

**AGENDA ITEM No 5(c)**

**MINUTES** of the Meeting of the **FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE** held at the Council Chamber, Drake Road, Tavistock on **TUESDAY** the **14th JANUARY 2014** at **7:16pm**

**PRESENT** Councillor Mrs A Johnson (Chairman)  
Councillor Mrs M Ewings (Vice Chairman)

Councillors D Eberlie, Mrs J Metcalf, J Moody, P Sanders D Whitcomb,

Councillor H Smith (Mayor)  
Councillor J Sheldon (Deputy Mayor)

Councillor Mrs S Bailey (Chairman Properties Committee)

**IN ATTENDANCE** Town Clerk, Assistant to the Town Clerk  
Councillor A Fleet (Ward Member)

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**320. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence as all Members were present.

**321. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor D Eberlie declared an interest at Agenda Item 10g by virtue of being a Trustee of Tavistock Museum.

**322. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES**

RESOLVED THAT the Minutes of the Meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 3rd December, 2013 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**323. MEETING OF THE PROPERTIES COMMITTEE HELD EARLIER THAT EVENING**

The Chairman of the Properties Committee drew the attention of the Committee to a recommendation that a Working Party be convened to review, inter alia, income levels derived from the Guildhall Car Park and Market Road areas.

**324. GENERAL FINANCE**

a) **Schedule of Payments**

The Committee considered the monthly accounts as at 30th November 2013, for submission to the next Council Meeting (Appendix 1).

The Town Clerk confirmed he had previously responded to queries raised by a Member.

b) **Budget Monitoring Report**

The Committee received and considered a copy of the Budget Monitoring Report as at 30th November 2013 (Appendix 2).

c) **Internal Audit Report**

The Committee received and endorsed the report of the Internal Auditor (Appendix 3), following his recent visit. Arising therefrom it was confirmed that the Council would not proceed with debit cards if the costs were prohibitive and the Works Department would prepare a briefing around arrangements for lists of select tenderers.

**325. COUNCIL PRECEPT & BUDGET & RELATED MATTERS**

a) **Forward Planning, Policy and Programme Sub Committee**

The Committee considered the Minutes of the Meeting of the Forward Planning, Policy and Programme Sub-Committee (Appendix 4) held on 16th December, 2013 arising from which it was:-

RECOMMENDED THAT (subject to (b) below) the Minutes of the Meeting of the Forward Planning, Policy and Programme Sub-Committee held on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2013 be received and the recommendations included therein endorsed

Noted That pursuant to Minute 297 – Applications for Financial Assistance 2014/2015 (The Wharf) it was noted that opportunity would be afforded to submit a replacement Grant application for the reasons outlined.

b) **Council Precept and Budget (Minute No. 299(b) refers)**

Consideration was given to the Council Precept and Budget 2014-15 arising from which it was:

RECOMMENDED THAT

- i. the proposed Draft Budget for 2014/15 be adopted.
- ii. the Precept charge for a Band D Property be held unchanged at £112.08 in 2014-15 equating to a total Precept figure for the Council of £522,885.

c) **Guildhall Car Park**

The Committee noted the outcome of previous deliberations by the Properties Committee (minute No 316(a) refers) and stressed the need to look at the matter in a holistic way with particular reference being made to:

- the future of the Guildhall Car Park and associated premises;
- public realm aspects of the Townscape Heritage Initiative Scheme;
- losses made upon car parking enforcement budgets by both Borough and County Councils;
- the Working Party which could appropriately include the policy for the issue of parking permits in its remit, noting it would be inappropriate to involve the Council in operational detail;
- the size of the Working Party which, the view was expressed, should be not less than 5.

**326. REVIEW OF PROCEDURAL STANDING ORDERS AND FINANCIAL REGULATIONS**

The Committee considered the report of the Town Clerk (Appendix 5), incorporating draft procedural standing orders (based upon the National Association of Local Councils Model) and financial regulations (incorporating the recommendations of the Internal Auditor) as amended and endorsed by the Working Party constituted to review standing orders.

RECOMMENDED THAT the Council

- a) subject to the deletion of '61,63 and 64' in para 11(h) and their replacement with '18(d)(i)' adopt the proposed revised Tavistock Town Council Financial Regulations, same to take effect from the commencement of the new financial year;
- b) adopt the proposed revised Procedural Standing Orders, same to take effect from the Annual Meeting of Council 2014.

**327. ELECTORAL REVIEW OF WEST DEVON**

The Committee considered correspondence from the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (Appendix 6), in respect of the above. Arising from observations around current and potential future operating arrangements, associated issues and options, it was:-

RECOMMENDED THAT a Special Meeting of Tavistock Town Council be convened to discuss this topic, and submit a response to West Devon Borough Council.

**328. REQUESTS/OTHER ITEMS REQUIRING A DECISION**

- a) **Parking Permits**  
Minute 325c above refers.

**329. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

The following items had been circulated for information only and were noted:-

- a) Jessie Ann Alford Charity – Report of Disbursements 2013 (Appendix 7).
- b) Report of the Assistant to the Town Clerk (Appendix 8).
- c) Tavistock Matters – Notes of the Meeting held on the 25th November 2013 (Appendix 9).
- d) Chamber of Commerce – the Minutes of the Meeting held on 6th January 2014 were not yet available and would be brought before the next Meeting.
- e) Tavistock BID – Notes of the Meeting held on the 21st November 2013 (Appendix 10).
- f) Southern Links Committee – Notes of the Meeting held on the 5th December 2013 (Appendix 11)  
Noted That arising from the above reference was made to opportunities to secure support for the introduction of wi-fi to village halls.
- g) Tavistock Museum Trust – Minutes of the Autumn Meeting (Appendix 12).
- h) Items were invited for future Agendas of the following;
  - i. Southern Link Parishes Committee
  - ii. West Devon/Tavistock Consultative Group.
- i) Connecting Devon and Somerset – update (Appendix 13)

- j) Member Allowances – Members were advised that West Devon Borough Council was due to undertake a scheduled review shortly, when the Town Council’s Allowances would also be considered. A request had been made for representatives of the Council to be afforded the opportunity to give evidence to the Panel, should arrangements permit.
- k) Outside Bodies – concern was raised regarding the lack of contact from the new Citizen’s Advice Bureau for the area to the Town Council and its representative. It was

RECOMMENDED THAT a letter be sent to the Citizen’s Advice Bureau requesting that that the Town Council continue to be represented under the new operating arrangements.

**330. PUBLIC BODIES (ADMISSIONS 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

**331. DEBTORS**

(**CONFIDENTIAL** by virtue of relating to commercially sensitive information)

The Committee considered and noted the list of all those with debts to the Council dating from earlier than the last quarter day and received updates, where relevant, in respect of same.

**332. GUILDHALL**

(**CONFIDENTIAL** by virtue of relating to legal, commercial and related matters).

All Members of Council had been invited to attend in connection with the following items:-

a) **Related Premises**

The Committee considered the views of the Council’s Surveyor in connection with the above matter, arising from which it was further:-

RECOMMENDED THAT the Council pursue the course of action set out in the appended exempt Minute Number 332(aa)

Noted that the Section 151 Officer drew the attention of the Committee to applicable requirements.

b) **Guildhall**

The Committee considered a report of a recent meeting in connection with the above matter, arising from which it was further:

RECOMMENDED THAT the Forward Planning, Policy & Programme Sub-Committee meet to consider the matter referred to and recommend to the Council whether or not to proceed and, if so, on what basis.

**333. LEGAL PROCEEDINGS – OUTCOME OF MARKET TRADER CASE**  
(**CONFIDENTIAL** by virtue of relating to legal matters).

The Committee considered the report of the Town Clerk, together with an attendance note prepared by the Council’s Solicitors in connection with the above, which set out recent events and arrangements to improve practice going forward.

RECOMMENDED THAT Council endorse the approaches outlined within the report.

Noted That a Member had circulated a commentary in connection with the above to Councillors.

**334. REVIEW OF STAFFING ARRANGEMENTS**  
(**CONFIDENTIAL** – by virtue of relating to matters appertaining to an identified individual or group of individuals and related contractual issues).

All Members of Council had been invited to attend in connection with the following items:-

**i) Review of Organisational Operating Structure – Consultation Responses**  
The Committee considered the report of the Town Clerk in respect of the above.

RECOMMENDED THAT, subject to the amendment of the supervisory titles listed to those of Superintendent for the three posts including Works Superintendent, Town Hall Superintendent and Market Reeve, Tavistock Town Council adopt the revised temporary staffing structure as agreed by Council at its meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> December, 2013 and progress arrangements with a view to implementation, as far as possible, within the current financial year.

**ii) Administration Office – Operating Structure**  
The Committee considered the report of the Town Clerk in respect of the above. Arising from a period of discussion regarding capacity to deliver current and prospective future demands it was:

RECOMMENDED THAT on the basis set out in para 3.3(b) of the report the Council retain the existing designation of 49 hours per week for current office duties and progress appointments accordingly.

Noted That

- a) the Assistant to the Town Clerk left immediately prior to consideration of this item;
- b) the basis upon which the costs of the alternative proposal could be assessed, whilst not capable of being identified precisely, were outlined.

The Meeting closed at 10.05pm

Signed.....  
CHAIRMAN

Dated.....

## CONFIDENTIAL MINUTE

332aa.

**RELATED PREMISES - PROPOSED ACQUISITION OF RESIDENTIAL PREMISES** (CONFIDENTIAL – by virtue of relating to contractual matters in association with negotiation with the acquisition of premises).

The Council considered the report of its Surveyor setting out matters pertinent to the provisions of Minute No. 282(a), with particular reference to availability, prospective market value and potential return on capital.

In the ensuing discussion the view was expressed that the location of the two residential units, in an area largely surrounded by Council owned property, strongly lent itself toward their incorporation into the Council's landed estate by way of increasing its control within the area, broadening opportunities for future development and beginning a process of rounding off ownership in the vicinity.

In the circumstances it was

RECOMMENDED THAT subject to contract and survey and to acceptance by the vendors of a price agreed as fair for the premises by the Council's Agents, authority be delegated to the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Finance & General Purposes Committee, to acquire the premises at a fair market value.

Noted That

- i. the Section 151 Officer drew attention to the substantial impact of the proposed acquisition upon Council reserves and related potential for consequential impact upon funding/delivery of the capital programme.
- ii. the Council's Policy for the acquisition and disposal of property required, inter alia, a structural valuation and a financial plan/feasibility study before embarking on any major project.

**Addendum:-** a copy of the relevant Minute, as endorsed by Council, outlining current policy is appended in order that Council may satisfy itself that its terms are met should it wish to proceed in this matter (in particular, but not exclusively, the first bullet point of para (a)).

214. **ACQUISITION AND DISPOSAL OF PROPERTY AND THE MANAGEMENT OF MAJOR PROJECTS – GOOD PRACTICE PROPOSALS**

*The Committee considered the report of the Town Clerk (Appendix 5) in respect of the good practice recommendations of the Audit Commission included in a public interest report to Dawlish Town Council.*

*RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council endorse and adopt recommendations R1-R3 of the Report of the Audit Commission as a basis for developing major projects namely:-*

- a) *provision be made within the Council's financial and business management arrangements to ensure that it:-*

- *prepares a proper financial plan and feasibility study before embarking on any major projects;*
  - *has a capital programme in place covering its capital projects; and*
  - *only proceeds with major projects having considered all relevant facts and prepared proper financial plans.*
- b) *the Council ensures that its arrangements for the acquisition and disposal of properties include:-*
- *obtaining an up to date professional evaluation before purchasing any property;*
  - *obtaining a structural survey before purchasing a property;*
  - *acting prudently and undertaking proper levels of due diligence for any major acquisition or disposal;*
  - *giving proper consideration to planning conditions and requirements;*
  - *undertaking adequate levels of consultation;*
  - *obtaining and acting on professional advice; and*
  - *being clear as to which organ of the Council has the authority to purchase and dispose of land, properties and other assets.*
- c) *the Council ensures that it follows the requirements of any publicity codes in force.*