

MINUTES of the Meeting of **BUDGET & POLICY COMMITTEE** held on **MONDAY 16th MAY, 2022** at 5.30pm in **THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, DRAKE ROAD, TAVISTOCK**

PRESENT

Councillors Ms M Ewings, Mrs A Johnson, Mrs U Mann, H Smith
Councillor P Ward (Mayor)
Ward Members – Councillors P Squire, B Smith (Observers)

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

14. ELECTION OF A CHAIRMAN

Nominations were invited for the Election of Chairman of the Budget & Policy Committee for the 2022-2023 Civic Year.

A nomination, duly seconded, was received in respect of Councillor J Ellis.

RESOLVED THAT Councillor J Ellis be appointed Chairman of the Budget & Policy Committee for the ensuing Civic Year.

15. ELECTION OF A VICE CHAIRMAN

Nominations were invited for the election of Vice Chairman of the Budget & Policy Committee for the 2022-2023 Civic Year.

A nomination, duly seconded, was received in respect of Councillor H Smith.

RESOLVED THAT Councillor H Smith be appointed Vice Chairman of the Budget & Policy Committee for the ensuing Civic Year.

Councillor H Smith (as Vice Chairman) took the Chair for the remainder of the Meeting, in the Chairman's absence.

16. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors J Ellis (Deputy Mayor) and A Hutton (Immediate Past Mayor).

17. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

RESOLVED THAT the Minutes of the Meeting of the Budget & Policy Committee held on Tuesday 29th March, 2022 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman (Appendix 1).

Noted That in response to a question an update was provided in connection with the progress of a tenant in the agreed sub-letting a unit (Minute No. 362 refers)

18. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Ms M Ewings Declared an Interest in Minute no 19 (Refuse Collection in Tavistock) by virtue of also being a Member of West Devon Borough Council.

ITEMS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

19. REFUSE COLLECTION IN TAVISTOCK

The Committee received, considered and noted copy correspondence (Appendix 2) as provided by West Devon Borough Council in response to concerns previously raised regarding problems/issues associated with refuse collections, and the operation of associated contracts.

20. COUNCIL FINANCIAL POLICIES & PROCEDURES

The Committee considered the Report of the Town Clerk (Appendix 3), together with related financial policies and procedures for periodic review and adoption.

RECOMMENDED THAT subject to any amendments as listed below:

a) Tavistock Town Council Financial Regulations

- The deletion of para 6.10 and consequential renumbering of the succeeding paragraphs;
- The amendment of para 6.13 to insert the words 'manual and' to precede 'automatic'

b) Tavistock Town Council Schedule of Suppliers

c) Tavistock Town Council Internal Control System

d) Tavistock Town Council Treasury Management Policy

e) Members' Scheme of Basic Allowances and the Travelling and Subsistence Allowance Scheme

The amendment of Part D of the Members' Travelling & Subsistence allowance Scheme to amend the seventh bullet point (car park permits) to read

'A Council Car Park Permit shall be made available, on request, to the Mayor for use when conducting official Council business'.

f) Tavistock Town Council Pension Discretions Policy

the foregoing documents be received and adopted/re-adopted by the Council.

Noted That in response to questions the Committee was advised

- Payments for factors such as 'passenger carriage' in the Travelling and Subsistence Scheme reflected HMRC approved payment rates;
- The Basic Allowance Scheme reflected the statutory position that the payment was not available to co-opted Members.

21. USE OF COLOURED PAPER

The Committee considered the Report of the Assistant to the Town Clerk (Appendix 4) regarding a proposal to review the use of coloured paper when issuing Agendas, Minutes etc, in connection with managing costs.

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council retain the use of coloured paper to help denote which Consultative Group, Committee or Council Meeting it referred to, due to the minimal cost saving anticipated.

ITEMS CIRCULATED FOR INFORMATION ONLY

22. PLATINUM JUBILEE OF HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

The General Manager provided an oral update on plans for the Queen's Jubilee celebrations;

- The Queen's Green Canopy – 7 trees had been planted in The Meadows, although there had been disappointment at vandalism to fencing and associated theft. An official celebratory photo with the Mayor would be taken shortly;
- Jubilee Beacon;
 - a pole had been sourced and the basket was currently being produced;
 - there would be catering on-site at The Pimple from 8.30pm;
 - a Bagpiper would be performing the specially written piece of music at 9.35pm;
 - Tavistock BID Company had circulated a list of events taking place in the town over the Jubilee Bank Holiday weekend.

Noted That the General Manager undertook to confirm that the theft of the fencing, as noted above, together with recent arson to rubbish bins, had been reported to the Police.

EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

23. 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 RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

24. COUNCIL PROPERTIES & PROSPECTIVE COMMITMENTS

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

The Committee was advised that the anticipated Report from the General Manager would be brought forward to a future Meeting of the Committee in view of capacity constraints.

25. MARKET ROAD – RETAINING WALL

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

The Committee considered the Briefing Note of the General Manager (Appendix 5) in respect of works required to the retaining wall in Market Road.

In the ensuing discussion particular reference was made to the Contract Administration costs and it was hoped that contract management costs could be shared/apportioned in some degree.

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council;

- a) endorse that, in view of the circumstances and the specialist nature of the services being sought, the procurement of Surveyor services be from the identified provider (Financial Regulation 11.1.a ii refers) without public advertisement;
- b) authorise the General Manager to award the contract for professional services to Crab Consulting Engineers to the value of £ 17,550.20 pertaining to Stages 1 to 5;
- c) authorise the General Manager to award Stage 6, on completion of Stage 5, for a value not exceeding £ 11,543.40 should he consider it represents best value.

26. TAVISTOCK HERITAGE TRUST – REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL FUNDING FACILITY

CONFIDENTIAL - by virtue of relating to legal &/or financial or commercial matters, staffing and/or the financial/business affairs of a person or persons other than the Council).

The Committee received and considered the Report of the Town Clerk (Appendix 6) in respect of a request for additional funding from Tavistock Heritage Trust.

During the discussion arising reference was made to:

- previous correspondence, and the background to prior requests for information from the Trust;
- the importance attached to the availability of quarterly financial information held by the Trust which, once available, would help the Council to expedite this matter (and was also necessary, together with the other financial information as agreed between the parties, to facilitate future/other requests for assistance not provided for in the agreed cost plan);
- the role and responsibilities of the Council as regarded probity and public monies;
- the importance attached to a mutually collaborative and constructive partnership;
- various other matters in connection with the purpose of the funding proposed, also statutory and other arrangements governing the administration of organisations with charitable objects.

RECOMMENDED THAT in order to best expedite the matter and enable an informed decision to be made the Committee request THT to provide:

- a) as a basis to consider the request (or any other request for direct/indirect funding outside of the business/cost plan) the applicable financial information as agreed between the partners: in this instance the:
 - quarterly schedule of THT income and spend for the first quarter of the calendar year 2022 (Jan-March); alongside
 - best estimate projections for the next (current) quarter, together with
 - the schedule of reserves/monies held as referenced in the correspondence of 6th May.
- b) should the information not be available at this time, to explain the reason accordingly, together with confirmation as to when the information would be made available to the Council.

Noted That insofar as the current request for financial assistance was concerned ((a) above refers the information to be requested to be provided prior to the Meeting of the Council on 24th May

27. MATTERS RAISED BY A TENANT

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

The Committee received the Report of the Town Clerk (Appendix 7), and correspondence from a tenant, in respect of a matter raised in connection with a tenancy.

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council endorse the decision of its officers as set out in para 2.9 of the report, namely:

- a) permit arrangements to shade the windows subject to agreement on the detail;
- b) decline the request for outside tables and chairs;
- c) continue with the existing large tables/benches provided by the Council to enhance dwell time and footfall at the East End.

Noted That in the discussion arising reference was made to the breadth of activities that could be considered as part of a wider review of the public realm, alongside areas already reviewed.

28. BAR STOCK AUDIT AND YEAR END CERTIFICATE

(**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 Bar Stock Audit (28th January 2020 – 28th March 2022), together with the Year End Valuation Certificate to 28th March 2022 (Appendix 8).

RECOMMENDED THAT the pricing increases, as recommended in the report, be adopted as a minimum (but subject to review not maximum) and also that all wine and function packages be reviewed.

29. CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS CIRCULATED FOR INFORMATION ONLY STAFFING

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

The Committee received oral updates from both the Town Clerk and General Manager, in respect of the current position as regarded the establishment.

In the ensuing discussion particular reference was made to:

- an increasingly challenging jobs market with growing pressure on recruitment and retention, exacerbated by the adverse impact of Covid on staff numbers;
- particular difficulties in recruiting to specific posts within the organisation;
- that, in consequence, no new bookings were being taken in the Town Hall in the current calendar year, but also that, more widely, if matters did not improve it might become necessary to look across the range of Council services to prioritise what could/could not be achieved within the available resource envelope;
- cost of living pressures affecting large parts of the workforce;
- interim cover arrangements for the various affected functions of the Authority where available/applicable.

It was further noted that a temporary (12 month) part time appointment had been made to provide cleaning in the Guildhall, and an agency appointment made to cover a period of long-term absence.

30. COUNCIL FINANCES

(**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 Town Clerk regarding the Council's current financial status with particular reference to the prospective impact of substantially increased revenue costs in the areas of insurance and energy, alongside other more general inflationary pressures. These would necessarily involve difficult decisions as to the prioritisation of resources and a report would be brought to a future meeting setting out the issues and implications in more detail.

Noted That in addition the General Manager provided an update on capital projects previously committed to but not yet progressed, alongside a wider discussion on asset use/utilisation and organisational capacity.

The Meeting closed at 6.52pm

Signed:

Dated:

CHAIRMAN

