

AGENDA ITEM No. 4

MINUTES of the Meeting of **BUDGET & POLICY COMMITTEE** held on Tuesday 23rd February, 2021 at 5pm conducted remotely via Zoom and YouTube

PRESENT

Councillor A Hutton (Chairman - Deputy Mayor)

Councillor Mrs G Parker (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Mrs A Johnson (Mayor)

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

Ward Members – Councillors A Lewis, G Parker, P Squire, P Ward, A Venning (Observers)

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

243. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence received.

244. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

RESOLVED THAT The Minutes of the Meeting of the Budget & Policy Committee held on Tuesday 12th January, 2021 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman (Appendix 1).

245. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

ITEMS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

246. SUSTAINABILITY & ENVIRONMENT WORKING GROUP

The Committee received and noted the Notes of the Meeting of the Sustainability & Environment Working Group, held on 9th February, 2021 (Appendix 2), the recommendation being reported by rote.

During the ensuing discussion particular reference was made to;

- reports of various incidents of surface water flooding around the town;

- how/if planning policy documents such as a Neighbourhood Development Plan might/might not facilitate flood alleviation measures;
- reporting of any such flooding incidents by the public or Members should be to the responsible authority (Devon County Council Highways) via its website so as to build up a database of issues and ensure best prospect of remedy;
- that in the short term details of reported incidents could also be forwarded to the Council's representatives on the Southern Links Committee (together with photos, if available) for discussion at its Meeting with representatives from Devon County Council, West Devon Borough Council and the Environment Agency.

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council endorse the recommendation included in the foregoing report of the Working Group (Note No. 4 refers).

Noted That, it was confirmed that the Blue Plaque Scheme regarding re-wilding was progressing, in partnership with Tavistock Community Gardening and a Member commended staff from the Works Department on the work undertaken in the Dolvin Road Cemetery.

ITEMS CIRCULATED FOR INFORMATION ONLY

247. TAVISTOCK TOWNSCAPE HERITAGE INITIATIVE

The Committee received and noted the Briefing Note of the General Manager in respect of the above (Appendix 3).

248. VIRTUAL MEETINGS & CORONAVIRUS

The Committee received an oral update from the Town Clerk regarding the arrangements for 'virtual' Committee and Council Meetings during the pandemic, which were due to end in early May 2021.

It had been widely reported that primary legislation would be required to extend the temporary regulations and it was presently unclear if the Parliamentary timetable allowed for that. In the meantime, professional bodies were seeking permission to legally test whether secondary legislation might permit a change in order to assist the Secretary of State. The continuing conduct of Council business by 'virtual' means (informal meetings were unaffected) could only continue to take place if the period of these arrangements were extended.

Should that not occur the Council's current emergency coronavirus delegation arrangements provided for business to continue to be transacted.

249. CORONAVIRUS - LOCKDOWN

The Committee received an oral update on the current operating position of the Council, which remained unchanged from previously.

The Government's latest Road Map to come out of the lockdown would allow for the re-opening of non-essential retail, potentially on or around 12th April 2021, at the earliest. This would primarily be relevant to the Pannier Market and Butchers' Hall and would facilitate market related trading from that date.

It was anticipated that bar-led events in the Town Hall would not recommence until towards the end of July, 2021.

Noted That – appreciation was extended to Council staff for taking on additional and different responsibilities during the pandemic.

250. INFORMAL POLICY MEETING

The Committee received an oral update from the Town Clerk regarding the forthcoming informal workshop for Councillors, scheduled for Tuesday 2nd March, 2021 at 5pm to consider future priorities.

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

251. 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 5.31pm.

The Meeting reconvened at 5.35pm attendance by Councillors and authorised Officers at the Confidential reconvened part of the Meeting was accessed via Zoom.

PRESENT

Councillor A Hutton (Chairman – Deputy Mayor)

Councillor Mrs G Parker (Vice-Chairman)

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

Ward Members:-

Councillors A Lewis, G Parker, B Smith, A Venning, P Ward (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

252. PUBLIC CONVENIENCES

(**CONFIDENTIAL** by virtue of relating to matters of a legal, financial and contractual nature)

The Town Clerk confirmed that the planned Meeting of the Public Conveniences Sub-Committee, which had been due to take place on 22nd February, 2021 had been cancelled in view of continuing discussions with stakeholders.

Noted That – it was reported that the General Manager would bring forward a report to a future Meeting regarding next steps.

253. COUNCIL INSURANCE

(**CONFIDENTIAL** by virtue of relating to matters of a legal, financial and contractual nature)

The Committee received the Report of the Town Clerk (Appendix 4) explaining the current position and prospective next steps.

In the ensuing discussion reference was made variously to cover levels, arrangements for annual policy review and the relationship as between landlord and tenant responsibilities.

RECOMMENDED THAT the Council support and adopt the recommendation as detailed in the Report, as follows:

- i) Agree the main Heads of Policy as appended as a basis for a new policy incorporating cover levels wherever possible, at (or above) those currently held;
- ii) Agree that, in view of the specific circumstances applying – pandemic, corporate takeover and associated timelines, for the purposes of letting the contract for insurance the Councils contract standing orders and financial regulations be temporarily suspended to enable it to either engage via single tender action, or select from a cohort of two providers without the requirement to advertise on contract finder;
- iii) Agree, in view of the timeframe, that the letting of the Contract be undertaken through the special (pandemic) delegation arrangements previously agreed involving the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, immediate past Mayor and Town Clerk with the decision being reported back to Council.

254. PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

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

The Committee received and considered the Report of the Town Clerk (Appendix 5) with regard to the Council's Letting and Property Management Policy setting out decisions and arrangements as agreed by Council over recent years, in consultation with its Solicitors and Letting Agent.

During the ensuing discussion particular reference was made to the benefits attached to prospective tenants engaging an independent professional advisor. In particular at the time of negotiating a lease so as to fully understand their rights and obligations including those arising at the end of term – dilapidations/make good etc, alongside landlord arrangements for the procurement of property services.

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council affirm the existing policy position for the management of its commercial lease-hold properties as set out and, in addition, adopt the proposed approach set out in para 2.17 (as below) as regarding arrangements for the administration of appeals from tenants against prior decisions of the Council; namely: - that in the event of an appeal submitted within 12 weeks of a decision being made by a tenant against a decision of the full Council (or a committee or sub-committee of it) on a commercial tenancy matter, a Panel comprising three Members - the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Chairman of Budget and Policy Committee (or Vice Chairman of Budget and Policy if the Chairman also holds office as Mayor or Deputy Mayor) be convened to hear/review the appeal and make a recommendation to the Council.

255. AUDIT

(**CONFIDENTIAL** by virtue of relating to matters of a legal, financial and/or contractual nature)

The Committee received the following Reports from the Council's Internal Auditor (Appendix 6);

i) Audit Review of the Townscape Heritage Initiative Scheme;

This was a review of the 6 years of the THI Scheme indicating the financial management of the Scheme had been robust and well managed. The report had been shared with the Councils' strategic partner and scheme funder (National Lottery Heritage Fund) for comment and review.

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council receive and accept the Audit Review, as received.

ii) Internal Audit Summary 2020-2021

In the ensuing discussion arrangements for the regular review of insurance were reported alongside the current position so far as monies held with institutions and the routine reporting of outstanding debt.

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council receive and accept the Internal Audit Summary 2020-2021, as received.

Noted That – to assist and arising from consideration of the report the Clerk undertook to trial the three current debt reports to Council being amalgamated as a single/composite document in the next round of meetings (ie after the conclusion of the deferred rent scheme).

256. TOWN HALL & PANNIER MARKET STAFFING

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

The General Manager provided an oral update on this matter, and confirmed that:

- recruitment had recently been undertaken for one of the vacant Markets & Events Assistant (MEA) posts;
- whilst it had previously been trialled for 3 MEAs, it had been necessary revert to 2x MEAs and 1x Cleaner/Caretaker in view of

- recruitment difficulties. To that end recruitment was under way for the Cleaner/Caretaker role;
- reference was further made to other vacant posts and related matters.

CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS CIRCULATED FOR INFORMATION ONLY

257. GUILDHALL GATEWAY CENTRE – PROGRESS REPORT

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

The Committee received the latest Guildhall Gateway Centre Progress Report (Appendix 7).

It was confirmed that the Town Council had been successful in securing a £130,000 Kick Start Grant, which was welcomed. Thanks were conveyed to the Team responsible, including National Lottery Heritage Fund and the awarding body, DCMS.

Following a query raised, it was confirmed that there was provision for two Electric Car Charging Points in the refurbished Guildhall Car Park.

The Meeting closed at 6.38pm

Noted That at the close of the Meeting Members were reminded of the upcoming policy workshop and the opportunity it presented to discuss and promote prospective future priorities for the Council.

Signed:

Dated:
CHAIRMAN