

AGENDA ITEM No 6

MINUTES of the Meeting of the **BUDGET & POLICY COMMITTEE** held on **TUESDAY 2nd DECEMBER, 2025 at 6.30pm** at the **COUNCIL CHAMBER, DRAKE ROAD, TAVISTOCK**

PRESENT

Councillor Mrs A Johnson
Councillor J Moody

Chairman & Deputy Mayor (ex-officio)
Vice Chairman

Councillor S Hipsey
Councillor P Ward

Mayor (ex-officio)
Immediate past Mayor (ex-officio)

Councillors B Smith, Mrs M Ewings.

Ward Member(s): Councillor A Hutton.

IN ATTENDANCE

Town Clerk, General Manager, Office and Finance Manager

207. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None received.

208. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

RESOLVED THAT the Minutes of the Meeting of the Budget & Policy Committee held on Tuesday 21st October, 2025 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman (Appendix 1).

209. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor B Smith declared an interest in Minute No 213 by virtue of Membership of the grantee organisation.

ITEMS CIRCULATED FOR RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

210. BUDGET PREPARATION & PRECEPT SETTING 2026-2027

The Committee considered the report of the Town Clerk (Appendix 2), together with the associated documentation in connection with the above (and enclosed sub-appendices) as follows:

- i. Budget Detail by Combined Account Code for 2024/25, 2025/26 and proposed for 2026/27 (sub-appendix 1);
- ii. Budget Detail by Cost Centre for 2024/25, 2025/26 and proposed for 2026/27 and Summary by Centre (sub-appendices 2-3);
- iii. Rolling Capital Programme (RCP) (sub-appendix 4);
- iv. Phased Budget Report as at 30th September 2025 (sub-appendix 5);

- v. Schedule incorporating an extract of Existing Fees and Charges 2025-26 and proposed Fees and Charges 2026-27 (sub-appendix 6);
- vi. Fixed Asset Register (FAR) (sub-appendix 7);
- vii. Schedule of Earmarked Reserves (EMR) (sub-appendix 8);

setting out the emerging draft Budget and Precept for 2026/27 financial year.

Attention was drawn, in particular, to the following: -

- Cost pressures had not abated;
- the Council was considering the final Budget round of the current term prior to anticipated elections in 2027;
- Uncertainties existed regarding the potential impacts of Local Government Re-organisation (LGR): whether before, on, or after reorganisation itself, upon both services and cost base. Accordingly related provision in the sum of £50,000 had been included as a baseline/safeguard;
- The draft budget did not include provision to make up the anticipated funding shortfall for the multi-use wheeled sports area (projected at potentially up to £130,000);
- The draft budget restored the Rolling Capital Programme (RCP) to the agreed minimum baseline figure of £100,000 acknowledging the requirements of an extensive heritage and grounds estate serving the community. Not least as the historic level of the agreed accompanying unallocated capital reserve was in the order of £500,000 (but currently zero);
- Attention was drawn to two proposed new Earmarked Reserves:- Occupiers Liability and Energy Performance Certification works arising from due diligence in year;
- Market Tolls were recommended to increase;
- Provision in the sum of £67,500 had been made in anticipation of taking on responsibility for the Guildhall WC's (revenue), alongside £40,000 (capital) - contingent on the agreement with WDBC to also provide a matching capital contribution (£40,000) toward bringing the premises back into a suitable condition for transfer.

Some of the assumptions underlying the draft Budget included:-

- No contingency funding for material projects as referenced in paragraph 2.6 of the report.
- Inflation was predicted to continue to run above the Bank of England target for 2026-27;
- Any Local Government Pay Award did not exceed the budget threshold of 5% (including increments);

- There were anticipated savings deriving from a reduction in the secondary rate employer contribution to the Local Government Pension Scheme projected in the region of approximately £40,000;
- That no material unforeseen financial impacts arose in year;
- There was no impact on the Town Council in 2026-27 arising from the extant review of Library Services by the Library Authority;
- VAT would be recoverable in full on partnership projects;
- There were no substantial calls on expenditure arising from LGR (accordingly only minimal provision had been made).

In the ensuing discussion reference was made, variously, to:-

- a) Potential pressures on cost base which might arise from/alongside LGR or other factors including streetscene, library services, CCTV, WC's, future of the BID Co, Goose Fair etc;
- b) A meeting anticipated to be offered by the Borough Council to discuss the future of 'community assets'. It was suggested by a Member the Borough Council was working to a Summer 2026 deadline for agreed initiatives;
- c) The importance attached to restoring the RCP to the current minimum operating level. It was however acknowledged that this figure had been in place for several years and, following cost price inflation in the construction and professional services sectors, was in need of (upward) review in the near future as circumstances permitted;
- d) Any potential impacts of the principal authority waste/cleaning contract coming to an end in 2027 on related assets/services for the Town;
- e) Whether the community grant fund might appropriately be increased from £20,000 to £25,000, alongside the extent to which a universal reduction in awards to meet budgetary constraints, as opposed to a relative assessment of the merit of each application received, was/was not effective;
- f) Direction of travel for bank base rates and treasury management;
- g) The material challenge posed by not having (since Covid and subsequent emergency works), a sufficient - or currently any, unallocated capital reserve for a Council of the type and size of Tavistock;
- h) The importance attached, when planning for the mid to longer term, of identifying things the Council might continue doing, do more of, less of, stop doing or start doing, alongside the financial implications of same;
- i) Information requested in October and still awaited from the Borough Council regarding community assets;

- j) The operation of the General Disposal Consent (2003), and the provisions of s123 Local Government Act 1972 - alongside the associated legal interpretation provided by the Borough Council, on more than one occasion, which was inconsistent with the application of the statutory framework (as opposed to any local policy position) by other local authorities nationally;
- k) A statement, from an office holder of the Borough Council, and welcomed by the Committee, that any asset or service transfer between authorities should include an element of 'quid pro quo';
- l) The extensive anticipated works, largely presently unfunded, as identified in para 2.6 of the report.

In the circumstances it was considered that, notwithstanding a range of challenges and whilst acknowledging its limitations, the Draft Budget, represented an appropriate basis to deliver acceptable services in 2026-27 including, as it did, provision to restore essential provisions to maintain the historic fabric of community assets (ie RCP), and take on new community services (ie Guildhall Toilets to prevent loss/closure by the principal authority). A further report would be brought before the Committee and Council in January 2026, when the Council Tax Base 2026-27 was known, in order that an accurate projection of Precept could be made prior to setting the Budget and Precept 2026-27.

RECOMMENDED THAT for the foregoing reasons Tavistock Town Council endorse and approve in principle (i.e. subject to final consideration in January 2026)

- a) The submitted draft Council Budget 2026/27 as submitted and:
 - i. incorporating adjustments arising from the previous deliberations of the Council; and
 - ii. providing, in particular, for:
 - a) the return of funding the programmed annual Rolling Capital Programme (RCP) contribution, to the identified long term minimum requirement of £100,000;
 - b) provision for the potential to take on running of the Guildhall Car Park Public Conveniences as proposed.
- b) The appended Schedule of Fees and Charges for Council Services.
- c) £80,000 of the uncommitted balance proposed to be held within the RCP be allocated to boiler replacement at the Town Hall (£50,000) and Council Offices (£30,000), the remaining £20,000 to be allocated to contaminated ground disposal.
- d) A LGR and legislation revenue Budget head be introduced in the sum of £50,000.

- e) Two new Earmarked Reserves be introduced in the sum of £10,000 (Energy Performance Certificate works) and £7,500 Occupiers' Liability;
- f) The other financial documents as submitted – Rolling Capital Programme, Fixed Asset Register and Schedule of Earmarked Reserves be approved/adopted.

Arising from the foregoing it was further:

RECOMMENDED THAT the Community Grants Budget be increased from £20,000 to £25,000.

211. EQUIPMENT (VEHICLE/PLANT) REPLACEMENT: EARMARKED RESERVE

The Committee received and considered the report of the Works Manager (Appendix 3) in connection with the above relating to a request to purchase a new cherry picker as a priority and subsequently as/if necessary, a new tractor. In the ensuing discussion reference was made, inter alia, to the life expectancy/service history of the vehicles, works undertaken and associated benefits.

It was noted, in particular, that the proposed expenditure, if undertaken in full, would exhaust the relevant budget head which would then be replenished over a 5 year period. An assessment by the Works Manager indicated that the lifespan of existing other vehicles was expected to be consistent with such a timeframe but could not be guaranteed.

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council approve:

- a) The purchase of a used vehicle mounted cherry picker at not more than the budget specified in the report and therefore agree to the disposal of the current asset; a 2007 Iveco Daily 50C15 vehicle mounted cherry picker for best price;
- b) Subject to the availability of funds, the purchase of a new compact utility tractor subject to the budget range and options recommended in the report, and therefore agree to the disposal at that time of the current asset; a 2006 New Holland TCE55 compact utility tractor for best price.

212. GRANTS TO THE COMMUNITY

The Committee considered the Notes of the meeting of the Grants Panel held on the 12th November, 2025.

In the discussion arising particular reference was made to:-

- o The Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) which had historically applied for a £4,000 grant but on this occasion had applied for £2,500. The importance of the CAB in terms of the support it gave, both to the

community as a whole and hard to reach/disadvantaged groups in particular was noted. On reflection an award in the full amount requested was therefore considered appropriate.

- A late application from Junior Life Skills, the applicant would be advised the application could not be considered due to late submission. They would be reminded of application arrangements and referred to the General Manager to see if there was any operational support which could be provided.
- The importance attached to consistency and probity in the assessment of applications, as distinct from applicants/associated individuals, how political causes might be treated and the merits of various applications.
- That in some instances (CAB excepted on policy grounds) the same organisations applied annually giving rise to concern as to whether the funds were treated as a given rather than used for new activities.
- The extent to which application no 21 for the Respect Fest did/did not comply with the grant scheme, including in view of absence of audited accounts and, at the time of application, there not being a bank account in the organisation name. Those indicated it should accordingly be considered for a grant of less than £500 as set out in the Policy. An award in the revised amount of £500 was therefore considered appropriate.
- That the Grant Policy could be reviewed so as to consider minor anomalies/points referenced above.

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council

- i) approve a 'light touch' review of the Grants Policy prior to the next Grant Round in 2026; and
- ii) award the following grants to Community Groups as set out below:

No.	Organisation	Amount applied for	Amount agreed
1	Tavistock Carer's Support Group	£500	£500
2	Tavistock Athletic Club	£2,500	£1,625
3	Tavistock Street & School Pastors	£500	£500
4	Tavistock Physically Challenged Group	£500	£500
5	National Autistic Society West Devon	£ 500	£500
6	Tavistock Group of Artists	£ 500	£500
7	Tavistock Festival CIO	£ 2,500	£1,625
8	2nd Tavistock Rainbows	£1,136.92	£790
9	Dartmoor Search & Rescue	£2,500	£1,625
10	Tavistock Heritage Trust	£750	£500

11	Robey Trust	£495	£495
12	TaviFringe	£1,050	£700
13	Lions Club of Tavistock	£1,730	£1,000
14	Catalyst (Tavistock)	£500	£500
15	The Printworks	£2,400	£1,800
16	Tamar Energy Community	£1,995	£1,297
17	Whitchurch Scout Group	£1,000	£600
18	Tavistock Youth Café	£1,275.26	£830
19	Chapel Barn CIC	Ineligible	
20	White Noise Theatre CIC	Ineligible	-
21	Respect Fest	£2,500	£500
22	CAB	£2,500	£2,500
	Total	£27,332.18	£18,887

213. GOOSE FAIR-INCOME AND EXPENDITURE 2025 & ASSOCIATED GRANT

The Committee received and considered the report of the Office and Finance Manager (Appendix 4) together with a Goose Fair Income and Expenditure Report.

It was noted that the cleaning figure of £5,652.69 was the original figure quoted before additional elements came to light. The actual figure should accordingly be recorded as £7,994.06. There was also additional income expected of approximately £1,800, still to be collected.

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council award £2,000 to Tavistock Lions Club, in recognition of the organisation's contribution to the successful delivery of Goose Fair 2025.

Noted That Councillor B Smith declared an interest in the above item by virtue of Membership of Tavistock Lions and left the room during consideration thereof.

214. MARKET SERVICES – MARQUEES

The Committee received and considered the report of the Market Reeve (Appendix 5) in relation to the current Market Services and regarding potential acquisition of 3 Marquees.

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council agree to the use of part of the balance of the Advertising Budget for the 25/26 financial year for the purchase of three 6m x 3m marquees and associated items for the value of £3,099.60 plus VAT and approve the associated virement.

ITEMS CIRCULATED FOR INFORMATION ONLY

215. PENNON SHARES

The holding of the Council in respect of shares held in Pennon Group PLC (593) was noted

216. LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION IN DEVON

An oral update was noted making reference to the links provided to various of the submissions made to Government by Local Authorities in Devon.

217. ABORICULTURAL MATTERS – COMMUNICATIONS

The Committee considered an oral report and update on progress arising from the previous update presented at the Budget and Policy Committee at its Meeting on 21st January 2025 relating to communications from a resident regarding hedge and tree management, more specifically appertaining to leaf debris, safety. Various Members confirmed the oral report was consistent with what they had been previously apprised of on the matter. It was further explained that due to the concerns of the resident the Council had commissioned an additional independent tree inspection on an oak tree which was subject to a TPO, and carried out further remedial works on receipt of planning consent and had increased its frequency of leaf clearing.

In the circumstances the Committee acknowledged that the Council had adopted proportionate and appropriate steps to investigate and act upon the representations received consistent with reasonable expectations relating to the management of open space assets by the Council.

URGENT MATTERS BROUGHT FORWARD AT THE DISCRETION OF THE CHAIRMAN

The following item was brought forward, at the discretion of the Chairman, in view of the timelines involved.

218. USE OF PUBLIC OPEN SPACES

It was noted that various representations had been received in connection with the above which offered differing and sometimes divergent views (Minute No 175 refers). To provide clarity on the points raised an information note, consistent with the approach previously endorsed (titled as above), was read and endorsed as a basis for placing on the Council website so that interested persons could be signposted to it. A link would be provided, for information, to all Councillors in due course. On a related point reference was also made to arrangements for the booking of Bedford Square.

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

219. 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

220. STAFFING CONTINGENCY PROVISION

(**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 General Manager in connection with the above (Appendix 6).

RECOMMENDED THAT

- a) Following a recruitment process, the Council agree to the appointment of a Market and Events Assistant on a fixed term contract for a period of 12 months.
- b) Pursuant to the provisions of Minute No 210 and the accompanying report (see above) the Council review and endorse the allocation proposed within the staffing budget as a contingency to mitigate long term absence, maternity and/or increased short term workload etc.

221. FLEXIBLE RETIREMENT 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).

RECOMMENDED THAT in the circumstances, which represented no change to arrangements already agreed but not yet implemented, the Council accede to the request.

222. TENANCY OR STAFFING 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 Committee received an oral update in relation to:

- i) a recent insurance claim, and matters being progressed with the insurers to the Council. A further report would be made when the points on which clarification had been sought were addressed;
- ii) progress in connection with a former employment matter which had reached the post claim conciliation stage.

The Meeting closed at 9.15pm

Signed:

Dated:
CHAIRMAN