

MINUTES of the Meeting of the **BUDGET & POLICY COMMITTEE** held on **TUESDAY 13th MAY, 2025 at 6.30pm** at the **COUNCIL CHAMBER, DRAKE ROAD, TAVISTOCK**

PRESENT

Councillor S Hipsey (ex-officio) Chairman (Deputy Mayor)

Councillor P Ward (ex-officio) (Mayor)

Councillors Ms M Ewings*, A Hutton, R Poppe

Ward Member(s) – Councillors J Moody and B Smith

IN ATTENDANCE

Town Clerk, General Manager and Assistant to the Town Clerk

*arrived late at the Meeting

421. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An Apology for Absence had been received from Councillor Mrs A Johnson (Vice Chairman).

422. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

RESOLVED THAT the Minutes of the Meeting of the Budget & Policy Committee held on Tuesday 8th April, 2025 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman (Appendix 1).

423. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following Declaration of Interest was made at this point in the Meeting:- Councillor A Hutton in respect of Agenda Item 10 (Tavi-Helps) by virtue of active involvement with the organisation.

Please also see Minute No. 428 below.

ITEMS CIRCULATED FOR RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

424. TOWN WATER SUPPLY

Concerns had previously been raised with regard to the recent water outage in Tavistock and the surrounding area, and South West Water's (SWWA) tardy response to the problem.

During the discussion arising reference was variously made to:

- the lack of a bottled water distribution point in Tavistock and the delay in setting one up. Initially it was understood water had only been available in either Bere Alston or Woolwell in Plymouth;

- the suggestion that the choice of the above locations might have been due to:
 - any presumption that people from Tavistock would be travelling via Plymouth for work, so they would be able to collect water from that station; and
 - that these areas had been most affected by the outage and initially the affect on Tavistock may not have been foreseen.
- the involvement of local MPs in helping to resolve the situation;
- that neither West Devon Borough Council or Tavistock Town Council had been approached to provide support, nor had local voluntary organisations (e.g. the Lions Club or Rotary Club) been approached to provide stewarding support at the distribution centres;
- looking forward the potential to develop/review locally based resilience planning arrangements working closely with those statutory bodies tasked under legislation with responding to emergency events;
- the information management implications of holding information on vulnerable persons.

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council reaffirms the progression of resilience planning for consideration as part of the upcoming annual Service Planning/work plan processes.

Noted That – Councillor Ms M Ewings arrived during consideration of the above matter.

425. DEVOLUTION/RE-ORGANISATION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN DEVON

The Committee received and considered the Notes of the Meeting of the Devolution/Local Government Re-organisation Working Group held on Tuesday 29th April, 2025 (Appendix 2).

The Committee noted that:

- Locally many assets and services which Councils in other areas might be planning to take on were already owned or delivered by Tavistock Town Council;
- Tavistock Town Council had previously decided to consider only taking on assets and services which were acknowledged to be of value to, and valued by, the community;
- to date Government had not made any firm decisions on the detailed shape of re-organisation in Devon, it was still considering a disparate range of preliminary proposals;
- a meeting with West Devon Borough Council was due to be arranged in due course to help identify if there were any options

available for the devolvement of any assets or services the Town Council may wish to consider taking on if local government reorganisation went ahead;

- no indication had yet been received from the new administration at Devon County Council as to how it intended to proceed.

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council endorse the Working Group proceedings.

ITEMS CIRCULATED FOR INFORMATION ONLY

426. HERITAGE ALLIANCE GROUP

The Committee received and noted the Notes of the Heritage Alliance Meetings held on 19th March and 23rd April, 2025 (Appendices 3 & 4).

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

427. 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.

CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

428. STAFFING ARRANGEMENT IN THE WORKS DEPARTMENT

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

The Committee received the Report of the General Manager (Appendix 5) in respect of proposed changes to the staffing structure in the Works Department. The content of the report was outlined, no existing staff were disadvantaged.

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council;

- a) adopt the revised staffing structure as a basis for the operation of the Works Department with final rates of pay for the Works Supervisor position being subject to job evaluation which includes:
 - Deletion of one Team Leader post and replacement with an additional Landscape and Maintenance Operative;
 - Retention of one Team Leader post (renamed chargehand), with unchanged duties and grading;

- Deletion of the remaining Team Leader post and re-designation as Works Supervisor subject to job evaluation.
- b) Authorise development of a role profile and person specification for the post of Works Supervisor and the related independent Job Evaluation
 - c) endorse that all new posts be advertised firstly as appropriate through an internal recruitment process, offered to all employees on the Departmental establishment and if unsuccessful in recruitment/retention to advertise the Works Supervisor role externally at the point that an Establishment vacancy arises (anticipated Oct 25).
 - d) If the positions are appointed internally for the Chargehand and Works Supervisor, to then appoint into the October 25 vacant role, advertising it externally as a Landscape and Maintenance Operative.
 - e) To include within the Works Supervisor and Chargehand roles a prerequisite around training needs, plus availability to support Dickensian Evening and to enrol on the out of hours on-call if numbers require.

Noted That Councillor Ms M Ewings Declared a Personal Non-Prejudicial Interest in this matter by virtue of a past association.

429. TAVI-HELPS

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

The Committee received the Report of the Town Clerk, together with a copy of correspondence between the Town Clerk and the organisation's representative (Appendix 6).

Noted That Councillor A Hutton provided the following oral update on the current situation with regard to the organisation before leaving the Meeting pursuant to the earlier Declaration of Interest.

The update included;

- that the organisation distributed short-dated food which was largely donated by local supermarkets;

- that applicants (of whom there were approximately 35) were not presently means-tested to ascertain why they were in need of food/financial support;
- that the organisation's application for Charitable Status had been refused by the Charity Commission due to the above, so this would need to be introduced to be successful on re-submission;
- application was anticipated within a few weeks.

Councillor Hutton left the room.

In the ensuing discussion reference was made to:

- past delays in the organisation applying for Charitable Status, despite this having been considered as a pre-requisite for support previously;
- that achieving charitable status would allow the organisation to apply for Business Rate relief (if/as liability became due), as these were now payable by the licensee under the terms of the Licence to Occupy the premises;
- that the Council had previously provided the premises as a storage unit, but it was now a storage and distribution centre, with attendant challenges in terms of site safety and management;
- matters raised with regard to the perceived governance arrangements of the organisation;
- that the Council had yet to decide on the long-term usage of the premises and that other organisations (whether or not with payment of rent) in the town had not been afforded the opportunity to offer to utilise the premises;
- how the current offer did/did not differ from other similar providers serving the town, not least now that Tavi-Helps was anticipating introducing means-testing;
- the range of costs the Council had incurred for the property during the licensees period of occupation.

RECOMMENDED THAT

- a) The Licensee be requested to:
 - i. re-apply to the Charity Commission (CC), by not later than 20th June, 2025, and provide acknowledgement of receipt of the application by the CC to the Council;
 - ii. provide by the above date (i refers), an outline of what it would do if the application were successful, also what it would do if it were not successful. In either case including, but not limited to, how the offer of the organisation links to, or is differentiated from, that of other providers of food to the underprivileged and disadvantaged operating in the locality;
- b) without prejudice to the existing temporary arrangement for occupation under licence, the Council undertake a review of potential future uses for the premises before the end of July 2025, and the Licensee be informed that is being undertaken accordingly.

Councillor Hutton re-entered the room.

430. TAVISTOCK MUSEUM - REQUEST

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

The Committee considered the report of the Town Clerk in connection with the above (appendix 7).

The Museum's previous request for a surrender of its current Lease and the issue of a new one was outlined, with particular regard to the framing of one lease term.

In the ensuing discussion reference was made to:

- the Council's significant contribution in the past year (iro £ 100,000) to seek to offset dry rot issues within the building and support the tenants use;
- allocation of repairing responsibilities under the current Lease;
- the Museum's reliance on volunteers;
- water ingress through the absorbent Hurdwick stone, and its impact on the building structure;
- the potentially major adverse impacts of recent (Covid/post Covid) changes to tenant building management arrangements on the fabric of the historic building. Mitigation measures trialled by the tenant were outlined;
- the re-pointing works which had recently been undertaken;
- the balance to be struck insofar as ongoing responsibilities and lease term were concerned/concern that if a 20-year Lease was entered into, then the Council could face repeated calls on resources to deal with ongoing property issues relating to building management arrangements.
- The importance attached to the Museum being pro-active in applying for Grant funding to help support the delivery of the function, and both supporting and delivering good building management practices.

RECOMMENDED THAT subject to legal advice, Tavistock Town Council accede to the request to accept 'reasonable endeavours' on the part of the Museum within the lease, on the proviso that the Museum accept the same on the part of the Council with regard to landlord repairing obligations.

Noted That the Assistant to the Town Clerk undertook to ascertain if any break clause within a Lease could affect the ability of the Museum to draw down Grant funding.

431. TENANCY MATTERS

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

The following verbal updates were provided:

- 12 Duke Street – the revised Hearing date had been set for Tuesday 20th May, 2025;
- Cattle Market Lease – negotiations were being undertaken on the Heads of Terms for the new Lease, which were outlined;
- Corn Market – an update was provided regarding the extent of progress/co-operation received in connection with information sought under the lease and related matters.

The Meeting closed at 8.42pm

Signed:

Dated:
CHAIRMAN