

AGENDA ITEM 4 (c)

MINUTES of the Meeting of the **FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE** held at the Council Chamber, Drake Road, Tavistock on **TUESDAY 7th April, 2015** at **7:03pm.**

PRESENT

Councillor Mrs A Johnson (Chairman)
Councillor P Sanders (Vice Chairman)

Councillors D Eberlie, Mrs J Metcalf, J Moody, J Sheldon, D Whitcomb.

Councillor H Smith (Mayor)
Councillor Mrs S Bailey (Deputy Mayor)

Councillor Mrs M Ewings (Chairman – Properties Committee)

IN ATTENDANCE Town Clerk, General Manager, Assistant to the Town Clerk, THI Project Manager, Works Administrator

NOTE - Immediately prior to the Meeting the Committee received confirmation from the Mayor that Mr Adam Fleet had resigned from membership of the Town Council.

415. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence had been received.

416. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest

417. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

RESOLVED THAT the Minutes of the Meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on Tuesday 24th February, 2015 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Noted That in response to a question, the Committee was advised that the composition and Terms of Reference of Committees were determined each year by Council at the Annual Meeting.

418. MEETING OF THE PROPERTIES COMMITTEE HELD EARLIER THAT EVENING

The Chairman of the Properties Committee advised of increases proposed (2%) to Goose Fair Fees and Charges (excluding fly pitches).

419. GENERAL FINANCE

a) Schedule of Payments

The Committee considered the monthly accounts, as at 28th February, 2015 for submission to the next Council Meeting (Appendix 1).

b) Budget Monitoring Report

The Committee received and considered a copy of the Budget Monitoring Report as at 28th February, 2015 (Appendix 2).

Noted That

- i. In response to a question reference was made to the treatment of instances of long term sickness of market traders and related provisions of the Pannier Market Rules and Regulations.
- ii. Arising from the foregoing clarification was given regarding income derived from market tolls.

420. TOWNSCAPE HERITAGE INITIATIVE

The Committee received a short presentation together with the report (Appendix 3) of the Project Manager for the Townscape Heritage Initiative outlining progress to date in connection with the roles and responsibilities of the Council in its capacity as Accountable Body for the Scheme.

Noted That

- i. in future a colour or equivalent key would be provided to the report;
- ii. potential restrictions regarding publicity were noted arising from the application of purdah;
- iii. the positive progress of the Scheme was noted and the importance of delivering important complimentary initiatives stressed;
- iv. the Contact details of the Project Manager would be circulated to all Members.

Arising from consideration of the item, the Committee proceeded to consider the following matter (minute no 421 refers).

421. COUNCILLOR CONDUCT

A Member drew attention to comments which had been made in a publication by a Councillor. Arising from same there was broad consensus that some of the comments were:-

- inappropriate and/or inaccurate/misleading;
- at odds with the public record and Council decisions;
- inconsistent with the obligations of Members to seek to avoid bringing the Council into disrepute and the convention for decision makers to observe the principles of collective responsibility.

Noted That

- i. all Councillors received all paperwork for meetings and were entitled to attend Committee and Sub-Committee meetings. Matters which might be confidential at the time of a decision (for example, when purchasing a property) became part of the public record as soon as a decision was effected.
- ii. There would be opportunity, at the Council Meeting, for the Member concerned to consider and respond to the points raised.

422. COMMUNICATIONS AND MEDIA POLICY

The Committee considered a report (Appendix 4) outlining the comments received from Members in connection with a Media and Communications Policy pursuant to the deliberations of the Council previously.

In particular reference was made to :-

- principles which might appropriately apply to the conduct of Councillors when purporting to represent the Council/acting as a Councillor with particular reference to the responsibilities and opportunities arising in a democratic organisation and collective responsibility;
- the merits or otherwise of a related 'policy' as opposed to 'advisory' document;
- the extent to which such a document might represent either an appropriate method of informing and coordinating the

work of the Council or, in the alternative, 'gagging' freedom of speech.

RECOMMENDED THAT a Working Group be set up promptly to develop advisory Communications and Media arrangements for Councillors at the earliest opportunity comprising Councillors D Eberlie, Mrs A Johnson, J Moody, P Sanders, J Sheldon and a report be brought back to the next round of meetings.

Noted That in connection with the broader issues around local authority transparency the Council's new website, once in place, would include a range of information according with the spirit of recommended practice.

423. RECORDING OF MEETINGS

The following item (Appendix 5) had been placed on the Agenda at the request of Councillor J Sheldon.

In the ensuing discussion particular reference was made to the nature of the proposal and the previous commitment of the Council to provide both audio and visual recordings of its meetings early in the new Council Term. In the circumstances, there was a consensus that the present approach represented the most appropriate and inclusive way forward – affording the public, Councillors and other stakeholders equality of opportunity and enabling appropriate training and preparation to be undertaken.

In view of the foregoing the proposition was withdrawn.

424. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

The following items had been circulated for information only:-

- a) Report of the Assistant to the Town Clerk (Appendix 6)

Noted That

- i. arising from consideration of the above a Member advised that the Local Election Count would take place on 8th May, 2015 arising from which it would not be necessary to re-schedule the pre-Annual Meeting of Council
- ii. Consideration was given to a grant request from the Junior Life Skills Council arising from which it was

RECOMMENDED THAT the application be brought before the next round of meetings.

- b) Tavistock and District Chamber of Commerce – Minutes of the Meetings held on 2nd February and 2nd March, 2015 Appendix 7).

Noted That in relation to the latter (para 15.17.6 refers) a Member reported the discussion which had taken place at the meeting.

- c) Tavistock Matters – Notes of the Meeting held on 23rd February, 2015 (Appendix 8).
- d) Devon Association of Local Councils – Larger Councils Sub-Committee – Minutes of the Meeting held on Thursday 12th February, 2015 (Appendix 9).
- e) Tavistock Museum – Annual Report (Spring 2015) (Appendix 10).

Noted that particular reference was made to a recent invitation to all Councillors to the Museum.

- f) Items for agendas
 - i. Southern Links Parishes Committee – no items were suggested.
 - ii. West Devon/Tavistock Consultative Group

Noted That the previous Meeting had been cancelled due to unforeseen circumstances, the importance of due consideration being given by the Borough Council to issues raised by the Town in connection with Planning Process was stressed.

- g) Updates received from Council representatives serving on other outside bodies.
 - i. An update was provided in relation to the continuing need for the Tavistock Food Bank.

425. 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.

426. 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 appropriate, in respect of same.

Noted that:- in connection with

i. Item A

RECOMMENDED THAT authority be granted to the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman and the Vice Chairman of the Finance and General Purposes Committee, to take such action including to bring such proceedings as are necessary to secure the recovery of all monies and debts due to the Council.

ii. Item D

Noted That proceedings were continuing in connection with the recovery of monies due in respect of this premise.

However, it was recognised that should the tenant meet the terms as set out in their offer (as reported) to the Council then consideration could be given to the possibility of a revised arrangement. Namely:

RECOMMENDED THAT

a) subject to all monies being paid by the offer date and the tenant agreeing to a variation of the lease terms to enable monies to be collected on a daily basis the lease be revised accordingly;

b) in the event the tenant fails to meet these terms or otherwise does not agree the Council continues with the previously authorised action for the recovery of the premises for non-payment of debts and authorise any necessary action for future non-payment.

427. BAR STOCK AUDIT REPORT

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

The Committee considered and received the Stock Audit and Analysis Report for the period 22nd November, 2014 – 23rd March, 2015. Comment was made on the positive report.

The Press and Public were readmitted to the Meeting.

It being the last meeting of the Committee prior to elections the Chairman expressed appreciation to colleagues for their support and extended best wishes for the future.

The Meeting closed at 9.16pm

Signed.....

Dated.....

CHAIRMAN