

MINUTES of the Meeting of **BUDGET & POLICY COMMITTEE** held on **Tuesday 29th March, 2022** at 5.30pm in **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 Members – Councillors P Squire, P Williamson (Observers)

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

353. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence had been received as all Members were present.

354. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

RESOLVED THAT the Minutes of the Meeting of the Budget & Policy Committee held on Tuesday 15th February, 2022 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman (Appendix 1).

355. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor A Hutton (Mayor) confirmed that he would be Declaring an Interest in an item in the Confidential part of the Meeting (Minute No 361 refers).

ITEMS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

356. LEVELLING UP – THE DEVON PLYMOUTH & TORBAY DEVOLUTION DEAL

The Committee received, considered and noted the Briefing Note from the Devon Association of Local Councils (Appendix 2) in connection with the recent 'Levelling Up' White Paper.

357. COUNCIL FEES & CHARGES

The Committee considered a correction in connection with the Schedule of Fees and Charges previously considered (Minute No. 265 (a)(i) referred), namely:

- that Butchers' Hall prices as shown included VAT;
- Charity Discounts only applied to venue hire;
- advertising rates at the Butchers' Hall were commensurate with the Town Hall;
- day and half day rates for booking Bedford Square were commensurate with those of the Guildhall Car Park.

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council authorise the changes, as listed above.

358. HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II PLATINUM JUBILEE

The Committee received a revised proposal from the Tavistock BID Company (Appendix 3) in respect of plans for the above event to commemorate and celebrate the occasion of the Platinum Jubilee of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

Attention was drawn, in particular, to the earlier decision of Council to match fund with the BID Company, to a maximum sum of £5,000 (on a whole cost basis) to include any 'in kind' costs – it being confirmed that the BID Company was aware it would receive the difference between the two sums as an actual payment. The matter had been brought back to the Committee and Council in view of a change to the match funding originally anticipated by the organisers.

The General Manager provided a further oral update that:

- there would be a road closure for Duke Street;
- the Robey Trust would be holding their annual Steam Fair over the Bank Holiday Weekend, and Tavistock Lions Club would be facilitating a Lunch in the Park;
- the plans for the Green Canopy Initiative were progressing, with a number of trees due to be planted;
- a Beacon would be lit on Whitchurch Down on Thursday 2nd June at 9.45pm, with the basket and pole having been sourced

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council note the change to the project scope and confirm it proceed with a financial contribution in the sum of £5,000, for the activities and events as outlined in the prior Report, on the whole cost basis previously set out (ie inclusive of in-kind Council contributions).

EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

359. 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

360. COUNCIL ENERGY CONTRACT

(**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 4) in connection with the above, alongside an oral update in relation to past and future energy supply provision.

During the ensuing discussion particular reference was made to:

- challenges and uncertainties in the current marketplace;
- the expertise and information required to assess any Tenders received, to ensure the best decision was made on any future provider;
- that the Council's Broker had been asked to provide a status report on the current market, bearing in mind the current instability in the energy market;
- it was hoped that this process would be less onerous than previously when several Contracts had been amalgamated.

RECOMMENDED THAT the Town Council:

- a) endorse the approach outlined in para's 2.1/2.2 of the Briefing Note;
- b) authorise Councillor H Smith to attend at the opening of the Tenders;
- c) authorise the General Manager (or in his absence the Town Clerk) to accept the most competitive Tender, or other arrangement to secure continuity of service subject to a report on the outcome to the subsequent round of Meetings.

361. TENANT REQUEST FOR FUNDING

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

The Committee considered the Report of the Town Clerk and General Manager (Appendix 5) in respect of a request from a tenant to draw down funds hypothecated to a specific purpose.

In the ensuing discussion particular reference was made to:

- The extent to which the proposed works did/did not offer value for money;
- whether the proposed works represented the best (or an acceptable) long-term solution;
- The requirement any works undertaken needed to be carried out to the satisfaction of the Landlord (i.e. the Council);
- the concerns raised by the General Manager that the specification of the proposed works did not provide a warranty/guarantee, and that deterioration of the surface could take place over a short time due to frost/water damage;
- matters associated with the timing of the letting of the contract and related factors;
- whether the applicant had applied for S106 funding to help finance the works to a higher standard;
- if the Club could liaise with its representative body to obtain a level of assurance with regard to the quality/sustainability of the anticipated works

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council not release the match funding pending the applicant undertaking the necessary due diligence prior to the Council Meeting including:

- a) establishing the potential availability of funding from S106 monies to secure improvements to a satisfactory standard;
- b) advising the General Manager of the position regarding, and implications associated with, the timeframe for the letting of the contract;
- c) identifying the measures necessary to secure either a limited/full warranty from the prospective contractor; and/or, an indication of the acceptability of the proposal (in terms of viability/suitability) from the organisation (representative body) which undertook the technical site survey previously.

Noted That Councillor A Hutton (Mayor) declared an Interest in this item by virtue of his membership of the organisation involved and took no part in the discussion or voting thereon.

362. REQUEST TO SUB-LET PREMISES

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

The Committee received and considered the Report of the Town Clerk (Appendix 6) in respect of a request received to sub-let a Council property, which would require a variation to the current Lease.

The proposed new usage was welcomed and it was therefore:

RECOMMENDED THAT, subject to agreement on final terms being reached, that Tavistock Town Council agree the request to sub-let on the basis outlined in the Report.

CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS CIRCULATED FOR INFORMATION ONLY URGENT ITEMS

The Chairman agreed to take the following item as a matter of urgency in view of the timescales involved.

363. REQUEST FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE – TAVISTOCK HERITAGE TRUST

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

The Committee was advised of a request for additional financial assistance in connection with a staffing matter which had been received from Tavistock Heritage Trust and which would be subject to a more detailed report at the next Meeting of the Council.

364. STREET FURNITURE

(**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 an oral update from the General Manager regarding progress in connection with the above (Minute No. 317 referred) – more particularly that agreement in principle had been reached on the terms previously reported by the General Manager.

365. TOWNSCAPE HERITAGE INITIATIVE - AUDIT

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

The Committee considered and received the report of the Audit of the THI (Appendix 7) and endorsed the recommendations included

therein, which would be actioned following the subsequent Meeting of Council.

366. COUNCIL PROPERTIES & PROSPECTIVE COMMITMENTS

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

The Committee considered and received the Briefing Note of the General Manager (Appendix 8), which provided a list of works already committed to, plus a list of other anticipated future works. It was noted a more detailed report would be prepared for a future Meeting to enable the Council to determine how it wished to prioritise and proceed in connection with same and capital spend in general.

Noted That ongoing refurbishment works to the Bandstand in The Meadows were commended by a Member.

367. PROPERTY MAINTENANCE

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

The Committee received, for information only, a verbal update from the Town Clerk:

- in respect of the current understanding of the landlords/tenant's responsibilities regarding maintaining the premises;
- further action/measures which might be required;
- further information and updates would be brought forward as the matter progressed.

368. STAFFING & COVID

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

The General Manager provided a verbal update on the current staffing position regarding positive COVID tests, and the procedure which had been put in place requesting that staff refrain from coming in to work following a positive test, until they had received two negative tests on consecutive days.

In view of the Government withdrawing from issuing free Lateral Flow Tests with effect from 1st April 2022, the General Manager confirmed that he sought to purchase 500 Test Kits, which would be distributed to staff, as and when necessary. This was to encourage staff to continue testing themselves should they either suffer symptoms, or had been in

contact with someone who had had a positive test and protect colleagues and the public.

369. COUNCIL INSURANCE

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

The Town Clerk provided a verbal update following the opening of the Insurance Tenders on Monday 28th March, 2022. A very substantial increase in premium had resulted, notwithstanding the Council's good claims record, which would need to be funded.

Reference was made to:

- the Town Council entering into a 3-year Policy in 2021, however its provider had advised in January 2022 that it would be withdrawing from providing cover to Local Authorities with effect from 31st March 2022, THIS had led to the Council having to re-enter the market earlier than anticipated;
- there only being 4 providers offering insurance cover to Local Authorities;
- one of those providers had dropped out of the Tendering process in the early stages due to requiring 3 months' notice, which the Council had been unable to provide on this occasion and two others had withdrawn subsequently, one for competition reasons, another due to Coronavirus;

A separate meeting would take place after this (Budget and Policy) Meeting with the designated/authorised Councillors to determine the matter.

The Meeting closed at 7.08pm

Signed:

Dated:
CHAIRMAN