

MINUTES of the Meeting of the **BUDGET & POLICY COMMITTEE** held on **TUESDAY 22nd JULY, 2025 at 6.30pm** at the **COUNCIL CHAMBER, DRAKE ROAD, TAVISTOCK**

PRESENT

Councillor S Hipsey
Councillor Mrs A Johnson

Mayor ex-officio
Chairman & Deputy Mayor ex-officio

Councillor J Moody
Councillor P Ward
Councillor Ms M Ewings

Vice Chairman
Immediate Past Mayor

Councillor A Hutton (Ward Member)

IN ATTENDANCE

Town Clerk, General Manager, Assistant to the Town Clerk

83. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for Absence had been received from Councillors R Poppe and B Smith.

84. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

RESOLVED THAT the Minutes of the Meeting of the Budget & Policy Committee held on Tuesday 10th June, 2025 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman (Appendix 1).

85. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor A Hutton (Ward Member) Declared an Interest in Minute No. 94 by virtue of membership of, and holding office with, a licensee of the Council and undertook to leave the Meeting at the point that these topics were considered.

ITEMS CIRCULATED FOR RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

86. LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION & DEVOLUTION

The attention of the Committee was drawn to the West Devon Borough Council online survey with regard to Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution, which could be found using the link below;
<https://www.westdevon.gov.uk/>

All Council Members were encouraged to complete this survey, as well as the Devon County Council survey (link previously circulated, see also below), on an individual basis, and to also encourage members of the public to complete the same:

Council launches engagement events to seek residents' views on local government reorganisation - News

It was further reported that:

- there would be a Devon County Council Consultation Event at the Pannier Market on Thursday 24th July, 2025 8.30am – 10.30am;
- there would be a West Devon Borough Council Consultation Event on 1st September, 2025 in Tavistock Town Hall, from 6.15pm – 7.30pm.

87. SIGNAGE

The Committee considered correspondence received from Tavistock & District Chamber of Commerce (Appendix 2) inviting it to endorse a Chamber initiative for improved Brown Tourist Signage to Tavistock from the A30.

In the ensuing discussion reference was made, in particular to:

- preliminary investigations an individual Member had undertaken in another capacity and types/styles of signage that they considered might be appropriate;
- The background to longstanding (unsuccessful due to Highways England criterion) historic attempts to secure such signage;
- The extent to which World Heritage Site status might/might not assist;
- possible avenues for funding to help offset the significant costs of the construction and installation of signs should an application by the Chamber be successful.

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council respond, confirming its support in principle, for the initiative led by the Chamber of Commerce to secure tourist signage from the A30 for the Town.

ITEMS CIRCULATED FOR INFORMATION ONLY

88. OTHER MEETINGS

a. HERITAGE ALLIANCE GROUP

The Committee received the Notes of the Heritage Alliance Meeting held on 4th June, 2025 (Appendix 3);

Noted That reference was made to the Heritage Fair scheduled for Saturday 26th July, 2025 10am – 3pm.

b. GOOSE FAIR OPERATIONAL MEETING

The Committee received the Notes of the Goose Fair Operational Meeting held on 26th June, 2025 (Appendix 4).

In response to a question the Committee was advised of contingency arrangements arising from changes notified regarding loss of availability of first aid cover from South West Ambulance Services.

89. TAVISTOCK TOWN COUNCIL – VACANCY NORTH WARD

The Committee was advised that following the necessary request for an Election to be called to fill the vacancy, an Election would take place on Thursday 4th September, 2025.

Addendum/Explanatory: publication of Notice of Election - 30th July, close of nominations 7th August.

90. REMOTE ATTENDANCE & PROXY VOTING

The Committee noted the current position, pending regulations, regarding the intention of the Government to proceed with the foregoing following a consultation exercise.

URGENT MATTER BROUGHT FORWARD AT THE DISCRETION OF THE CHAIRMAN

91. DEVON ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS: AGM & CONFERENCE

The following item was taken forward as a matter of urgency in view of the timeline for the event and associated responses. The event was due to take place on Wednesday 1st October, 2025 at Exeter Racecourse (10am – 4pm), at a cost of £50 per head.

The matter was also listed on the Agenda for Council. For Members who wished to attend:

- they should contact the Assistant to the Town Clerk who would book places in the normal way;
- it was noted in view of the cost implications there was facility to recover the cost from non-attendees or those who cancelled too close to the event for a refund to be obtained;
- that transport should be shared where possible.

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

92. 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

93. OUTCOME OF THE RE-TENDERING OF UTILITIES

(**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 and endorsed the Briefing Note of the General Manager (Appendix 5) in respect of the re-tendering exercise for energy utilities (gas and electricity).

The General Manager spoke to the content of the report and answered questions with particular regard to:

- the number of tenders received and associated due diligence undertaken;
- next steps;
- management information to inform usage projections;
- because the tenders fell within budget no further authorisation from Council was needed in order to progress the contract;
- The most competitive (successful) tenderer was Clear Utilities Solutions Ltd who had tendered in the overall sum of £65,532,35 based upon usage in the prior financial year and the Council would contract accordingly.

Noted That:

- Appreciation was expressed to the procurement team;
- The tender figure, based as it was on prior year usage which was necessarily indicative, could only serve as a guide for future cost purposes. More work would be undertaken in this regard to inform future budget setting.

94. MOLLY OWEN CENTRE

(**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, for information, the confidential Briefing Note of the General Manager (Appendix 6), setting out in outline the approach proposed to be undertaken (Minute No 24 refers) and associated review of premises at the above location.

In the ensuing discussion reference was also made to:

- subsequent correspondence received from the applicant organisation in relation to the content of the report (Appendix 7) and an associated response to same;
- the status of the report – indicative and scoping only in nature;
- the clearly articulated intention to consult stakeholders in preparation of the review itself;
- the importance attached to the Council both being consistent and even handed in the treatment of all its licensees/tenants, irrespective of whether they had other connections to the Council.

RECOMMENDED THAT the Council receive the report, note the correspondence received, and endorse the approach proposed.

Noted That

- a) Councillor A Hutton (Ward Member) Declared an Interest in the above item by virtue of membership and holding office with a licensee of the Council and left the Meeting immediately prior to consideration of same;
- b) Consideration of this item took into account and included the related Agenda Item titled 'Correspondence from a Licensee' which therefore does not arise under separate head (see also Appendix 8).

URGENT CONFIDENTIAL MATTER BROUGHT FORWARD AT THE DISCRETION OF THE CHAIRMAN

95. 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 Chairman agreed, with the consent of the Meeting, to take this item as a matter of urgency in view of the timelines involved.

Correspondence had been received earlier that day from the Tenant (Appendix 9 – also available on the Councillor Portal) setting out a request.

This was pursuant to the provisions of Minute No's 430 and 24 (Budget and Policy Committee of 13th May and succeeding Council Meeting refer).

It was acknowledged that it would not be appropriate to make a recommendation at the present time in view of the recency of the information, lack of accompanying report and implications associated with potential organisational risk and associated matters.

Noted That –

- In response to a question the position of a reserve Observer appointed by Council to the Trust was outlined - Councillor J

Moody, Declared a Personal Non-prejudicial Interest in the above matter accordingly;

- the Town Clerk undertook to provide a briefing to the Council Meeting scheduled for Tuesday 29th July, 2025 to allow this matter to be considered.

96. TENANCY OR STAFFING MATTER(S)

(**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 confidential updates were received:

a) Establishment Matters

- i. The General Manager provided an oral update in some detail in connection with a Health and Safety matter and associated potential implications for effective operations. Further updates would be brought forward, as available.
- ii. The background to an issue regarding certain categories of emolument (holiday pay and TOIL) was outlined in some detail, together with advice received, communications with the other party and others, the current position and prospective next steps.

b) (Former) Tenancy Matter - Duke Street

The background, previously extensively reported, to this matter was outlined. In response to a request a further offer had been made by the Council, consistent with its prior parameters, in an attempt to secure a mutually acceptable solution. Should that not prove possible the final stage of proceedings previously agreed would be progressed.

CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

97. ADJUSTMENT TO THE ESTABLISHMENT

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

The Council considered the report of the Town Clerk (Appendix 8) in connection with the above.

In the ensuing discussion reference was made, in particular, to the specific background attaching to this matter, associated transitional arrangements elsewhere, the various deliberations that had taken place and the current stage of proceedings, roles, responsibilities and linkages, including for recruitment.

RECOMMENDED THAT the recommendation as set out in para 2.6 of the report be endorsed.

The Meeting closed at 9.00 pm

Signed:

Dated:

CHAIRMAN