council considered the following:-

a) Schedule of Payments

The Council received and considered copies of the monthly accounts as at 31st December, 2024 as listed on the Council website (Appendix 4);

b) Budget Monitoring Report

The Council received and considered a copy of the Budget Monitoring Report (Appendix 5) as at 31st December, 2024.

306. BUDGET & POLICY COMMITTEE

The Council considered the Minutes of the Meeting of the Budget & Policy Committee (Appendix 6) held on Tuesday 21st January, 2025 the recommendations being reported by rote, together with a copy of the Abbey Remains Restoration Project Partnership Agreement 2025–27 (Appendix 7).

During the discussion arising particular reference was made to;

- whether the Town Council should consider purchasing equipment to deal with flooding issues, rather than hiring it in, as it was anticipated that such weather occurrences could increase in future. It was reported that this might be something to consider when agreeing the Budget for 2026–2027;
- that the 2026-2027 Budget could be a difficult one, and realistically it was unlikely that the historically lower-level increases in the Precept could be maintained.

RESOLVED THAT subject to consideration of Minute Nos. 287-288 being deferred to a later point in the Meeting in view of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted; and

- Following a call for nominations, duly proposed and seconded, the following amended Recommendation in respect of Minute No. 282 in connection with the formation of a Devolution Working Group

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council designate a Working Group, comprised of Councillors Ms M Ewings, S Hipsey, A Hutton, Mrs A Johnson, J Moody, R Poppe, P Ward meeting on an informal basis, to consider the implications of and preparation for the future impacts of the implementation of the White Paper, with particular regard to the reorganisation of local government in Devon and how best to represent the interests of the ratepayers and community of the Town.

the Recommendations included in the foregoing report of the Budget and Policy Committee, (Minute No's 274-277(a); 277(d), then 279-286 be approved and adopted.

Noted that: the following Declarations of Interest were made in respect of Budget & Policy Minute No.280 – Goose Fair 2024: Councillors T Munro and B Smith by virtue of membership of the organisation involved.

307. DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT & LICENSING COMMITTEE (DM&L)

The Council considered the following: -

- i) Development Management & Licensing Committee - Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday 28th January, 2025 (Appendix 8) (Minute No's 289 - 298 inclusive) the recommendations being reported by rote:

RESOLVED THAT the Recommendations included in the foregoing report of the Development Management & Licensing Committee be approved.

ITEMS CIRCULATED FOR INFORMATION ONLY

308. SERVICE REPORTS

The Council received, for information, the Reports of the General Manager, Pannier Market, Town Hall & Butchers' Hall and Works Department (Appendices 9-11 refer).

- i. General Manager Report (incorporating Works Dep't) (Appendix 9)

Noted That:

- An update was provided regarding the prospective transfer of the Guildhall Toilets to the Town Council and the position of the principal authority;
- Appreciation was conveyed to the:
 - Mayor and the Assistant to the Town Clerk for their help in facilitating an event with regard to the mosaic in the Pannier Market Surround;
 - Two staff members from the Works Department for their work on the frame of the mosaic;
- the General Manager undertook to consider some form of covering for the mosaic to protect it from the elements and consideration would be given to a new plaque to be added to the mosaic, recording the refurbishment date.

- ii. Pannier Market Report (Appendix 10):

Noted That the Mayor conveyed, on behalf of the Council and Community, appreciation for and congratulations to involved staff, traders, and stakeholders, alongside the support of the community, that had secured Tavistock's Pannier Market first place in the National Association of British Market Authorities (NABMA) 'Market of the Year' competition, in the strongly contested and highly prized 'Large Indoor Market' category.

- iii. Town Hall & Butchers' Hall Report (Appendix 11).
Noted That in response to a question regarding cancelled bookings and the associated 'deposit scheme' the General Manager outlined existing arrangements and advised of increased rigour going forward.

309. FINANCE & OTHER MATTERS

The Council received, for information, the following: -

- a) Report of the Assistant to the Town Clerk (Appendix 12);
Noted That the Mayor reminded all present of the date of this year's Civic Ball, and encouraged early booking.
- b) West Devon Borough Council Report – Councillor H Greenberry-Pullen (Appendix 13);
- c) The following updates or feedback were brought forward:
 - i. Representatives on outside bodies:
 - o BID Board – attention was drawn, in particular to empty premises, a recent meeting with the MP with a view to alleviation through collaborative working, positive work undertaken by the BID, previous benchmarking surveys commissioned by the Borough Council, past national initiatives, comparison with other settlements, population growth and the opportunities to support the business community.

Noted That – Councillor Ms M Ewings left the Meeting during consideration of the above item.

- o Dartmoor Common Owners' Association – at a recent meeting topics covered had included appointment of a new Chairman, the recommendations of the Dartmoor Land Use Management Group, whether representation were best served at Member or Officer level, ongoing legal challenges regarding wild camping, work by the National Park Authority with other settlements regarding proposed visitor centre(s) following the closure of Princetown, progress with byelaws and opportunities for Tavistock in that regard. The representative undertook to liaise with the DNPA in connection with same.
- o Feedback from Members following attendance at any training sessions: none brought forward.

Noted That no report had been received from County Councillor D Sellis.

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

310. 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 REQUIRING A DECISION

311. BUDGET & POLICY COMMITTEE CONTINUED

(**CONFIDENTIAL** by virtue of relating to legal and/or commercial matters, staffing and/or the financial or business affairs of person or persons other than the Council).

The Council received, considered and noted Minute Nos. 287-288 of the Meeting of the Budget & Policy Committee (Appendix 6 refers) held on Tuesday 21st January, 2025.

312. PROPERTY, LEGAL & FINANCE MATTERS

(**CONFIDENTIAL** by virtue of relating to legal and/or commercial matters, staffing and/or the financial or business affairs of person or persons other than the Council).

i. DEBTORS' REPORT

The Council considered and noted a list (Appendix 14) of all those with debts to the Council dating from earlier than the last Quarter Day and received updates accordingly:

Noted That: Debtor A - the Council was advised of:

- an application for relief made by a party to the lease, and the scheduled court date;
- a further 'without prejudice' offer received and associated terms. The amount offered and terms being considered to be neither realistic, certain nor acceptable;
- and acknowledged what a potentially acceptable offer might look like;

- the balances to be applied in evaluating the risk/reward of legal proceedings, including but not limited to acknowledgement of the significance attached to the treatment of all tenants in good faith, with consistency and fairness;
- the importance attached to operational flexibility in a case such as this. Accordingly it was:

RESOLVED THAT authority be delegated to the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Mayor and Deputy Mayor to consider and if acceptable agree any suitable offer for settlement subject to legal advice.

It was further:

Noted That

- a) Councillor A Lewis left the Meeting at this point.
- b) The resolution above was without prejudice to the prior decision of the Council to take proceedings should the matter not be resolved by agreement beforehand.

ii. TOWN HALL BAR STOCK AUDIT REPORT

The Council received and noted the Bar Stock Audit Report dated 13th January, 2025 (Appendix 15).

CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS CIRCULATED FOR INFORMATION ONLY

313. PROPERTY, LEGAL & FINANCE MATTERS

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No updates were brought forward.

The Press and Public were re-admitted to the Meeting.

The Meeting closed at 8.34pm.

Signed:

Dated:

CHAIRMAN