

AGENDA ITEM No 6

MINUTES

of the Meeting of the **BUDGET & POLICY COMMITTEE** held at the Council Chamber, Drake Road, Tavistock, on **TUESDAY, 4th September, 2018 at 6.46 pm.**

PRESENT

Councillor Mrs A Johnson (Chairman & Deputy Mayor)
Councillor P Ward (Mayor)

Councillors Mrs M Ewings, P Palfrey, P Williamson.
Councillors Ms L Crawford, Mrs U Mann (Ward Members)

IN ATTENDANCE

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

Note - prior to the commencement of the Meeting there was an opportunity to discuss the work of Tavistock Heritage Trust with its Chairman, Mr A Main.

103. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors A Hutton and P Sanders.

104. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

RESOLVED THAT subject to the amendments made by Council the Minutes of the Meeting of the Budget & Policy Committee held on Tuesday, 16th July, 2018 (Appendix 1) be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

105. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interests made.

ITEMS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

106. GUILDHALL GATEWAY CENTRE – PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee was advised of, and noted:-

- a) Progress towards securing Permission to Start (PTS), more particularly progress toward entering into the Lease/Service Level Agreement (a necessary pre-requisite for PTS) on which tentative agreement had been reached with Tavistock Heritage Trust; and
- b) Preparatory appointments made to date, including Project Manager, Interpretation and Evaluation Consultants and (subject to advert) Quantity Surveyor. All appointments were contingent on securing PTS.

The importance of submission, well in advance of the 26th September deadline, to Heritage Lottery Fund of all the necessary documentation for the PTS was stressed.

107. REPORTING OF RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL

Pursuant to the last Meeting of the Council the Committee considered making a recommendation as to how Committee recommendations might be reported at Council Meetings.

In a wide ranging discussion potential approaches referenced included those sometimes adopted by larger councils, such as reference to Minute numbers and sequence, page numbers, or reference to the presence of a recommendation where arising. However, on balance, it was felt by the Committee that for smaller parish based authorities such as Tavistock repetition of the recommendations as they arose by rote represented the most appropriate way forward.

RECOMMENDED THAT Committee recommendations being reported to Council be on the basis of repetition of the recommendation by rote, as they arose in the Minutes, by the Committee Chairman at Council Meetings and a review of the process be undertaken in March/April 2019.

Noted That arising from the above there was consensus that where Council might wish to come to a view at variance with that of a Committee recommendation the matter should, in accordance with good practice, generally be referred back to the Committee for further consideration with an outline of the reason why, before a final decision was made by Council. This reflected the additional information the Committee would have had in coming to its decision, the greater expertise of its Members and the role allocated to it by Council.

108. SERVICE PLANS (CORPORATE)

The Committee considered the draft Tavistock Town Council Corporate Service Plan 2018-2019 which formed the Council Work Programme for the following year, together with a précis of performance against each target in relation to the previous year (Appendix 2).

Attention was drawn, in particular, to:-

- The recommended inclusion of two new sub-priorities within the Democracy and Economy sections of the Council's four year Strategic Plan 2017-21, namely:-
 - D5 Compliance (reflecting the regulatory/related obligations placed on the Council), and;
 - EC6 Prudent Financial Management (reflecting the challenging financial environment – internal and external)
- The increased level of risk attaching to a number of risk categories alongside an existing and on-going significant level of risk, which represented cause for concern and monitoring.

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council endorse and adopt the Corporate Service Plan as a basis for the delivery of related Council

Services 2018-2019, together with the proposed amendments to the Strategic Plan 2017-21 and the accompanying organisation Risk Register.

Noted That, arising from consideration of the above, reference was made, in particular, to:-

- a) Former initiatives by the Environment Agency and other partners in relation to flood prevention;
- b) Certain of the administrative initiatives within the Plan;
- c) The importance attached to collaborative working with organisations such as the BID Company and, more particularly, ensuring that Council partnership working in events such as Dickensian Evening was underpinned by safe and proportionate Safety and Management Plan arrangements (this would be picked up in more detail in the Community Services Plan which would come to the next Meeting).

109. GRANT APPLICATIONS – REVIEW OF APPRAISAL PROCESS

The Committee considered the Report of the Assistant to the Town Clerk (Appendix 3) setting out details of the four responses received in relation to a trial grant assessment exercise recently undertaken.

In the ensuing discussion reference was variously made to the benefits/drawbacks of a structured grant assessment process, aspects which had worked well and less so during the trial, and the benefits which could accrue from running the 2018-19 grants process upon the suggested basis.

In particular there was consensus that, in order to afford all Members of Council the opportunity to participate in grant assessment in an informed manner, and to avert the possibility of Council (without having undertaken detailed assessment work) seeking to alter or amend evaluated recommendations, it would be beneficial to establish a Grants Panel. Same to be open to all Members of Council in the Autumn of each year specifically tasked with undertaking the appraisal of grant applications and making recommendations to Council in connection with same.

RECOMMENDED THAT

- a) The submitted methodology for the appraisal of grant applications be endorsed for application in the next round of awards;
- b) a Grants Panel be appointed each year, with membership open to all Members of Council so as to undertake review of grant applications in accordance with the adopted process;
- c) For those grant applications to be received in the upcoming budget round Council seek expressions of interest regarding Membership and make appointments to the Grants Panel.

110. CAPITAL PROGRAMME FUNDING

It was reported that a preliminary meeting had been held with the Accountant to the Council with regard to the funding of the Capital Programme. Future meetings were proposed in order to enable Council, during the Budget-setting process, to be informed to the fullest extent regarding its financial position and more particularly budget shortfall.

111. PUBLIC TOILETS IN TAVISTOCK

The Committee noted a request for a meeting from the Borough Council to discuss Public Toilet provision in the Town as part of an exercise to seek to secure a £50,000 saving to the Borough in the next financial year.

RECOMMENDED THAT the Mayor and Deputy Mayor be appointed to represent the Council in connection with the above.

Noted That in the discussion arising from consideration of the above reference was made to issues associated with various of the Public Convenience facilities delivered by the Borough Council within the Town, community benefit and need, potentially substantial financial implications (capital and revenue) and pressures already anticipated in the next financial year.

112. PANNIER MARKET SURROUND (PUBLIC REALM)

The Committee considered an update from the General Manager with regard to the contract for the Pannier Market Surround (Public Realm Project). This had originally been scheduled to be undertaken prior to Christmas.

However, following extensive consultation with businesses operating in that area there was consensus around a strong preference for delivery to be in the early part of 2019 (traditionally a quieter time of year for trading).

In recognition of the strong partnership of the Council with the business community generally, and its own tenants in particular, commencement of the contract had therefore been put forward to the early part of 2019. Affected businesses, together with the wider business community through the Chamber of Commerce and BID Company, would be advised accordingly.

113. COUNCIL MEETING – OCTOBER 2018

The Committee considered the possible rescheduling of the respective October Meetings of the Council and Development Management & Licensing Committee so as to amend dates (i.e. Council to fall on 23rd October and Development, Management & Licensing to fall on 22nd October 2018).

RECOMMENDED THAT the revised dates for Council and Development Management & Licensing Committee, as outlined above, be endorsed.

URGENT BUSINESS

The following item of business was considered with the consent of the Chairman

114. GOOSE FAIR PARK & RIDE

The Committee was advised, for information, that there was uncertainty regarding the availability of the Lumburn Park & Ride site in 2018. This resulted from the transfer of ownership from the existing landowner to Bovis Homes alongside any early mobilisation works they might have in hand. Discussions were taking place with Bovis Homes on an 'in principle' basis in an endeavour to secure the continuation of the facility for the 2018 year. It was recognised that, in any event, it would be necessary to identify an alternative Park & Ride site to serve the western side of the Town prior to the 2019 Goose Fair.

ITEMS CIRCULATED FOR INFORMATION ONLY

115. UPDATES

- a) **Capital Works** Update – the Committee was advised that scheduled works to the Molly Owen Centre were now complete.
- b) **Markets and VAT** – the Committee was advised of continuing uncertainty, on a national basis, regarding the view of HMRC as to those circumstances in which VAT might be payable in respect of market operations. The matter was being kept under review and any change or clarification in circumstances would be brought back to the Committee.

EXCLUSION OF PRESS & PUBLIC

116. 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

117. LEGAL MATTERS AND STAFFING MATTERS

(**CONFIDENTIAL** by virtue of relating to information of a commercially sensitive nature and/or legal proceedings and/or relating to identifiable individuals)

The Committee:-

- a) **Mediation** – 27th September 2018: noted the date for mediation in connection with the restriction on the Land Registry regarding Meadowlands (Councillors Palfrey and Mrs Johnson to attend);
- b) **Cemetery Matters** – was advised of a complaint regarding the operation of the Plymouth Road Cemetery to which resolution was being sought;
- c) **Community/Out-Services** – received an oral staffing update from the General Manager in connection with:
 - i. **Works Department** – a review was being undertaken regarding operating arrangements for the Works Department and some of the thinking and associated parameters were outlined. A more developed proposal would then be brought to the Committee for review and recommendation to Council.
 - ii. **Town Hall Staffing** – the resignation of the Town Hall Manager and Duty Officer was noted. As a public facing service early and seamless transition represented a priority and, to that end, discussions had taken place with senior Managers across the Market and Town Hall areas of operation. There was a strong consensus that (not least because the Butchers’ Hall offer was still in the development stage) a move toward a permanent structure at this time would be premature as a further review would, in any event, be required within 12 months.

Discussions with the Service Management Team had indicated a clear and viable interim operating structure (Appendix 4 refers) and timeline (Appendix 5) which was capable of being delivered within the existing budget and was considered to represent the most viable and appropriate interim arrangement. This could be delivered operationally without change to the permanent establishment and within existing budgets. Any appointments required would be on a fixed term basis. The Committee noted the importance of early action in view of the timescales involved and endorsed the proposed interim operating arrangement.

The Meeting closed at 9.32pm.

Signed.....

Dated.....

CHAIRMAN