

AGENDA ITEM NO. 6

MINUTES of the Meeting of **BUDGET & POLICY COMMITTEE** held on **WEDNESDAY 12TH JULY, 2023** at **6.30pm** in **THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, DRAKE ROAD, TAVISTOCK**

PRESENT

Councillor P Ward (Chairman)
Councillor U Mann (Vice-chairman)

Councillors Ms M Ewings, A Hutton, Mrs A Johnson
Councillor P Squire (Ward Member)

IN ATTENDANCE Town Clerk, General Manager

91. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence, all Members were in attendance.

92. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

RESOLVED THAT the Minutes of the Meeting of the Budget & Policy Committee held on Tuesday 23rd May, 2023 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman (Appendix 1).

93. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at this point in the Meeting.

ITEMS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

94. INTERNAL AUDIT SERVICES

The Committee considered the briefing note of the Town Clerk in connection with the provision of Internal Audit Services and related matters (Appendix 2).

RECOMMENDED THAT the recommendation as set out in paragraph 3.2 of the report be endorsed and adopted.

95. BANK SIGNATORIES/MANDATE

The Committee considered the briefing note of the Town Clerk in connection with a review of arrangements for bank signatories/mandate (Appendix 3).

RECOMMENDED THAT the recommendations as set out in paragraphs 2.1 and 2.2 of the report be endorsed and adopted.

96. MERCHANT SERVICES BANK ACCOUNT

The Committee considered the briefing note of the Town Clerk in connection with arrangements for the transfer of funds from its Merchant Services Bank account (Appendix 4).

RECOMMENDED THAT the recommendation as set out in paragraph 2.2 of the report be endorsed and adopted.

97. INSURANCE SERVICES – CYBER INSURANCE

The Committee considered the briefing note of the Town Clerk in connection with the prospective availability of Cyber Insurance for the Council (Appendix 5).

In the ensuing discussion reference was made to a range of risks and issues, including matters such as business interruption, ransomware, data breach and cyber enabled fraud together with the rapidly growing incidence of cyber related crime. In the circumstances it was the consensus that an appropriate level of insurance cover represented a necessary mitigation of the identified risk.

RECOMMENDED THAT the Council adopt “Option C-4X6F-062539” in the sum of £2,000.32 per annum.

Noted That in particular concern was expressed at the very low level of take up amongst Members for the designated mandatory Cyber Security Training which had been arranged for Tuesday 11th July, 2023 (and postponed due to poor take up).

Given the importance of this to all, including the safety of public and Council resources, and the mandatory nature of the training, it was:

RECOMMENDED THAT all Members of Council be reminded of their obligations to attend mandatory training and make the necessary arrangements to be in attendance at the rearranged Cyber Security Training event.

98. DEVON ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS (DALC) ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND CONFERENCE

The Committee noted arrangements for the above event which was scheduled to be held on Wednesday 27th September, 2023 at Exeter Race Course during the day. An Agenda and itinerary were not yet available.

It was reported Members who had attended in the past had found the event to be both informative and useful, which also provided opportunity

to meet colleagues from other authorities.

Expressions of interest were invited on the basis of car sharing with the cost of the event (met by the Council) anticipated to be in the range £30-£50 per person (with repayment for non-attendance only potentially applying in circumstances where cancellations occurred at short notice).

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council at its Meeting on 25th July, 2023 invite expressions of interest from Councillors to attend the DALC Conference 2023 and authorise attendance on the basis outlined above.

URGENT BUSINESS BROUGHT FORWARD AT THE DISCRETION OF THE CHAIRMAN

The Chairman agreed to take the following update as a matter of urgency.

99. SHORT TERM LICENCE

The Chairman agreed to take the following item as a matter of information and update.

The Committee was informed that agreement had been reached to issue a short-term licence to a local voluntary group (Tavi-help) who had requested temporary (for several weeks over the summer period) use of a room in the detached premises in the Molly Owen Centre for the storage of food pending distribution to the needy via the Red and Black Club.

Noted That

- arising from consideration of the above the Town Clerk undertook to arrange the review and consolidation of arrangements for the provision of storage to third parties/community groups including to promote consistency/equity and manage demand;
- It was understood that the West Devon Borough Council Environmental Health Team had issued the appropriate licences in relation to food storage and handling to the applicant user group;
- In the discussion arising on the substantive item reference was made to various developments in connection with the storage and distribution of food within the town, agencies involved and the differing categories of beneficiary.

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

100. 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

**101. CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS CIRCULATED FOR INFORMATION ONLY
PROPOSED ARRANGEMENTS TO INTRODUCE ON-STREET
CHARGING FOR PARKING IN TAVISTOCK BY DEVON COUNTY
COUNCIL**

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

The Committee received and reviewed an update (appendix 6) regarding recent correspondence in connection with proposed arrangements to introduce charging for on-street parking in Tavistock by Devon County Council. In the ensuing discussion reference was made to the depth and breadth of concerns in connection with the proposals, not least that they:-

- a) were ill-conceived during a cost of living crisis, most especially for a town with a substantial, sparsely populated and in some case deprived rural hinterland, dependent largely on private transport to access services;
- b) failed to acknowledge the unique and historic character of the Town and its street scene;
- c) were unsubstantiated by any evidence provided by the County Council to demonstrate that the necessary statutory tests could be met (or even that any evidence had been gathered).

Accordingly there remained a deepening concern at the failure of Devon County Council - either to provide the evidence which had been reasonably requested, or to acknowledge that it had not done so. It was therefore considered essential that, prior to any meeting with representatives of the County Council scheduled for the following week, the County Council provide same to enable an informed, fair and constructive discussion to take place.

RECOMMENDED THAT a further letter be sent to Devon County Council reiterating the concerns of both the Town Council and Borough Council in connection with the failure of the Highway Authority to engage and/or provide relevant information, and asking for same as a matter of urgency well in advance of the meeting scheduled to be held on 20th July*.

Noted That

- the Clerk to the Council undertook to contact other Authorities affected by the County Council proposals to establish if they shared the concern of Tavistock Town Council regarding DCC's failure to engage with local Councils and their communities in a transparent, meaningful and constructive manner;
- *subsequent to the Meeting a response was received from the County Council. However, it still did not address the main elements of evidence/information requested.

102. CEMETERY – CRIMINAL DAMAGE

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

The Committee considered the report of the Works Manager setting out the background to acts of criminal damage contrary to Section 211 of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (Appendix 7).

In the ensuing discussion concern was expressed at the nature and extent of the damage, associated intent, and the importance attached to doing all that could be done to identify the perpetrator(s) of the crime. It was agreed that a joint appeal for information would be issued with West Devon Borough Council and appreciation was also expressed to the Police for the investigations that they were undertaking.

Noted That Councillor U Mann left the Meeting at 7.40 p.m.

103. LEGAL SERVICES

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

The Committee received, for information, the report of the Town Clerk in connection with the provision of Legal Services to the Council (Appendix 8).

104. TAVISTOCK HERITAGE TRUST/GUILDHALL GATEWAY CENTRE

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

The Committee received an oral update in connection with the above with

particular regard to the various arrangements currently in hand, and the timeline for completion, which was now anticipated to be imminent.

105. WORKS CONTRACTS

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

The Committee received oral updates in connection with: -

a) Market Road Retaining Wall

It was reported that progress had recently been positive in connection with the operation of the pumping systems and cofferdam which had now reduced water levels to an appropriate height for in-stream working.

It had also been possible to identify areas where historic concreting had taken place which suggested that, subject to Environment Agency approval, a revised specification for the mid-section and parts of other areas incorporating shuttering below the (normal) water line might be appropriate. This carried the combined benefit of being a more robust solution than that originally anticipated, and one which could be more straightforwardly and rapidly deployed. Vegetation clearance works had identified other areas where repairs were necessary, however, priority was being given to essential works in view of budget and timeline constraints at this stage.

b) Tavistock Museum

It was anticipated that the main supporting beam would be removed over the weekend following which 're-construction' within the premises could take place.

URGENT CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS BROUGHT FORWARD AT THE DISCRETION OF THE CHAIRMAN

The following urgent item was brought forward at this discretion of the Chairman by way of update

106. LEGAL AND TENANCY MATTERS

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

The Committee was advised of the following in connection with two lease

renewals upcoming:

- a. A request had been received from the operator of a commercial premises for a lease renewal for a period of 2-years pending the outcome of greater clarity in connection with the implementation/impact of Government Legislation and relevant sector funding arrangements.
- b. Community organisation premises – the Committee was advised of a request from a community based organisation that the Council vary the normal leasehold arrangements whereby, on renewal, the terms of the preceding lease carried forward to the next. It was reported that in view of the foregoing (as regarded normal practice), the prior decisions of the Council and the particular circumstances attaching to this matter, the request had been declined.

The Meeting closed at 8.02 p.m.

Signed:

Dated:

CHAIRMAN