TAVISTOCK TOWN COUNCIL
BUDGET AND POLICY COMMITTEE
24TH JULY, 2019
BRIEFING NOTE
PRE-POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCOPING (WORKSHOPS)

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 At the meeting of Council held on 28th May, 2019 the Council endorsed the approach to be adopted for the application of informal mechanisms for pre-policy development, Member engagement and scoping. Subsequently a Policy Workshop, attended by 14 members of Council, was held on 9th July 2019 in order to explore, identify and then prioritise the views of Councillors.

2. ISSUES RAISED

2.1 The Workshop sought input on the basis of 3 headings – Economy and Environment, Community and Democracy (the foregoing headings relating to the four strategic themes of the Tavistock Town Council Strategic Plan 2017-21) and "Other" topics. The 'long-list' issues raised are included at Appendix 1.

2.2 The long listing was undertaken on the basis that nothing should be ruled out, or in.

2.3 The long list issues identified indicate a wide ranging ambition, from the potentially simple, short term and inexpensive to long term, complex and demanding.

2.4 These were then subjected to a 'short-listing' exercise (Appendix 2 indicates the votes cast[1]) whereby each councillor identified their three highest priorities for Council action. These were understandably diverse and apart from one or two areas (eg public conveniences) there was limited consensus on specific proposals.

2.5 However, looking in more detail (and in very broad terms) a significant number of the priorities indicated can be further aggregated into broadly related (or potentially related) topic classes. In particular, the following two main groupings:-
   a. Sustainability and the Environment (e.g. Neighbourhood Development Plan, Renewable Energy, Biodiversity etc.);
   b. Communications (e.g. website, signposting, social media etc.).

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[1] And is loosely colour coded

There were then some lesser but more focussed responses around:
c. Council Services (e.g. Public Conveniences);
d. Role in the Community (e.g. working with others etc.).

3. PRIORITISATION

3.1 Appendix 2 uses this broadly based grouping methodology to identify the principal underlying themes which emerged and have been annotated as follows:-
  i.   Sustainability and the Environment (in blue);
  ii.   Communication (in green);

3.2 It is recognised that these are loose groupings – for example some elements which have been included might be disaggregated (others which have not been included could potentially be included). Certainly not all could, or would, necessarily be desirable to achieve. However, they do serve as a start point for a more holistic or strategic view as to how the Council might proceed.

3.3 There is also a mix between priorities to which the Council is already either fully committed (such as public conveniences), conditionally committed (Neighbourhood Development Plan) and under review (environment/climate).

4. NEXT STEPS

4.1 It is recognised this is a very broad approach at this early stage and more work is required. Some topics may, on investigation, relate less well together, others might in future be developed. Likewise some may fit in more than one grouping.

4.2 In view of the responses received, and to move matters forward, it is therefore suggested that reports[2] be brought back in connection with the two most significant areas identified in the scoping session:-
  -   Sustainability and Environment;
  -   Communication.

4.3 This will enable the Council, in more detail, to hone its view of how these topics might be developed and their related scope, and then if/as appropriate, to agree the terms of reference for working groups[3] to review and develop proposals which meet the necessary criteria for the application of public monies, being that they should be:-
  i.   Evidence based and compliant with organisational Policies and Plans,

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[2] Identifying what is already done, what can potentially be done and more rigorously reviewing the interrelationships between topics
[3] Whether sequentially or concurrently depending on resource

    ii.   Costed,

    iii.   Funded (& resourced[4]),

    iv.   Represent value for money and be proportionate;

    v.   Achievable[5];

    vi.   Prioritised.

4.4 In doing so the Committee and Council will be mindful that the funding and resource position in the Council is presently challenging and unclear, in particular, pending visibility into:

- o the potential final cost implications associated with the Guildhall Gateway Centre; and
- o Financial Year End Adjustments;

both of which will become apparent over the next few weeks.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 If the Committee is comfortable with the 'rough and ready' preliminary approach to groupings it is suggested that the most effective and timely way of considering how best to proceed is to review each of these topic areas holistically. That enables a wide ranging review, proper prioritisation and co-ordination of activity and resource.

5.2 It is also acknowledged that there is a desire amongst Members to move sooner rather than later and so to that end it is:-

RECOMMENDED THAT:-

a. Reports be prepared in connection with how the Council might develop workstreams regarding:-

    i.   Sustainability and the Environment[6];

    ii.   Communications.

with the first (Sustainability and the Environment) being brought before the next Meeting.

b. The principles as set out in Para 4.3 (i)-(vi) above be adopted and endorsed for the development of related work streams.

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JULY 2019

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[4] Recognising not all resources are funding based eg staff time, consultancy, community resource etc

[5] Including being within the gift of Council to deliver

[6] This report to be the first as it has most recently (in part) been subject to consideration by Council