

**TAVISTOCK TOWN COUNCIL
BUDGET AND POLICY COMMITTEE
TUESDAY 3RD SEPTEMBER, 2019
BRIEFING NOTE
SUSTAINABILITY AND THE ENVIRONMENT**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Committee will be aware of the outcome of the recent Policy Workshop, as endorsed by Council, which identified sustainability and the environment as the priority new work stream for development by Council¹.
- 1.2 The establishment of a sustainability and the environment working group will enable Council, subject to the agreed requirements, to review:-
- What 'good looks like' nationally and how best that might appropriately apply to Tavistock;
 - What the Council already does (see Section 2 below);
 - The extent to which issues identified by Councillors (Section 3 below) may complement and/or conflict with one another, and may or may not be appropriate for the Council to seek to achieve either in whole or in part;
- and
- Can be selected, modified, discontinued and/or prioritised as appropriate.
- 1.3 It will also enable the Council to look both strategically, and in detail, at how it discharges at an operational level its recent decision in respect of climate change (June Meeting of Council refers);
- 1.4 This will help the Council to put together an informed package of what it would like to achieve prior the next elections in 2023 in this arena, and linking to both officer capacity and managed increases in Council Tax how to fund same. In so doing it specifically sets out to avoid the cost and waste invariably associated with piecemeal projects that do not form part of a co-ordinated and plan led approach.

¹ subject to the application of the underlying principles of any proposals being:-

- i. Evidence based and compliant with organisational Policies and Plans;
- ii. Costed;
- iii. Funded and resourced;
- iv. Representing value for money and being proportionate;
- v. Being achievable;

2. THE CURRENT POSITION

2.1 The Council has in place a range of measures to promote differing aspects of sustainability and the environment including, but not limited to:-

- i. A section in the major items report template for matters with significant resource implications requiring consideration of environmental issues;
- ii. Ensuring that it's extensive capital programme is compliant with energy saving and similar regulations insofar as they apply to the built estate;
- iii. An ongoing programme for the replacement of standard lighting with LED lighting to reduce costs and improve efficiency;
- iv. Operation of cardboard and rubbish compactors to reduce cost, improve recycling efficiency and reduce landfill requirements;
- v. Application of measures to make premises more energy efficient – such as installation of heat distribution fans in the Pannier Market to reduce the requirements for energy consumption;
- vi. An extensive Management Plan for Whitchurch Down, developed in consultation with stakeholders and very much focused around maintaining and growing biodiversity suitable for the location alongside supporting public access;
- vii. Ongoing work to maintain trees in the ownership of the Council accompanied by a replanting scheme to support both the tree-scape of the settlement and enable continuing carbon capture;
- viii. The re-wilding of certain areas within the ownership of the Council to promote biodiversity and reduce human impact accompanied by initiatives such as the provision of 'bug houses';
- ix. Application of flexible grass and hedgerow cutting schedules to reflect weather conditions, enable wildflower growth and respect nesting seasons;
- x. Provisions promoting recycling by Market and other Traders;
- xi. Provision of a wildflower meadow within the Council's Green Burial Ground, and working with Tavistock Community Gardeners utilising the polytunnel to propagate seed;
- xii. Financial support through the THI Scheme, and in partnership with the Tavistock Energy Community, to provide insulation/energy efficiency support to owners of the Town's historic Bedford Cottages;
- xiii. Keeping under review the power and durability of electrical equipment and vehicles ². As and when suitable models become available these will form part of the Council's

² Note current models do not lend themselves to the Town Council's activities either by virtue of cost, power or specification. For example, there are not yet sufficiently powerful heavy duty brush cutters (electrically powered) on the market but it is a developing area of technology under review.

- replacement programme or, if the cost envelope is greater than existing will be brought before Members;
- xiv. Weed treatment regimes being kept under constant review;
 - xv. Establishment of an Open Space Sport and Recreation Group to contribute to the principles on which S106 monies might be allocated by the Borough Council;
 - xvi. Consideration, in the Autumn of the establishment of a Neighbourhood Development Plan Working Group³.

3. NEXT STEPS

3.1 As indicated previously the establishment of a Working Group would enable a review of the activities already undertaken (see above) alongside, most particularly, those related matters which were identified in the "shortlist" of voting arising at the recent Policy Workshop namely:-

- using natural resources to generate power;
- review of what the Council is doing and could do in terms of environment and biodiversity;
- inclusion of an Open Space Sport and Recreation Plan within the Neighbourhood Plan (and do a Neighbourhood Plan);
- a tree planting scheme;
- take forward Sustainable Tavistock;
- target Community Grants to support sustainability projects;
- use the Development Management and Licensing Committee to promote sustainability/efficient methods and products;
- encourage traders to use green packaging;
- provide good public services such as public toilets;
- consider installation of electric car charging points;
- decrease car use and exhaust emissions in the Town.

3.2 Whilst there will no doubt also be other issues these were the ones voted for by Members as prospective priorities in this area and therefore each should receive consideration as to whether or not it could/should be progressed and, if so, on what basis within the parameters of a plan led approach.

3.3 It will also be necessary to disaggregate those which appropriately fall to the Neighbourhood Planning process in relation to the built environment from those that might fall to such a Group as here proposed.

³ which, no doubt, if it progresses will have a section relating to matters of such as sustainability and the environment

- 3.4 That then leaves a residual matter relating to a recent notice of motion which, although not directly addressed in voting at the recent Policy Workshop, is clearly something which Council has indicated it would wish to review in due course⁴.
- 3.5 It would clearly be neither sensible nor responsible to commit to new resource based actions before appropriate due diligence has been conducted and that was the view of Council when the notice of motion came before it. However, if the 'political' component is separated from resource based actions⁵ the Council could consider whether or not to consider the possibility of a political statement on the proviso it was without prejudice to the outcome of detailed deliberations by the working party established to look into such matters.
- 3.6 On that basis the political action of declaring a climate emergency⁶ (or otherwise acknowledging the significance of climate change on/in the environment) at this time could both acknowledge concerns whilst not prematurely or inappropriately yet committing resources. Thereby respecting the importance attached by all to applying appropriate levels of due diligence in the application of tax payers money through the prospective investigations of a working group and subsequent deliberations of Council.

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 It is suggested that in accordance with the requirements of Minute No 94 a Sustainability and Environment Working Group reporting via this Committee to Council be established, comprising up to 4 Members drawn from across the membership of the Council (plus Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Budget & Policy Committee, ex-officio voting) tasked with:
- a) Undertaking a review to identify and evaluate best practice as regards the potential for town/parish councils to promote sustainable and environmental initiatives including with regard to climate change⁷;
 - b) On completion of (a) above⁸
 - i. to review and assess those projects put forward through voting at the Policy Workshop;

⁴ ie vis climate change

⁵ Pending the work of this Group

⁶ Readers will recall the comparable declarations by the Liverpool City Council of Derek Hatton and likeminded administrations in the 1980's of 'nuclear free' zones

⁷ Other than those which will appropriately address built environment issues and appropriately fall to the Neighbourhood Development Plan Working Group if constituted

⁸ Ibid

- ii. together with any others which have been identified.
- c) Then developing a draft sustainability and environment action plan⁹ for consideration and subsequent assessment against funding via the Strategic Plan and Medium Term Financial Strategy¹⁰;
- d) Identifying and supporting the Member(s) who will lead researching and developing proposals in this area¹¹ and also providing the nominee(s) from which Town Council representation at WDBC climate change meetings will be drawn (if invited).

Climate Change

- e) Should it be the will of Council at this time - to consider whether to declare a Climate Emergency (or other similar wording) on the basis set out in para 3.5 above.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 That the Committee and Council endorse the course of action as set out in para 4.1 (a-d) above and consider whether it wishes to progress (e) at this time.

**CARL HEARN
TOWN CLERK
AUGUST 2019
TAVISTOCK TOWN COUNCIL**

⁹ ibid

¹⁰ If adopted (in respect of the latter)

¹¹ ie acknowledging the extreme short term demands on the staffing establishment and community basis of this work theme