

MINUTES of the Meeting of **BUDGET & POLICY COMMITTEE** held on Tuesday 8th September, 2020 at 5pm conducted remotely via Zoom and YouTube

PRESENT

Councillor Mrs A Johnson (Mayor)
Councillor A Hutton (Deputy Mayor)

Councillors Ms L Crawford, J Ellis, Mrs M Ewings, Mrs U Mann, Mrs G Parker, H Smith and P Williamson

Ward Members – Councillors B Smith and P Squire (Observers)

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

48. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

Nominations were invited for the election of Chairman for the Budget & Policy Committee for the 2020-2021 Civic Year.

Nominations, duly seconded, were received in respect of Councillors A Hutton and H Smith. Following a vote by roll call it was:-

RESOLVED THAT Councillor A Hutton be appointed Chairman of the Budget and Policy Committee for the ensuing Civic Year.

49. ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN

Nominations were invited for the election of a Vice Chairman of the Budget & Policy Committee for the 2020-2021 Civic Year.

Nominations, duly seconded, were received in respect of Councillors H Smith and Mrs G Parker. Following a vote by roll call it was:-

RESOLVED THAT Councillor Mrs G Parker be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Budget and Policy Committee for the ensuing Civic Year.

50. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence, all Members of the Committee were present.

51. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

RESOLVED THAT The Minutes of the Meeting of the Budget & Policy Committee held on Tuesday 14th July, 2020 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman (Appendix 1).

52. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following Declarations of Interest were made - Councillors Mrs U Mann and A Hutton declared a personal non-prejudicial Interest with regard to the winding up of the Tavistock Locals Help Group, by virtue of being members of the organisation.

ITEMS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

53. EMERGENCY FINANCIAL PLANNING

The Committee received the report of the Town Clerk and RFO (Appendix 2) in respect of the above.

During the ensuing discussion reference was made, amongst others, to:-

- the substantial in-year savings planned and proposed;
- the availability, or otherwise, of additional grant funding for the projects the Council was undertaking (such as from NHLF and Pennon);
- the availability, or otherwise, of financial support such as Discretionary Grants, from the Local Authority;
- ongoing discussions with, and representations to, partner organisations.

RECOMMENDED THAT the Council endorse and adopt:

- i. the revenue savings outlined in the report;
- ii. the deployment of the General Reserve, and the making available of the cemetery/Burial Ground Earmarked Reserve, to address the revenue position of the Council;
- iii. that a further detailed review of actual as against projected income be undertaken early in quarter 3 as part of Budget setting;
- iv. the preparation of further reports to inform both continuing in-year review and the upcoming budget setting process.

54. WEBSITE ACCESSIBILITY REGULATIONS

The Committee received the report of the Assistant to the Town Clerk (Appendix 3) in respect of the above.

The Committee noted that the Regulations would come in effect from the 23rd September 2020, by which time the Council would need to have issued an Accessibility Statement and Route Plan to demonstrate how the website complied with the Regulations and how it would continue to improve and maintain compliance.

It had been identified that this;

- would be a work in progress for some time;
- would lead to a reduction in the uploading of video links on the website, due to a requirement for captions/alternate formats and the lack of organisational resource to do so;
- would result in a visible difference in the layout of Agendas, Minutes and reports and some operating arrangements;

It was confirmed that copies of the Accessibility Statement and Route (improvement) Plan, would be placed before the next Council Meeting.

RECOMMENDED THAT Council endorse the approach currently being undertaken, as detailed in the 'next steps' section of the report.

Noted That – the extensive preparatory work undertaken in preparation for the deadline was commended.

55. DRAKE'S STATUE

The Committee considered the progress report, as prepared by one of the Council's nominated representatives, in connection with the above (Appendix 4) following the completion of a survey which had been issued on this matter.

During the ensuing discussion, reference was made to:

- the proposed photographs would cost in the region of £ 200, not £500 as indicated in the report;
- the statistical basis/integrity of the survey and related matters;
- panel location, maintenance, and associated costs;
- panel wording – notwithstanding a range of views expressed on the indicative wording in the report it was noted that the panel was being designed, funded and curated via third parties and the final text would be determined independently of the Council.

RECOMMENDED THAT the Council;

- a) Commission a set of high-definition photos of the statue, including the three unique bas relief panels, for which the Council retains copyright, which can be used in electronic and print media at a cost of £200 (see above);

- b) Add a separate page to the Council website for the full history of the erection of the statue and Sir Francis Drake;
- c) Approve language to be included on the information panel along with the logos for the Town Council, Historic England and Tavistock Heritage Trust (see above);
- d) Approve the location of the panel on Council property at Mrs Webb's Arboretum behind the wall on the NE pavement near the Drake's Statue roundabout.

ITEMS CIRCULATED FOR INFORMATION ONLY

56. CAPITAL PROJECTS

The Committee received and noted the report of the General Manager, in connection with the above (Appendix 5).

Particular reference was made to the clarity and presentation of the information and positive progress being made.

57. WINDING UP OF TAVISTOCK LOCALS HELP

An oral update was provided confirming that the organisation's service to the community had finished on 28th August 2020, and that the telephone service had also now ended.

It was explained that, as a legacy, Tavistock Locals Help Trust had been formed to support people who had experienced unexpected financial hardship due to the COVID pandemic and other hardships.

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

58. 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.

The Meeting then temporarily adjourned at 6.02pm.

The Meeting reconvened at 6.10pm attendance by Councillors and authorised Officers at the Confidential reconvened part of the Meeting was accessed via Zoom.

PRESENT

Councillor A Hutton (Chairman)

Councillor Mrs G Parker (Vice Chairman)

Councillors Ms L Crawford, J Ellis, Mrs M Ewings, Mrs A Johnson, Mrs U Mann, H Smith and P Williamson

Ward Members:-

Councillors B Smith and P Squire (Observers)

IN ATTENDANCE

Town Clerk, General Manager, Assistant to the Town Clerk.

DECLARATION on entering the Confidential section - each Councillor present was asked to declare to the Chairman that there were no other persons present, nor would be present, who were not entitled to be (hearing or seeing), and/or recording the Meeting. All Members made a positive Declaration.

CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

59. TENANCY MATTERS

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

The Committee considered the report of the Town Clerk in connection with the above (Appendix 6).

During the ensuing discussion particular reference was made to;

- how some businesses in the town had/had not adapted to a Covid environment;
- the basis on which assessment of requests for assistance could be made;
- the extensive support which had already been provided by the Council to its tenants, over and above that which the Government had required, including deferred rent periods and flexible payment plans;
- the significant level of support given to a particular applicant;
- the availability of Government financial support to businesses;
- the potential impact of any additional financial support over and above that already given and proposed might have on the public purse.

RECOMMENDED THAT Council:

- a) provide an additional measure of support to tenants of Tavistock Town Council by temporarily suspending or not implementing the operation of rent review clauses for a period of 2 years from 31st March, 2020 and:
- b) that the request for additional financial assistance from the tenant as listed in para 2.2 of the report be declined.

Noted That Councillor Mrs M Ewings Declared an Interest in the above matters by virtue of:

- having helped a Council tenant apply for a grant from West Devon Borough Council; and
- being a tenant of a Town Council owned property.

60. LICENCE MATTERS

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

The Committee received the report of the Assistant to the Town Clerk (Appendix 7), in respect of a request received from a licensee to surrender their Licence following the interruption of their ability to trade during the pandemic.

It was confirmed that a written request had yet to be received.

RECOMMENDED THAT subject to receipt of a written request the Council;

- a) allow the Licensee to surrender the Licence currently in place, at no cost, subject to any outstanding fees being paid;
- b) would not re-tender for the Licence until Spring 2021, when it was hoped a viable trading opportunity would be available for any successful tenderer; in addition
- c) offer the current Licensee, subject to any outstanding fees having been paid, the ability to return to trading with a quarterly review at a point when the trader felt the situation had changed sufficiently to make trading financially viable.

CONFIDENTIAL ITEM CIRCULATED FOR INFORMATION ONLY

The Chairman agreed to take the following item out of order to expedite the business of the Meeting.

61. GUILDHALL PROJECT – PROGRESS REPORT

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

The Committee received and noted the Guildhall Progress Report as submitted to the National Heritage Lottery Fund (NHLF) (Appendix 8).

The contribution of the General Manager, main contractor and professional support services in continuing to deliver the project notwithstanding the impact of Covid was commended.

CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

62. ORGANISATIONAL JOB EVALUATION SCHEME

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

A report from South West Councils (Appendix 9), the Human Resources provider to the sector, setting out the results of the independent review of the Tavistock Town Council Job Evaluation Scheme had previously been circulated.

By way of context:

- The background to job evaluation schemes as a means of providing fair, objective and legally compliant organisational pay and grading arrangements was outlined;
- Overall Job Evaluation for the Council had last been undertaken in 2006. It was normal practice to review the operation every 5-10 years, therefore in 2019 South West Councils had been instructed to reassess the Scheme and review, in particular:
 - operating arrangements in the round, including the impact of legislative changes since 2006;
 - posts which had not been reviewed in the last 5 years;
 - posts which had been reviewed in the last 5 years, but where it was considered that the duties of those posts had materially changed;

In summary the report found

- the grading of two posts subject to review increased;
- the consequential grading of

- two other posts increased (however there was no current financial impact as these posts were unoccupied until at least the next financial year);
- three other posts provisionally reduced, however it was anticipated from discussions with the HR provider and management that this was a technical outcome and on the necessary subsequent full review the current grading would be retained by virtue of changes arising since.

Officers then left the Meeting and the Committee proceeded to review the findings of the report.

Arising therefrom it was agreed that the report be brought to Council for determination on 15th September, and to facilitate deliberations the Head of Human Resources for South West Councils be invited to attend the Meeting.

The Meeting closed at 7.15pm

Signed:

Dated:
CHAIRMAN