

MINUTES

of the Meeting of the **BUDGET & POLICY COMMITTEE** held at the Council Chamber, Drake Road, Tavistock on **TUESDAY 14th NOVEMBER, 2017 at 6.30 pm.**

PRESENT

Councillor P Sanders (Chairman)

Councillors Mrs M Ewings, Mrs A Johnson, P Palfrey, H Smith, P Williamson.

Councillor A Hutton (Ward Member)

IN ATTENDANCE

Town Clerk, General Manager

191. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence had been received from Councillor P Ward.

192. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

RESOLVED THAT the Minutes of the Meeting of the Budget & Policy Committee held on Tuesday 3rd October, 2017 (Appendix 1) be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

ITEMS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

193. BUDGET PREPARATION AND PRECEPT SETTING 2018-19

The Committee considered the Report of the Town Clerk prepared pursuant upon previous consideration of related matters and incorporating sections relating to:-

i) Capital:-

- Capital Programme and Reserves (Appendix 2)
- Rolling Capital Programme (Appendix 3)

ii) Council Fees and Charges – Current and Proposed (Appendix 4)

iii) Budget detail by:-

- Combined Account Code for 2016/17, 2017/18 and Proposed for 2018/19 (Appendix 4)
- Cost Centre for 2016/17, 2017/18 and Proposed for 2018/19 and Summary by Centre (Appendix 5)
- Budget Summary, Gross Revenue and Expenditure for 2017/18 and Proposed for 2018/19 (Appendix 6)

Arising from the Report the attention of the Committee was drawn, in particular, to the following:-

- Confirmation from West Devon Borough Council of the figure for Council Tax Support Grant 2018/19 in the sum of £29,179;
- The draft Budget did not incorporate a figure for the payment of the proposed loan to be taken from the Public Works Loan Board within the loan repayments section. This would equate to an annual cost of in the order of £24,000 per annum;
- The figures in section 4 of the Report (Introduction) listed as "£300,000" and "£162,000" should be amended to "£175,000" and "£138,000" (the former figures representing uncorrected amounts from an earlier iteration);
- Notwithstanding the technical shortfall in the General Reserve it was noted that, by virtue of the Capital Programme falling over more than one financial year, the actual level of potentially available reserves, if needed, was in practice greater than that shown;
- Notwithstanding the foregoing it remained the case that Council Officers advised the Council to be cautious of incurring any new/additional spend until such time as a demanding and ambitious capital programme had been substantially delivered;
- Attention was drawn to the extent of projected reductions in income arising from refurbishment works to the Pannier Market;
- Reference was drawn to a range of potential other impacts upon Council finances in the year(s) ahead including the possibility that austerity in the public sector might lead to the devolution/transfer/loss of assets and/or services presently being delivered by other public bodies;
- Attention was again drawn to the considerable demands placed on organisational capacity to deliver.

In the ensuing discussion and deliberations upon the draft Budget particular reference was made to:

- a) Consensus that, in view of the financial pressures outlined in the Report and as discussed previously, a Council Tax rise of in the order of 9.5% should be considered;
- b) The demanding programme of capital restoration and repair works supporting the Council's historic estate;
- c) The potential impact and/or extent of any devolution of principal Council services to the Town Council;
- d) Progress of the Guildhall Gateway Centre Project. More specifically risks/opportunities and matters associated with the potential affordability of the project in view of the deteriorating public sector economic environment;
- e) The financial and other tests and targets to be applied to both the Council and Tavistock Heritage Trust (THT) in assessing the resilience of the Guildhall Project;
- f) A difference of view in relation to that of officers as expressed in para (e) of Appendix 1 to the Report as to whether the Council did/did not have the capacity or funding to take on significant additional commitments;
- g) Issues and opportunities associated with the acquisition of the Molly Owen Centre including the relocation and/or consolidation of a wider range of Council services;
- h) The extent to which the Rundle Room refurbishment project could/should be delivered;
- i) The significance attached to maintaining a satisfactory level of General Reserve;
- j) A request for clarification from the Town Hall Manager regarding two areas where fees and charges were proposed to rise in excess of 25%.

Arising from consideration of the foregoing it was agreed that an informal meeting of all Members of the Council (to be held on Monday 27th November, 2017) would be helpful to assist in considering and reviewing progress in matters associated with the Guildhall Gateway Centre Project. It was further:

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council endorse:

- i. The prioritisation of measures to ensure the General Reserve operates at a satisfactory level;
- ii. With regard to the Capital Programme the Council:-

- a) Guildhall – review the position further following an informal Meeting of all Councillors
 - b) Molly Owen Centre –
 - Current works to the Molly Owen Centre focus upon necessary repair/weatherproofing and such internal works as necessary to enable full occupation by the Works Department within the allocated budget;
 - Further plans for the premises be reconsidered pending the outcome of (a) above in/by May 2018.
 - c) Drake Road Offices – the Council commission its Surveyors to undertake
 - An up to date Market Valuation;
 - As assessment of the letting potential of the premises if let in part or as a whole;
 - A preliminary assessment of the potential of the site to be redeveloped for residential use, any uplift in value that could arise and an estimate of the costs of preparing same;
 - And then review the position.
 - d) Capital Programme Savings – the Council discontinue the Rundle Room project in its current form at this time, authorising the General Manager to undertake such works as required to secure the planning consent in perpetuity
 - e) Other – The Council affirm its commitment to enter into no further commitments with significant financial or capacity implications in the next Financial Year, and thereafter to prioritise the rebuilding of the General Reserve, subject to review in May 2018.
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- iii. Council Fees and Charges – the Schedule of Fees and Charges for Council services for 2018/19 (as amended) be adopted;
 - iv. The submitted draft Council Budget 2018/19 and a precept prepared on the basis of an increase of 9.5% for a Band D equivalent property be adopted subject to final consideration at the next Meeting;
 - v. Any surpluses available as of the year end and not otherwise identified be rolled over into the Rolling Capital Programme (or Property Maintenance Reserve as appropriate).

ITEMS CIRCULATED
FOR INFORMATION ONLY

194. NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN

There was no further update in connection with the above, the recent joint Council/BID Co/Chamber of Commerce Newsletter had invited members of the community to express their interest in participating.

195. PENNON SHAREHOLDING

The Committee noted the shareholding of the Council in respect of Pennon Group PLC.

Noted That arising from consideration of the above it was suggested that the Council explore the costs/benefits of disposal.

196. 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
FOR RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

197. TENNIS CLUB

(**CONFIDENTIAL** by virtue of relating to information of a commercially sensitive nature and/or legal proceedings)

The Committee considered a request from the tenant and the accompanying report of the Town Clerk in connection with the above. Arising therefrom it was:-

RECOMMENDED THAT

- a) the Council offer to the Tennis Club the amended terms as indicated in Appendix 2 to the Report;
- b) Authority be granted to the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Mayor and Deputy Mayor, to determine the matter and terms of lease.

CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS
FOR INFORMATION ONLY

198. LEGAL MATTERS

(**CONFIDENTIAL** by virtue of relating to information of a commercially sensitive nature and/or legal proceedings)

The Committee received an update in connection with the following:-

- a) Meadowlands – it was anticipated the parties were nearing agreement;
- b) Corn Market – progress against the previous instructions of the Council was reported;
- c) Guildhall Lease – a copy of a draft lease agreement had been circulated for consideration by Tavistock Heritage Trust;
- d) St Eustachius Churchyard – The views of the Council Solicitor were reported.

The Meeting closed at 8.55pm.

Signed.....

Dated.....

CHAIRMAN