

MINUTES of the Meeting of **BUDGET & POLICY COMMITTEE** held on **TUESDAY 28th MARCH, 2023** at **5.30pm** in **THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, DRAKE ROAD, TAVISTOCK**

PRESENT

Councillor H Smith Vice Chairman (in the Chair)
Councillor P Ward Mayor
Councillor A Hutton Deputy Mayor
Councillors Ms M Ewings, Mrs A Johnson, B Smith.

Councillors Mrs U Mann, P Peers, P Squire (Ward Members).

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

Prior to the commencement of the Meeting the Committee observed a period of quiet reflection in memory of former Councillor, Mayor and Freeman of Tavistock, Ted Sherrell who had recently passed away.

427. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None.

428. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

RESOLVED THAT the Minutes of the Meeting of the Budget & Policy Committee held on Tuesday 24th January, 2023 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman (Appendix 1).

429. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest made at this point in the Meeting.

ITEMS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

430. NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN (NDP): PROGRESS REPORT & REQUEST FOR FUNDING

The Committee considered the Report of the Town Clerk (Appendix 2) in connection with the above.

Copies of the NDP's 'Developing Policy Intents from Aims and Objectives' (Appendix 3) were distributed at the Meeting.

In the ensuing discussion particular reference was made to:-

- that some of the costs incurred for the NDP, and listed in Appendix 3 of the Report, would come from the current year's budget and some would be deferred to the 2023 – 2024 budget;
- work would be suspended between 31st March and 11th April, 2023 during the pre-election period;
- the amount of time and effort put into the project thus far, and the progress being made with the Plan;
- that a new volunteer Finance Co-ordinator had been appointed to the NDP Steering Group. The appointee would take over the finances of the Group from April, 2023.

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council endorse and approve the Recommendation as included at para 3.2 of the Report; namely, the potential allocation of up to £ 18,971 from the Localism Budget 2023-24 toward Neighbourhood Development Plan costs, less any grants received, and subject to applications being made for those grants as listed subject to provider availability.

Noted That appreciation was expressed to those Councillors who had supported the development of the Plan.

431. BETSY GRIMBAL'S TOWER

The Committee considered the Briefing Note of the Town Clerk (Appendix 4) in connection with the above, together with the Abbey and related structures/archaeology.

In particular it was noted:

- the report sought landowner support 'in principle' at this stage, in order to open the possibility of grant funding to the sponsoring group (which had links to Devon Historic Buildings Trust and Tavistock Heritage Trust amongst others);
- it was understood preliminary discussions with Historic England (HE), and the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) had been positive;
- those involved in the project brought relevant skills sets to bear;
- as matters developed, further reports would be brought forward for comment and agreement;
- the potential for other relevant community groups to become involved;
- it was anticipated this topic could form part of the 'heritage' element of the Neighbourhood Development Plan.

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council welcome the project "A Future for the Tavistock Abbey Remains" and confirm its support, in

principle, for the development of a bid to NLHF/HE (or other relevant funders) along the lines set out in Appendix 1 of the Report.

ITEMS CIRCULATED FOR INFORMATION ONLY

432. ENERGY CONSUMPTION

The Committee received and noted the Briefing Note of the Town Clerk (Appendix 5) in respect of recent energy usage across the organisation.

It was reported that matters would become clearer when year-end figures were available over the next two months.

433. URGENT BUSINESS BROUGHT FORWARD AT THE DISCRETION OF THE CHAIRMAN

The following items were brought forward at the discretion of the Chairman, and in view of the timelines (principally financial year end) involved.

It was reported that the Council's Accountant had visited that day to prepare for the Year-End closedown, and the following three proposals of an administrative nature had been brought forward during that visit:-

- a) **Banking: Merchant Account** – it was reported that currently card payments received by the Council were credited to the Merchant Account. However, to access those funds a transfer arrangement was required. Because this would represent a change of instruction to the bank, which was outside of existing arrangements, the proposal was for an automatic arrangement to be set up to transfer funds into the Council's Active Saver account in order that they could be made available for use in the normal way.

RECOMMENDED THAT authority be granted for the establishment of a regular automatic transfer facility of residual balances from the Merchant Account to the Active Saver Account.

- b) **Debts: Write Off** – the Committee acceded to a request a report be brought to the next Council Meeting seeking agreement to the write off of certain historic debts and similar.

Noted That in normal circumstances this would have been first considered by the Budget & Policy Committee, however timescales did not allow for this prior to the final Year-End closedown.

- c) **Extraordinary Maintenance: Earmarked Reserve** – this reserve had originally been established to hold an in-year underspend by

way of future contingency for emergencies (i.e. £87,000). However, in view of the extent of calls upon the Rolling Capital Programme (RCP) for urgent/emergency works, it was recommended that this reserve be transferred to the RCP to support those works.

RECOMMENDED THAT the Extraordinary Maintenance Earmarked Reserve be discontinued and the current balance transferred to the Rolling Capital Programme to support emergency/urgent works to Council property.

- d) **Bannawell Play Park** - the General Manager reported that:
- a proposal for improvements to Bannawell Play Park had been issued to six play park providers, for the provision of conceptual designs for the area, and that there had been four returns received by the deadline for submissions which had now passed;
 - three of the designs received were currently being considered, with one design not being progressed as unsuitable;
 - there would be on-site consultations on the 12th April and 19th April to encourage local residents and members of the public to engage in the process and indicate preferences;
 - due to the time constraints in accessing the available S106 funds it was intended, if possible, to reach a decision within a week of the consultation events. It was hoped that the works could be completed by September, prior to the possibility of inclement weather setting in.

Accordingly it was requested that authority to agree the design and let the contract be granted.

RECOMMENDED THAT authority be granted to the General Manager, in consultation with the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and (Acting) Chairman of the Budget and Policy Committee, to review consultation responses and then agree and commission the scheme to be progressed in a sum not exceeding £75,000.

Noted That reference was made to recent maintenance works which had been undertaken by the County Council to improve drainage in the area, also the scope for the site to accommodate play equipment for various needs bearing in mind various physical access constraints.

EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

434. 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

435. PANNIER MARKET SURROUND (PUBLIC REALM) USAGE

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

The Committee considered the Report of the Town Clerk in respect of the above (Appendix 6).

In the ensuing discussion particular reference was made to:

- The principles underpinning the Councils Townscape Heritage Initiative Bid to improve the area, substantially based upon decluttering and enhancing the street scene;
- The current policy position regarding outside seating and the reasons for it;
- Arrangements for assessment of rent for café/restaurant type businesses operating in the Pannier Market Surround and the relationship of those business models to outside seating;
- Picnic tables and seating provided by the Council to support pedestrian traffic and customers of non-cafe businesses in the area;
- The benefits and drawbacks associated with different approaches to street furniture and links to the Councils estate management policy.

RECOMMENDED THAT the recommendation as set out in paragraph 3.1 of the Report be adopted.

Noted That reference was also made to footfall, the extent to which the East End of the Market Surround represented a secondary shopping location with lower levels of 'dwell time', together with the role of the Conservation Officer in connection with colour schemes on/in the curtilage of listed buildings.

436. MARKET ROAD COTTAGE

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

The Committee receive an oral update from the General Manager in respect of the above.

It was reported that the property had been vacant for some time, whilst refurbishment works had been undertaken to address damp issues. The following had been undertaken;

- re-plastering;
- re-decorating;
- 4 new electric fans installed;
- a dehumidifier had been utilised in an effort to dry the property out.

In the discussion arising particular reference was made to:

- the purposes behind the original purchase by the Council of these properties, which had allowed access to The Guildhall;
- the significance attached to any prospective new tenants being made aware of the importance attached to proper heating and ventilation, especially during the winter months to obviate the possibility of damp in listed buildings of historic construction and materials;
- options for retention/disposal of the properties now works to the Guildhall were complete, associated benefits and drawbacks;
- the Council’s commitment to maintaining historic properties in good repair, and the responsibilities of tenants to act accordingly;
- whether letting the property as a seasonal ‘holiday let’ through an agent might be an option, thereby enabling the Works Department to best manage heating/ventilation in the wetter/winter months out of season.

RECOMMENDED THAT the Council;

- a) subject to (b) below, offer the premises for let on a short-term tenancy for six months only;
- b) investigate the possibility of using the property as a holiday let via a holiday letting agency and a report be brought back accordingly.

CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS CIRCULATED FOR INFORMATION ONLY

437. INSURANCE

(**CONFIDENTIAL** - by virtue of relating to legal and/or

commercial matters, staffing and/or the financial or business affairs of a person or persons other than the Council)

The Town Clerk provided an oral update in connection with the letting of the Contract for the Council's insurance services.

In particular it was reported that:

- Tenders had been invited from insurers active in the local government (town/parish) market sector, two tenders had been received;
- Particular challenges associated (locally) with the offer related to the size/siting of the Councils listed estate and proximity to the River Tavy and (nationally) in connection with changes in underwriting practice and attitude to risk from insurance companies;
- The lowest tender offering best value had been received from James Hallam Insurance Brokers in the initial sum of £74,859pa and had been accepted. The term was for 3 years and subject to the normal annual uplifts.
- There was the potential to add Cyber Security cover, at an additional cost of £1,900 subject to eligibility which was being investigated.

438. MARKET ROAD RETAINING WALL

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

The Committee received an oral update from the General Manager outlining the current position with regard to the above.

It was reported that;

- a pre-start meeting had taken place the previous day;
- contracts had been signed;
- the potential abortive costs had been decreased from iro £12,000 to £2,500 following discussions with the contractor and prospective suppliers;
- the Flood Risk Activity Permit (FRAP) application would be completed in the current week, and would then be submitted to the Environment Agency, where it was anticipated there would be a six-week turnaround period;
- it was hoped the works would start in the first week of June 2023, with a completion date planned during the summer.

439. GUILDHALL GATEWAY CENTRE

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

The Committee received an oral update from the Town Clerk and Councillor representatives in respect of the current situation with the Guildhall Gateway Centre including that the offer, as previously agreed by Council to assist the Trust, had been made and a response was anticipated shortly. The informal views of the Chair of the Trust were noted.

The Press and Public were re-admitted to the Meeting.

Immediately prior to the close of the Meeting, the Chairman extended appreciation and best wishes to Members, it being the last scheduled Meeting of the Committee prior to scheduled local government elections in May.

The Meeting closed at 6.43pm

Signed:

Dated:
CHAIRMAN