

MINUTES of the Meeting of the **BUDGET & POLICY COMMITTEE** held on **TUESDAY 10th JUNE, 2025 at 6.30pm** at the **COUNCIL CHAMBER, DRAKE ROAD, TAVISTOCK**

PRESENT

Councillor S Hipsey	Mayor ex-officio
Councillor Mrs A Johnson	Deputy Mayor ex-officio
Councillor P Ward	Immediate Past Mayor
Councillors Ms M Ewings*, J Moody, R Poppe, B Smith	

IN ATTENDANCE

Town Clerk, General Manager, Assistant to the Town Clerk and Financial Administrator (for part of the Meeting).

*arrived late at the Meeting

38. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

Nominations were invited for the Election of Chairman of the Budget & Policy Committee for the 2025-2026 Civic Year.

A nomination, duly seconded, was received in respect of Councillor Mrs A Johnson.

RESOLVED THAT Councillor Mrs A Johnson be elected Chairman of the Budget & Policy Committee for the ensuing Civic Year.

39. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

Nominations were invited for the Election of Vice-Chairman of the Budget & Policy Committee for the 2025-2026 Civic Year.

A nomination, duly seconded, was received in respect of Councillor J Moody.

RESOLVED THAT Councillor J Moody be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Budget & Policy Committee for the ensuing Civic Year.

40. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No Apologies for Absence had been received.

41. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

RESOLVED THAT the Minutes of the Meeting of the Budget & Policy Committee held on Tuesday 13th May, 2025 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman (Appendix 1).

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

42. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest made.

ITEMS CIRCULATED FOR RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

43. SERVICE PLANS 2025 – 26

The Committee considered the following Plans;

- a) Corporate Service Plan 2025 – 26, Organisational Risk Register and Annual Summary(Appendix 2)

Corporate Service Plan 2025 - 26

During the discussion, a query was raised with regards to the Regulatory and Compliance section on P9, and the extend of the reported backlog.

It was confirmed that the areas where a backlog of work had been identified were;

- the Community Services Department which included pothole registers, tree surveys, an overall review of Health & Safety, a Health & Safety Policy, Risk Assessments and safe systems of work;
- the Corporate area which included information management, record keeping, review of the Council's Insurance Policy and its adherence to the terms of that Policy and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) requirements.

It was reported that both the temporary staffing arrangements in the Works Department, which had recently been extended, were making significant inroads into reducing the backlog, and the upcoming changes in staffing in the Corporate area would provide increased resource to help overcome the backlog in that department.

The additional staffing in the Works Department had already had a significant impact on the Asbestos Register, the risk of slips, trips and falls, playpark inspections and tree management.

It was confirmed that a report would be brought forward to a future Meeting, however it was anticipated that by the calendar year-end it would be easier to identify the progress.

Concerns were raised with regards to;

- if the possibility of Local Government Re-organisation would put additional pressures on the Council's staff and its ability to reduce the backlog;
- resilience planning and the impact Martyn's Law would have on events such as Goose Fair, and other large events delivered by the Council;
- the Council's dependence on key staff for particular topics i.e. Health & Safety, and the impact of the loss of that person on the Council's ability to meet its responsibilities. It was reported that additional staff had now received NEBOSH training, which would increase the Council's resilience in this particular area

b) Community Services Service Plan 2025 – 26 (Appendix 3)

The General Manager;

- provided an outline of the anticipated costs of the Projects/Tasks as listed on P7;
- confirmed that he had considered putting some of the Council's more vulnerable buildings on the 'At Risk Register' as this could allow for grant funding to be applied for;
- responded to the suggestion that Crowd Funding could be an option to raise funds for new play equipment in the play parks which required refurbishment i.e. Monksmead;
- confirmed that the consultation on the Multi Use Wheeled Sports Area project had been delayed by two months. The same delay also applied to both the Betsy Grimal's Tower and Abbey Remains projects;
- reminded Members that the Council did not currently have a play park equipment replacement fund as grant funding was often available (see P10).

RECOMMENDED THAT:

- i) The Council receive and endorse the Annual Summary;
- ii) the Tavistock Town Council Corporate Services Improvement Plan 2025-26 and the Community Services Service Plan 2025 – 26 both be endorsed and adopted as the basis for the delivery of Council Services 2025-26 (see below regarding Risk Register);
- iii) the Council endorse and adopt the Tavistock Town Council Organisational Risk Register.

44. FINANCIAL MATTERS

The Committee considered and noted the following reports;

- a) **Bank Mandate** (Appendix 4)
- b) **Year-End Overspends** (Appendix 5)
- c) **Unaudited Financial Statements for the period 2024 – 2025**
(Appendix 6)

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council;

- i. endorse the Bank Mandate as provided;
 - ii. endorse the Year-End Overspends as provided;
 - iii. Subject to the;
 - Addition of Councillor A Hutton to the Councillor list;
 - Deletion of Councillor U Mann from the Councillor list;
 - Amend the name of the Town Mayor from Councillor P Ward to Councillor S Hipsey
- endorse the Unaudited Financial Statements for the period 2024 - 2025

ITEMS CIRCULATED FOR INFORMATION ONLY

45. HERITAGE ALLIANCE GROUP

The Notes of the Heritage Alliance Meeting held on Wednesday 4th June, 2025 were unavailable, so would be deferred for consideration at the next Committee Meeting.

46. URGENT MATTERS BROUGHT FORWARD AT THE DISCRETION OF THE CHAIRMAN

The following items were brought forward;

CCTV article – Members were advised that an article had recently been published in The Moorland magazine with regards to the possibility of CCTV in Tavistock.

Members were reminded that in May 2024 the Police had approached the Town Council on this matter, and the Council had requested additional information in order that this could be considered by Council. Information had been provided, however it did not cover the areas requested e.g. what funding would be available to cover the costs, what had been the level of a Police presence over the previous 2-3 year period.

It was reported that a meeting invitation had been received for 20th June, 2025 and the probable attendees would be the Town Clerk, Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Immediate Past Mayor.

Tavistock Pride – Members were reminded that 3 years ago the Town Council had gone through a long and detailed process to agree its Flag Flying Policy, following a request from Tavistock Pride to fly its flag that year on the Town Hall.

The consensus at that time had been to;

- Fly the Pride flag on 28th June annually (Pride Day) as long as that date did not conflict with Armed Forces Day. If it did, then the Pride flag would be flown the following day;
- that if Tavistock Pride preferred to have the flag flown on the day of its annual event, then the flag would be flown that day instead, but not in addition to.

However this year;

- a request had been received from Tavistock Pride to fly the new Progress Pride flag instead of the previous Pride flag, and to fly it for a month; and
- a request had also been received from a member of the public to fly the Progress Pride flag for the day, plus a week in February 2026.

The Town Clerk confirmed that he had reminded the correspondents of the Council's Policy, and had offered to meet with them after this year's event to discuss future partnership working for this event.

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

47. 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

48. RE-TENDERING OF ENERGY CONTRACTS

(**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 Briefing Note of the General Manager (Appendix 7) in respect of the re-tendering for utilities.

During the discussion reference was made to;

- the weightings applied when the assessment of tenders received was undertaken e.g. the use of renewables;
- that the 2025 – 2026 utilities budgets had already been reduced in anticipation of potential savings to be made, once re-tendering had been completed.

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council;

- a) Approve the tender process outlined in 2. CURRENT SITUATION, including:
 - Notifying prospective tenderers and advertise on our website and social media
 - To evaluated the tender based on technical merit (30%) and price (70%)
 - To award the contract for up to 30 months, commencing 1st August 2025 and concluding no later than 31st January 2028.
 - Appoint a Cllr Representative to attend the tender opening , to be held on 16th July 2025.
- b) Authorise the General Manager (or in his absence the Town Clerk) to accept the most competitive tender, or other appropriate arrangement to achieve best value, in consultation with the Mayor and Deputy subject to being within Budget.
- c) Agree that the Cemetery and Communications Officer, in consultation with the General Manager, liaise with the preferred tenderer and authorise the utility contracts on behalf of the Council.

Noted That a Member would be appointed at the Council Meeting on 24th June, to attend the tender opening on 16th July, 2025.

49. 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 oral updates were provided:-

- a) Damage to Market Road Wall – it was reported that as it had been deemed a 'medical episode' which had caused the van driver to damage the wall, the Council had previously been advised that there was little likelihood of receiving a payout from the driver's insurers. Nor was the wall included in the Town Council's insurance.

However a firm of Solicitors, acting on behalf of the van driver's insurers, had recently contacted the Council and offered a 'full and final' payment of £ 10,000, which had been accepted.

- b) 12 Duke Street – it was reported that the Guarantor had been granted 'Breathing Space' with regards to the Council's ongoing process of bringing Bankruptcy action against her, this would remain in place until 1st August, 2025.

The Guarantor had recently;

- made an offer to pay £1 per month; and then
- increased the offer to £300 per month, based on a debt of iro £ 20,000.

Concerns had been raised with regards to accepting monthly payments, because if the Guarantor defaulted, the process would have to restart from the beginning.

Three options were put before the Committee to consider, as follows;

1. refuse the offer of £ 300 per month, and proceed with an application for Bankruptcy once the 'Breathing Space' ended, unless payment was received in full in the meantime;
2. accept the offer of £300 per month, and take the risk of default;
3. revert to the Guarantor and offer that if £ 14,001 was paid as a lump sum, (£20,000 legal fees + the recent Court costs awarded to the Council), so leaving a sum of less than £ 10,000 owing, then the Council would accept the offer of £ 300 per month. This was to be paid until the debt has been repaid in full.

By having a sum owing of less than £ 10,000, if there was a default then the outstanding balance could be recouped via The Small Claims Court.

Members were reminded that;

- the Guarantor, and the tenant, had previously stated that the Guarantor had no property, assets or savings in her own name.

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council;

- i. offer, on a 'without prejudice' basis, the Guarantor the option to make a lump sum payment of £ 15,000, with the remainder of the debt being repayable at a rate of £ 300 per month;

- ii. agree delegation to the Clerk, Mayor and Deputy Mayor to progress this matter.

Noted That as both the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Committee were also Members of West Devon Borough Council, it was agreed that should a conflict of interest arise in the future, on any matter concerning the Borough Council, both parties would be asked to leave the Meeting, and a temporary Chairman would be appointed to continue.

The Meeting closed at 8.30pm

Signed:

Dated:
CHAIRMAN