

AGENDA ITEMS 7&14 REFER

MINUTES of the Meeting of the **BUDGET & POLICY COMMITTEE** held at the Council Chamber, Drake Road, Tavistock on **TUESDAY, 16TH OCTOBER 2018, at 6.30pm**

PRESENT Councillor Mrs A Johnson (Chairman and Deputy Mayor)
Councillor P Ward (Mayor)
Councillors A Hutton, P Palfrey, P Williamson

IN ATTENDANCE Town Clerk, General Manager

Councillors Ms L Crawford, Mrs U Mann, P Squire
(Ward Members - Observers)

151. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Mrs M Ewings and P Sanders.

152. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

RESOLVED THAT the Minutes of the Meeting of the Budget & Policy Committee held on 4th September 2018 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

153. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest made.

ITEMS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

154. BUDGET PREPARATION AND PRECEPT SETTING 2019/20

The Committee considered the Report of the Town Clerk (Appendix 1) in connection with the above outlining related current and future issues and providing an opportunity to consider the basis upon which the draft 2019/20 Budget and Precept should be developed.

Attention was drawn, in particular, to:

- the considerable progress which had been made in delivery of a range of key projects;
- projected capital and revenue shortfalls and associated impact upon respective reserve levels;
- uncertainty regarding future inflation projections (both CPI and building inflation);
- litigation risks;

- the demands/scale of the Guildhall Project;
- past practice of adjusting the Precept to mitigate the loss arising from the impact of the localisation of Council Tax;
- on-going uncertainty within the sector regarding the potential Precept 'capping' that might be applied, also regarding HMRC treatment of VAT in connection with market activities;
- pressure upon staffing resource and consequential lack of capacity for new projects or increased workload at a time of high intensity activity;
- the summary position set out in Paragraph 3.5 of the Report.

In the ensuing discussion particular reference was made, inter alia, to:-

- i. the benefits accruing to the Town from the Council's bold approach to the protection of the commercial built heritage – both public and private sector;
- ii. both the short and potential longer term benefits accruing from the acquisition of the Molly Owen Centre;
- iii. the importance of focussing upon existing schemes and not embarking upon new initiatives until organisational scope/capacity arose to do so;
- iv. the range of potential avenues which could be explored for the raising of monies including, but not limited to, Precept, grant applications, savings, work scheduling, asset disposals, taking on debt etc;
- v. the importance attached to being clear in communications regarding the need for/purpose of any increase in Precept including clarity on both the relative and absolute cost of same;
- vi. the prospective future financial and organisational impact of any transfer of public conveniences from West Devon Borough Council to the local council sector (estimated by the WDBC to be in the order of £114,000 pa for Tavistock);
- vii. additional grants funding which was being sought as part of the Guildhall Project;
- viii. the knock-on effect of 'austerity' on the Local Council sector;
- ix. The current level of Council Tax Precept – in the order of £135.30 per Band D property;
- x. funding shortfalls – more information would be available after the next visit of the Council's Accountant to inform thinking at the November meeting of the Committee;
- xi. detailed review of budget heads, which would form part of the consideration of the Committee at its next meeting;
- xii. the ongoing impact of the localisation of Council Tax.

Arising from consideration of the above the Committee reviewed existing and proposed financial commitments and associated avenues available to mitigate same.

RECOMMENDED THAT the Report be received and the approach proposed for the Budget-setting process for the 2019/20 Financial Year be adopted including adjustment for the localisation of Council Tax and a further report be brought before the next Meeting of the Committee outlining how best to manage projected spend and any necessary Precept increases within prudent thresholds.

155. SERVICE PLANS (COMMUNITY SERVICES)

The Committee considered the draft Tavistock Town Council (Community Services) Service Plan 2018/19 which formed the Council work programme for that area of activity for the following year, together with a précis of performance against each target in relation to the previous year (Appendix 3).

Attention was drawn, in particular, to:-

- The development of the Forward Maintenance Plan for Council property;
- Issues and challenges associated with securing continuing support from Goose Fair Traders, together with a range of associated options for future years;
- Usage of Bedford Square;
- Risk Nos 8-9 and the importance attached to consultation, engagement and collaborative working;
- The development of the Butchers' Hall offer;
- The status of, and relationship with, the Farmers' Market;
- The Community Services Team were commended for their work over the past year.

RECOMMENDED THAT the Tavistock Town Council endorse and adopt the Community Services Plan as the basis for the delivery of related Council Services 2018-2019 and the accompanying Service Risk Register.

156. FILMING OF PRE-MEETING ACTIVITIES

This item had been placed on the Agenda at the request of a Member, following a posting on social media by a Member of the Borough Council.

In the discussion arising reference was made variously to the potential benefits/drawbacks, issues and opportunities associated with the proposal. However, there was no consensus arising and, in the absence of the Member who had requested the item be considered, it was:-

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council be requested to consider how it wished to proceed.

ITEMS CIRCULATED FOR INFORMATION ONLY

157. UPDATES

The Committee received oral updates in connection with:-

- a) Guildhall Gateway Centre – a meeting of the Steering Group would be held prior to the next meeting of/with the HLF Monitor;
- b) Audit 2017-18 – the Committee welcomed an unqualified External Audit for the past Financial Year and commended the Finance Team and Accountant on the outcome.

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

158. 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:

159. LEGAL 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 was advised:-

- a) Meadowlands – of the outcome of a recent mediation exercise – to be reported in detail by the Council's Solicitor at the next Meeting of Council;
- b) Cemetery Matters – of the resolution of a recent complaint;
- c) Pursuant to Minute No. 140 by way of response the net current cost to the Council associated with the identified work-stream was in the order of £18,500;
- d) Town Hall Staffing – the Committee noted that a member of staff leaving the organisation had gone to considerable lengths to assist during the period of hand-over and offered continuing support for a further period of three months whilst temporary arrangements were bedded in. Taking into account the contribution they had made, and continued to make, beyond their contractual obligations together with the untypical circumstances necessitating their departure from Council employment, it was

considered that their additional contribution should be appropriately recognised. To that end it was:

RECOMMENDED THAT Council agree a reduction of 22.36% in the amount required to be repaid in connection with the operation of the Council's Training Policy by the individual concerned.

The Meeting closed at 8.54 pm.

Signed.....

Dated.....

CHAIRMAN