

AGENDA ITEM No 6

MINUTES of the Meeting of the **BUDGET & POLICY COMMITTEE** held at the Council Chamber, Drake Road, Tavistock on **WEDNESDAY 24TH JULY, 2019 at 6.30pm**

PRESENT Councillor P Williamson (Chairman)

Councillors Ms L Crawford, Mrs M Ewings, Mrs A Johnson, H Smith, P Ward (part meeting).

Councillors J Ellis, Mrs U Mann (Ward Members)

IN ATTENDANCE Town Clerk, General Manager

89. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence have been received from Councillor A Hutton.

90. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

RESOLVED THAT the Minutes (Appendix 1) of the Meeting of the Budget & Policy Committee held on Tuesday 4th June, 2019 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

91. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Mrs M Ewings declared a personal non-prejudicial interest in connection with Public Conveniences by virtue of her membership of, and holding of office within, another Public Body.

ITEMS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

92. PUBLIC CONVENIENCES IN TAVISTOCK

The Committee considered the report (Appendix 2) of the Town Clerk in respect of the above.

In the ensuing discussion reference was made, in particular, to the importance attached to progressing arrangements once West Devon Borough Council had provided draft Heads of Terms to ensure that a smooth and orderly transition took place.

RECOMMENDED THAT:-

- a. A Public Conveniences Sub-Committee of not more than 4 Members who may be drawn from the whole of Council Membership (plus in addition the Chairman and Vice Chairman of Budget and Policy ex-officio voting) be appointed.
- b. Same to be charged to review and make recommendations in connection with the proposed transfer and future operating arrangements (leading up to 1st April, 2020) of Public Conveniences scheduled to be transferred to the Town Council in order to facilitate a timely, informed and co-ordinated transfer of services.

Noted That

- Councillors Ms L Crawford, Mrs A Johnson, J Ellis and H Smith all expressed an interest in being appointed to the Sub-Committee by Council in due course;
- in response to a question it was reported agreement had been reached, in principle, in connection with lease obligations in respect of the Bedford Car Park Public Conveniences.

93 TAVISTOCK TOWN COUNCIL DEBTORS PROCESS

The Committee considered the report (Appendix 3) of the Assistant to the Town Clerk in connection with the above which set out proposed amendments to the Commercial Debtors Process of the Council to facilitate the timely resolution of matters with recurrent debtors.

RECOMMENDED THAT the revised Generic Debtors Process, as set out at Appendix 2 to the Report be adopted and endorsed.

94. PRE-POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCOPING

The Committee considered the report (Appendix 4) of the Town Clerk prepared pursuant to the outcome of the Member Policy Workshop held on 9th July, 2019.

More specifically it set out the long list "of topics" explored alongside the prioritised "shortlist". The latter indicated those areas

where Members felt greatest focus could be achieved together with how development of the identified areas might be taken forward.

It was acknowledged that Council had recently (at the June meeting) agreed its work programme for the next 12 months. It was therefore recognised that any significant work streams arising from this should be forward scheduled accordingly to avoid conflict with the high level of extant commitments. Likewise in view of the capacity and funding position of the Council such work should be evidence based, costed, funded and represent value for money.

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

- environmental issues, climate change and related matters;
- the indicative aggregation of topics as outlined in the report;
- the varying emphasis which could be placed upon different themes emerging;
- notwithstanding officer/finance limitations – recognition that with the number of Member Groups being created there was also potential challenge to available Member capacity.

Arising from consideration of the forgoing it was:-

RECOMMENDED THAT:-

- a. Reports be prepared in connection with how the Council might develop workstreams regarding:-
 - i. Sustainability and the Environment;
 - ii. Communicationswith the first (Sustainability and the Environment) being brought forward to the next Meeting.
- b. The principles as set out in Para 4.3 (i)-(vi) of the Report be adopted and endorsed for the development of related work streams.

In order to expedite the business of the Meeting the following items were advanced from the order listed on the Agenda.

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

95. 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

96. TOWN HALL AND MARKETS TEAM – STAFFING

(**CONFIDENTIAL** by virtue of relating to personnel matters)
The Committee considered the report (Appendix 5) of the General Manager and Town Clerk in respect of the above.

Having reviewed the options, and in the discussion arising reference was made, in particular, to:-

- operation of past, current and proposed arrangements;
- consultation being/proposed to be undertaken with the staff side;
- the support of the Service Management Team for the proposal outlined;
- the arrangements proposed to bring the new arrangement as close as possible to the existing budget threshold.

Arising from the above it was:

RECOMMENDED THAT subject to the outcome of consultation with the staff side the Council:-

- a. Confirm that the Duty Officer permanent establishment increase from 2 to 3 and (subject to satisfactory performance) confirm the current post holders in post;
- b. Confirm that the Market and Events Assistant (MEA) permanent establishment (see also (c) below) increase from 2 to 3 and also a single temporary (12 months) Market and Events Assistant role be created:-
 - i. The current holder of permanent contracts being confirmed in post;

- ii. The current two holders of temporary MEA contracts being afforded the opportunity to apply for the remaining one permanent and one temporary role;
- iii. The post of Cleaner in the Pannier Market being deleted from the establishment and re-designated Market and Events Assistant, the postholder being offered suitable alternative employment in the new role.
- c. The reduction of the Pannier Market wages (Casuals) budget from £18,500 to £2,000 per annum.
- d. If necessary, subject to the outcome of consultation bring a report back to the Committee and Council with a view to determination in the September round of meetings.

97. GUILDHALL GATEWAY CENTRE

(CONFIDENTIAL by virtue of relating to confidential matters of a commercial and contractual nature)

The Committee considered the report (Appendix 6) of the Town Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer in connection with the above.

The Committee received a presentation from the General Manager in connection with the outcome of the recent capital tendering exercise setting out tender returns and work undertaken post tender returns to "value engineer" the project to more closely fit to the allocated budget. Attention was drawn to a range of specific adjustments which had been made, for example:-

- removal of the external lift extension and toilet and accompanying replacement with internal provision;
- removal of the refurbishment of the outbuildings from the scheme;
- the possibility that the "One Stop Shop" might no longer be delivered from the within the premises;
- alternative arrangements in connection with welfare facilities;
- savings which might arise from the provision of alternative finishes to new openings;
- savings projected in connection with the mechanical and electrical costs.

The savings above amounted to in the order of £325,000 and work was continuing in a number of other areas to bring the overall additional cost envelope to the Council down to a potentially more manageable sum of an extra £175,000.

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

- i. the background to and purpose of the project;
- ii. the longstanding commitment of the Council, including in it's Strategic Plan, to delivery of the project;
- iii. the options available to the Council in terms of fund raising to support additional costs;
- iv. the continuing support of Tavistock Heritage Trust for the proposal, notwithstanding the value engineering changes proposed to the scheme and the indicative support, in principle, of National Lottery Heritage Fund for the mitigation measures proposed;
- v. the merits of the Project as a joint venture;
- vi. the rigour of the tender evaluation process and provenance of the lowest tenderer;
- vii. the extent to which the value engineering suggestions could/could not be replaced as/if more funds became available in the future;
- viii. anticipated other claims on Council resources which could reasonably be anticipated over the next 2-5 years and the balance as between same;
- ix. views on the level of risk attaching to the project;
- x. the "opportunity cost" in terms of financial impact by proceeding with the project in preference to others;
- xi. the nature of the decision;
- xii. work to review the operation of the Service Level Agreement with Tavistock Heritage Trust which would formally commence shortly.

In response to a question the Town Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer outlined the challenges which lay ahead, whether or not the Council proceeded with the project. It was stressed, and acknowledged, that a robust commitment would be required from both Members and officers to exercise rigorous financial discipline for the foreseeable future to accompany and deliver the stated commitment of the Council to rebuilding its reserves .

Arising from consideration of the foregoing it was:

RECOMMENDED THAT subject to the views of the National Lottery Heritage Fund (i.e. permission to enter into the contract) Tavistock Town Council:-

- a. Receive and note the Tender returns received in respect of the Guildhall Gateway Centre Project;
- b. Endorse the value engineering/cost saving changes made to reduce the extent of the projected overspend and associated scheme adjustments;
- c. Agree:-
 - i. To make additional funding available in the sum of up to £175,000 to support the capital works of the Project ;
 - ii. Agree to meet the funding shortfall by:
 - In relation to earmarked reserves
 - The reallocation of the £50,000 provision allocated for Cemetery land acquisition;
 - The reduction of the equipment replacement reserve by £25,000 (with a commitment to rebuild in the next financial year);
 - The reduction of the extraordinary maintenance reserve by £25,000;
 - The Council review how to secure the remaining £75,000 in the Autumn Budget setting round;
- d. Subject to the foregoing, and to the consent of NLHF, agree that the most competitive tender submitted by tenderer No 2 as adjusted and excluding contingency in the sum of not more than £1,383,695 be accepted.

Noted That

- provision of an additional Project contingency in the sum of £75,000 had been made which sat outside of the contract and was already budgetted;
- the draft notes of a recent Meeting of the Project Steering Group were circulated.

URGENT ITEMS

In the interests of expediting the business of the Committee, the Chairman agreed to take the following confidential items as matter of urgency.

CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS
FOR INFORMATION ONLY

98. TENANCY MATTER

(**CONFIDENTIAL** by virtue of relating to legal or contractual matters or the financial affairs of persons other than the Council)
The Committee was advised of an anticipated request to surrender a Lease which, should a request be made, would be brought before the Committee and Council for decision in due course.

99. POTENTIAL INSURANCE CLAIM

(**CONFIDENTIAL** by virtue of relating to legal matters)
The Committee was advised of a potential claim.

The Press and Public were readmitted to the meeting.

ITEMS FOR RECOMMENDATION
TO COUNCIL (CONTINUED)

Further the above and in the interests of expediting the business of the Committee, the Chairman agreed to take the following non-confidential items as matters of urgency.

100. TRAVELLING AND SUBSISTENCE POLICY

The attention of the Committee was drawn to an omission in the current Policy with regard to whether or not travelling and subsistence claims could be made by the Mayor when undertaking Mayoral duties outside of the Parish.

Having reviewed the matter it was:-

RECOMMENDED THAT

- a) 'the reasonable cost of travelling and subsistence incurred by the Mayor when undertaking Mayoral duties beyond the boundaries of the Parish shall be reclaimable' and
- b) the Tavistock Town Council Members Travelling and Subsistence Allowance Scheme be amended accordingly.

Noted That Councillor Mrs A Johnson declared an interest in the above item took no part in the discussion or voting thereon.

101. ROYAL VISIT

It was reported that agreement had been reached as between Tavistock Town Council and West Devon Borough Council as to the sharing of costs for the recent Royal Visit in the sum of up to £5,000 each.

RECOMMENDED THAT in the event there were any underspent balance as at last Financial Year End, a transfer of up to £5,000 be made to cover the cost of the recent Royal visit.

The Meeting closed at 9.07pm.

Signed.....

Dated.....

CHAIRMAN