

AGENDA ITEM No. 7

MINUTES of the Meeting of the **BUDGET & POLICY COMMITTEE** held on **Tuesday 16th November, 2021** at 5.30pm at **THE COURTROOM, THE GUILDHALL, TAVISTOCK**

PRESENT

Councillor H Smith (Chairman)
Councillor Mrs U Mann (Vice Chairman & Deputy Mayor)

Councillor A Hutton (Mayor)
Councillor Mrs A Johnson (Immediate Past Mayor)
Councillors J Ellis, Mrs M Ewings, Mrs G Parker

Ward Member – Councillor P Squire (Observer).

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

Prior to the commencement of the Meeting an update was provided on the background to the restoration of The Guildhall, including partnership working with Tavistock Heritage Trust (THT).

223. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence as all Members were present.

224. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

RESOLVED THAT The Minutes of the Meeting of the Budget & Policy Committee held on Tuesday 5th October, 2021 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman (Appendix 1).

225. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest made.

ITEMS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

226. BUDGET PREPARATION & PRECEPT SETTING 2022-23

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

During the ensuing discussion reference was made, amongst others, to the report having been prepared in accordance with the previous deliberations of Council. It incorporated projected out-turn for 2020-21, together with the draft Budget (subject to future fees and charges) for 2022-23. Savings to mitigate the impact of the pandemic continued

to be made where possible. Agreement of a final Budget, and then the Precept for 2022-23, would fall to final determination at the January Meeting of Council. Attention was further drawn to:

- Risks inherent in budgeting arising from the pandemic and potentially unforeseen calls on resources;
- Reinstatement of annual contributions to the Rolling Capital Programme (RCP) of £60,000;
- Provision for a burial ground replacement reserve (subject to finances/savings progress);
- The longer term commitment to rebuild unallocated reserves to safe operating levels;
- Staffing – the use of Agency Workers, savings made and the commitment to return to full staffing levels;
- Inflationary pressures (generally anticipated at iro 5% (CPI) in accordance with projections by the Bank of England for 2022), but including at much higher levels around energy prices;
- The position nationally with regard to unresolved pay negotiations;
- Issues consequential on the anticipated withdrawal of commercial services from a particular location following a change in licensing arrangements, and disappointment with the recommendation of the relevant authorities in connection with same;
- The prior indication to seek to bring in any necessary increase in Precept at a level below the rate of inflation;
- Funding arrangements (both short and longer term) in connection with the operation of the Guildhall and partner organisations;
- the 'discounted' nature of arrangements provided to some of the Council's tenants, due to their community basis, and the condition of one premise in particular;
- the possibility of a one-year uplift in the Play Equipment Maintenance Budget for the Meadows to rectify and repair play equipment which had either been damaged due to vandalism, or was beyond economic repair.

RECOMMENDED THAT the Council adopt and endorse the Report (ie subject to final determination in January), as appropriate including the following: -

- i. The submitted Draft Council Budget 2022/23, as enclosed and prepared:
 - incorporating adjustments arising from the previous deliberations of the Council;

- providing for any surpluses available as at year end, and not otherwise identified, being carried forward into the Rolling Capital Programme (RCP) to support priority works to public buildings/premises;
- agreement
 - on the RCP (subject to the below adjustment);
 - in principle (and subject to availability of residual funds) the three potentially available RCP budget heads being re-deployed to priority property works;
- ii. Consideration of a Schedule of proposed Fees and Charges at the next Meeting (and consequentially the final proposed Precept level);
- iii. Agree
 - In principle, and subject to the availability of funds (following preparation of a final draft Budget including projected fees and charges (ii above refers)), to make a one-off additional allocation of £10,000 from revenue toward play equipment repair in the next financial year;
 - authorise the purchase of a wood chipper in a sum not exceeding £5,000 from the vehicle maintenance reserve (with a corresponding reduction in the funds previously allocated for vehicle maintenance).

Noted That in response to a request, details of the impact/costs incurred due to vandalism and anti-social behaviour in The Meadows since the start of the year, and which had led to damage to play and other equipment, would be provided to the Committee by the Works Department.

227. GRANTS PANEL

The Committee received the Notes of the Grants Panel held on 9th November, 2021 (Appendix 3).

The view was expressed it had previously been anticipated by the Panel that the newly adopted process would require review, however it was felt that overall the process was much clearer and made the assessment of Applications easier.

RECOMMENDED THAT the Town Council agree to the following amendments to the Grants Process:

- a) remove the criteria that for a Grant to be considered an Application must have a positive outcome to all questions (i.e. no zero scores); and

- b) that the total average score previously set at 12 to be eligible for a Grant, be reduced to an average score of 10; and
- c) in the event Applications are received which score more than 10, and which total more than the budgeted sum, those Applications to be assessed on their merits by the Grants Panel.

228. VEHICLE PURCHASE

The General Manager provided an oral update, for information, in lieu of a written Report as previously listed on the Agenda.

In particular the Committee noted the following regarding:

- The current (inflated) nature of second hand and new vehicle markets;
- Potential benefits associated with deferring a decision for 6 months on replacement of the 'Box Truck' in order to review available options – lease vs purchase, new vs second hand, diesel vs petrol, e vs hybrid etc when a report would be brought back before the Committee and Council;
- For that period, and in view of the failure of the Box Truck (which was beyond economic repair), to lease for a period of up to 6 months a suitable alternative vehicle on a temporary basis funded from the vehicle replacement reserve.

229. INDICATIVE PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS 2022-2023

The Committee considered an indicative Calendar of Meetings 2022-2023 (Appendix 4).

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council endorse, in principle (and subject to formal consideration in due course), the appended indicative Calendar of Meetings.

Noted That formal consideration and determination of the Calendar of Meetings would take place, as required by Standing Orders, at the Annual Meeting of Council in May 2022.

ITEMS CIRCULATED FOR INFORMATION ONLY

230. PENNON SHARES HOLDING

The Council's holding of 502 Pennon Group PLC Shares was noted.

231. GUILDHALL GATEWAY CENTRE – PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee received and noted an oral update in connection with the progress on the Guildhall Gateway Centre with particular reference to the satisfactory outcome of a meeting with the main external funder. Also the Centre was nearing completion, with the opening

scheduled for 4th December, 2021, preliminary tours had been provided to interested Councillors.

232. URGENT ITEMS BROUGHT FORWARD AT THE DISCRETION OF THE CHAIRMAN

A Member reported that the Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) Steering Group was in a position to engage the services of a Project Management service operating to a slightly amended brief to that previously anticipated.

EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

233. 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.

234. CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS CIRCULATED FOR INFORMATION ONLY COUNCIL PREMISES (MUSEUM)

(**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 report outlining the condition, as preliminarily assessed, of the premises - issues of structural deterioration that had been identified, potential causal/contributory factors and associated Survey work being/to be undertaken. Reference was also made to estimated quantum/measures to remedy the position and the importance of close and continuing co-operation between landlord and tenant.

235. TOWN HALL & MARKETS TEAM STAFFING

(**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 in connection with staffing in the above department. It was confirmed that:

- due to sickness and a staff member leaving the organisation, a report would now be brought not later than the next Budget & Policy Committee Meeting (scheduled for 4th January, 2022) outlining future staffing requirements;
- that efforts to secure the appointment of Casual staff in a challenging labour market were ongoing.

236. INTERNAL AUDITOR REPORT

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

The Committee received and noted the Report of the Internal Auditor (Appendix 5).

237. GUILDHALL GATEWAY CENTRE

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

- a) Advisory Forum – the Draft Notes of the Meeting of the Guildhall Gateway Centre Advisory Forum, held on 22nd October 2021, were received and noted (Appendix 6);
- b) Project Progress – the details of the project funding and spend against budget to date, were received and noted (Appendix 7)

Noted that additional costs iro £14,500 were expected for the installation of data connections. The overall position in relation to Budget was necessarily uncertain pending the submission of final accounts. The Committee commended the General Manager on the capital works to date and expressed appreciation to all those instrumental in bringing the project to fruition.

The Meeting closed at 7.00pm

Signed:

Dated:

CHAIRMAN