MINUTES of the Meeting of the **BUDGET & POLICY COMMITTEE** held on **TUESDAY 26th May, 2026 at 6.30pm** at the **COUNCIL CHAMBER, DRAKE ROAD, TAVISTOCK**

PRESENT

Councillor Mrs A Johnson	Mayor ex-officio
Councillor J Moody	Deputy Mayor ex-officio
Councillor S Hipsey	Immediate Past Mayor

Councillors Ms M Ewings, P Ward.
Councillor Ms S Wood (Ward Member)

IN ATTENDANCE
Town Clerk, General Manager, Office & Finance Manager.

13. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

Nominations were invited for the Election of Chairman of the Budget & Policy Committee for the 2026-2027 Civic Year.

A nomination, duly seconded, was received in respect of Councillor J Moody. There being no other candidates it was:

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

14. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

Nominations were invited for the Election of Vice-Chairman of the Budget & Policy Committee for the 2026-2027 Civic Year.

A nomination, duly seconded, was received in respect of Councillor B Smith. There being no other candidates it was:

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

15. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for Absence had been received from Councillors A Hutton and B Smith.

16. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

RESOLVED THAT the Minutes of the Meeting of the Budget & Policy Committee held on Tuesday 14th April, 2026 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman (Appendix 1).

17. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Declarations of Interest were received from Councillors Ms M Ewings, Mrs A Johnson, and J Moody in relation to Minute No 20 by virtue of also serving as West Devon Borough Councillors.

ITEMS CIRCULATED FOR RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

18. SERVICE PLANS 2026–27

The Committee considered the following Plans which respectively set out the work programme for the organisation for the upcoming civic year, together with a review of past activity:

a) **Community Services Service Plan 2026–27**

The Committee received and considered the Community Services Service Plan 2026-27 (Appendix 2).

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

i) Amendment of bullet point 3 on page 4 to delete "through daily themes" to better reflect the evolving Market offer which was agreed;

ii) Progress in connection with the conduct of the energy performance certification of Council properties (P2 refers) (complete);

iii) Slippage arising regarding P8 (Molly Owen Centre Review of use) and the benefits/drawbacks of various courses of action over different timelines. However, in view of the inability to conduct previously agreed works and a review to time a recommendation came forward (see below), which sought to afford consistency of approach regarding scope and potential for other use(rs) on the one hand, with equity over a fixed term to the current licensee on the other. The General Manager undertook to schedule the associated works aspect within 3 months.

b) **Corporate Service Plan 2026–27**

The Committee received and considered the Corporate Service Plan 2026-27 (Appendix 3), including the Organisational Risk Register.

Attention was drawn, in particular, to the organisational Risk Register, current scorings, areas where risk severity/likelihood were proposed to be changed, and related matters.

c) Annual Summary 2025-26

The Committee received and considered a report (Appendix 4) setting out 'what we said we would do 2025-2026' and associated commentary regarding progress. It included a high level summary of project and non 'business as usual' type activities over the past year arising from which with reference was made to:

- the first item (LGR/Localism), the Committee noted that commencing in October 2025 express undertakings to provide simple information (regarding how best to protect critical community interests before, during and after local government reorganisation in Devon), and to deadlines now expired had been made by officers of the Borough Council but not fulfilled. They included from the Chief Executive, the former Director of Place and Enterprise and the Assistant Director of Properties. Subsequently in March 2026, the Deputy Chief Executive (Director – Community Services, Economy and Infrastructure) had pledged to remedy same and ensure the Town Council would now receive response on the outstanding queries prior to the end of May, 2026. A reminder had been sent.

- The fourth item (Public Conveniences), an update would be provided at a later point in the meeting.

- The fifth item (Planning for the Future) an update was provided in connection with a 'save the date' reminder recently sent to all Members in connection with feedback on the recently commissioned independent review of aspects of the Neighbourhood Plan for Tavistock.

RECOMMENDED THAT:

a) The Tavistock Town Council Corporate Services Improvement Plan 2026-27 and the Community Services Plan 2026-27 both be endorsed as the basis for the delivery of Council services 2026-27 (see below regarding Risk Register);
b) The Council endorse and adopt the Tavistock Town Council Organisational Risk Register, including the amendments as proposed and listed therein;
c) The Council receive and endorse the Annual Summary;
d) Council agree to extend the TaviHelps Licence for the use of the MOC House until 31st March 2027 ((a)-iii above refers).*

*NOTE: (d) = Addendum introduced following submission to Council 9th June, but prior to confirmation on 14th July - correction to reflect recommendation omitted in error from draft minutes.

19. FINANCIAL MATTERS

The Committee considered the following:

a) **Virements**

The Committee considered the report of the Office and Finance Manager (Appendix 5) in connection with the above

RECOMMENDED THAT on an exceptional basis, Tavistock Town Council agree to carry the identified underspend amount of £24,879 over to 2026/27 through allocation by way of a virement to EMR 328 (Extraordinary Maintenance – see RCP) to support Property Maintenance in year 2026-27.

b) **Bank Mandate**

The Committee considered the report of the Office and Finance Manager (Appendix 6) in connection with the above

RECOMMENDED THAT the approach as set out in para's 2.1 and 2.2 of the Report be endorsed and the necessary amendments made

c) **Year End 2025-2026 – Preliminary Position**

The Committee considered the report of the Town Clerk (Appendix 7) in connection with the above and associated measures proposed to support financial resilience for the organisation. Also included, for information only, was a copy of the emerging draft (still subject to finalisation) unaudited financial statements for 2025-26.

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council

a) endorse and adopt the appended Rolling Capital Programme as proposed;
b) endorse and adopt the appended Schedule of Earmarked Reserves as proposed, subject to:
    - The amendment of line 334 to read (description) ' Town Hall & Courtgate Sinking Fund' in the revised sum of £20,000
    - The introduction of a new earmarked reserve titled 'Guildhall Interpretation' in the sum of £10,000.
c) note the unaudited financial statements for 2025-26.

20. COMMERCIAL CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

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

In the discussion arising reference was made, in particular, to the occasional circumstances in which such situations might occur in view of ongoing items of business between the partner bodies and overlaps in Membership. Arising from consensus on the arrangements as outlined it was:

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council

i) invite the office holders as listed in para 2.7(a);
ii) together with any other 'twin hatters' (one at present)

to agree to proceed along the lines as set out in para 3.2 in the report in the interests of probity, transparency and the public interest.

Noted That all 'twin hatters' were in attendance and endorsed the approach.

The Committee further considered the position arising in the event that an issue of such a type arose which would otherwise normally be subject to consultation with the Mayor and Deputy Mayor, and how best to address same - arising from which, it was:

RECOMMENDED THAT in such circumstances the consultation take place instead with the most recent former Mayors who did not also serve on West Devon Borough Council, namely Councillors S Hipsey and P Ward, with Councillor A Hutton the designated reserve.

21. RENTERS RIGHTS ACT

The Committee considered the report of the Assistant to the Town Clerk in connection with the above (Appendix 9) which set out the requirements of, and actions taken in connection with, the foregoing legislation.

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council note and endorse the current position and associated course of action as set out in the Report.

ITEMS CIRCULATED FOR INFORMATION ONLY

22. LOCAL GOVERNMENT PAY AWARD 2026-27

It was reported, for information, that agreement had not been reached with the unions on the national pay award offer from the Employer side of 3.3%. Unison was proposing selective/targeted industrial action.

The Committee noted that, alongside the pay offer, the Employer side had indicated it would review the National Joint Council (NJC) pay spine in light of the degrading effect of ongoing changes to minimum wage legislation. Arising therefrom a Member expressed the view, to which colleagues present acceded, that the impacts of such historic changes may have resulted in a deterioration of the relationship as between the Councils own Job Evaluation Scheme on the one hand, and the associated pay and grading structure on the other. Most likely with particular regard to certain categories of posts and associated pay (% terms) differentials.

It was also noted that, when benchmarked for pay against comparable authorities, the Council was often not well placed. In so doing it was acknowledged that change, if it occurred, would appropriately need to follow completion of the national initiative (estimated 2027), and require a thoroughgoing review of the size of the organisational JE scheme as well as (for any change to be able to take effect) the available organisational budget envelope.

As an initial step at the request of the Committee the Town Clerk undertook to arrange comparative data indicating the pay differentials as applying to posts when the current operating structure was introduced to those applying currently to enable:

- informed discussion on any adjustments as might be equitable in all the circumstances;
- consideration of the future budget envelope in the Autumn budget setting round.

URGENT MATTERS BROUGHT FORWARD AT THE DISCRETION OF THE CHAIRMAN

23. HMRC MILEAGE RATE

In view of the timing of a recent Government announcement, the Committee was advised that the HMRC mileage rate had recently increased to 55p per mile (backdated to 1st April). Typically all Council policies stated that the rate set by Inland Revenue be used. However, in the interests of certainty and consistency it was:

RECOMMENDED THAT if/as applicable references to mileage in Tavistock Town Council policies refer to 'the applicable HMRC mileage rate' (or equivalent wording – currently in the sum of 55p per mile) so as to maintain currency with present and future changes that might arise.

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

24. 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

25. TOWN SURVEILLANCE

(**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 Briefing Note of the Town Clerk (Appendix 10) in respect of the above. In the ensuing discussion reference was variously made to factors including, but not limited to, matters appertaining to the available evidence base, capacity, cost, partner roles/responsibilities and potential for wider partner involvement as well as related matters. Accordingly it was common ground that consideration of such should be plan based and evidence led, criteria which at the present time were not met.

RECOMMENDED THAT Tavistock Town Council place the matter in abeyance pending:

a) A material change in the evidence base, including to reflect the gaps in that provided to the Council to date;
b) confirmation from the potential other partners - Police and Crime Commissioner, West Devon Borough Council, Devon County Council, Devon and Cornwall Police and Tavistock Business Improvement District as to the extent of material (as opposed to token) funding/resources they would be prepared to make available so as to assist to substantially fund a viable future scheme.
c) Pursuant to (a)-(b) above - more detailed and more compelling evidence of need to justify the request.

26. 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 Committee received and considered the following oral updates: provided:-

a) <u>Guildhall Public Conveniences</u>

Matters were ongoing as between the respective legal teams. When more developed, lease and service level agreement, determination would be brought back to eligible (Minute No 20 refers) Members of the Council.

b) <u>Tavistock Museum Lease</u>
The Committee welcomed agreement with the Museum on a proportion of legal fees being met by the partner body.

c) <u>Land at Sandy Park</u>
There was no further update available.

d) <u>Delinquent Tenant - Insolvency Proceedings</u>
Receipt of further correspondence from the Trustee in Insolvency was reported.

e) <u>Meadowlands</u>
The Committee was advised of a reported failure by the Head Tenant to comply with its obligations under the terms of its lease with the Council. Following repeated requests for information some had now been provided by the other parties legal team, but enquiries were still ongoing to properly assess the situation. When more information became available a report would be made to eligible (Minute No 20 refers if/as necessary) Members of the Council for determination.

The Meeting closed at 7.51pm

Signed:

Dated:
CHAIRMAN