AGENDA ITEM NO 6

MINUTES of the Meeting of the **BUDGET & POLICY COMMITTEE** held on **TUESDAY 20th OCTOBER, 2026 at 6.30pm** at the **COUNCIL CHAMBER, DRAKE ROAD, TAVISTOCK**

PRESENT

Councillor B Smith **Vice Chairman (in the Chair)**

Councillor Mrs A Johnson **Mayor (ex-officio)**

Councillors Ms M Ewings, A Hutton.

IN ATTENDANCE

Town Clerk, Office and Finance Manager.

162. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors S Hipsey, J Moody and P Ward.

163. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

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

164. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made at this point in the Meeting.

ITEMS CIRCULATED FOR RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

165. LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION IN DEVON & RELATED MATTERS

There were no new developments to report.

166. TAVISTOCK TOWN COUNCIL – COMPLAINTS POLICY

The Committee considered the report of the Town Clerk in respect of the above (Appendix 2 refers – note an updated copy was circulated to the meeting (Appendix 3 refers)).

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

- the period of time in which to raise a complaint. The consensus being that a lesser period than the proposed 4 months be applied in recognition of the importance attached to timely/effective intervention and investigation, also the further safeguard included relating to when a complainant first became aware of a matter.
- the importance of consistency and proportionality in complaint processes. More particularly regarding the number of times an

appeal/complaint should be heard to reflect both the rules of natural justice and proportionality. It was the consensus that typically a complaint, having been determined at first instance, should be subject to a right of appeal should the complainant be dissatisfied.

- The relationship between the Complaints Policy and Market Rules and Regulations was acknowledged. In that particular case it was considered that, notwithstanding the arrangements set out in the Rules and Regulations, a final right of Appeal lay with a Member Panel. Furthermore the (present) potential for multiple appeals was inconsistent with due process, and should be removed.

RECOMMENDED THAT the Council agree the amendments to the Complaints Procedure of the Town Council as set out (Appendix 3 refers) subject to:

a) the time period to make a complaint being reduced from 4 months to 5 weeks;
b) the deletion of paragraph 11 in the interests of clarity.

167. DEVON & TORBAY COMBINED AUTHORITY

The Committee discussed the value of all Members of the Council being afforded the opportunity to express a view on this matter as the closing date for consultation responses fell prior to the next meeting of Council.

There was general consensus that Plymouth City Council joining the foregoing Combined Authority represented a positive step which it was understood could 'unlock' the potential for a Mayoral Strategic Authority for Devon, and consequential powers and resources for the County.

There was however concern that, as presently constituted, voting rights for Districts were minimal and potentially unfair, whilst unitary authority rights were disproportionate to the populations served.

It was therefore the consensus that the proposal for an extended Combined Authority for Devon, Torbay and Plymouth be supported subject to the inclusion of equitable representation for each District Authority, and with a view to consideration of a Strategic Mayoral Authority to access additional power, resources and influence for the benefit of Devon's residents.

168. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC
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

169. FAIR PAY AND GRADING

(**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 4). Attention was drawn, in particular, to the origins of the report (Minute No 22 refers), national policy impacts, degradation/diminution of local pay multiplier/differentials, prospective areas of greatest impact, scheduled national review of the NJC 'pay spine', recruitment/ retention, equality/fairness in employment practice, available options, review and associated matters.

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

a) the challenges posed, on both an organisational and sectoral basis, by dynamic policy changes initiated by Government and/or the Employers nationally in recent years;
b) the relationship between a job evaluation scheme (measuring size/scope of roles articulated in a numeric score and mapped one to another), with a pay and grading structure which, after benchmarking and comparison, then mapped posts to salary ranges consistent with overall budget;
c) the importance attached to providing fair reward for work, with due regard to responsibility differentials, comparator analysis/ benchmarking etc, alongside fitness for purpose of the funding envelope;
d) a current review by the National Association of Local Councils and Society of Local Council Clerks of the sector Job Evaluation Scheme/pay and grading structure, together with role benchmarking, which would be incorporated in the review of Town Council arrangements, subject to timings;
e) potential consequential cost implications. It was noted this was difficult to assess prior to an independent report from a suitably qualified provider to establish whether issues mooted were either anecdotal, or material. Full restoration of prior pay multiples was not proposed (which might in any event itself be inconsistent with good practice, also in recognition that national policy had substantially benefitted some categories of post to thereby cause the potential anomalies elsewhere). Rather the work was to establish if, and if so where and to what extent, degradation had occurred, associated extent and implications alongside an overdue periodic JE review. That afforded the Council, opportunity to consider appropriate next steps. For budgeting purposes an initial

estimate for an additional contingency approximating to £50,000 (or iro 4% of the staffing budget) was mooted.

f) The importance attached by the Committee to completing the work within the life of this Council, acknowledging the importance attached to continuity and sustainable arrangements for recruitment and retention;
g) South West Councils represented a specialist sector provider (the only provider owned and operated by local authorities for local authorities), which provided JE services to the Council. Also as/if proposals came forward the role of an independent provider vis a vis Council officers.
h) Current pay grades could be effecting recruitment and retention, The Council would like to be seen as a fair employer. Reflecting on Goose

RECOMMENDED THAT acknowledging the importance of fairness in the operation of the organisational Job Evaluation and Pay and Grading arrangements, the Council commission South West Councils (as a proprietary item/specialist provider) to undertake a full review of the organisational JE/associated Pay and Grading arrangements including comparator benchmarking/pay multiples, spine length, budget envelope and other relevant factors.

Noted That Councillor Ms M Ewings declared a personal non prejudicial interest by virtue of service on the South West Councils Board.

170. PROPERTY SERVICES

(CONFIDENTIAL by virtue of relating to legal and/or commercial matters, staffing and/or the financial or business affairs of a person or persons other than the Council).

The Committee considered the Report of the Town Clerk in connection with the above (Appendix 5).

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

a) Current arrangements and contracted service levels;
b) The 'split' between activities undertaken variously by external providers - surveyors and solicitors, and internal departments;
c) Extant trends – tending toward increased legislative/regulatory burden, more challenging high street conditions, consequential impacts on lease configuration, and other landlord tenant arrangements indicating increasing and more widely ranging workflows;
d) The qualifications/responsibilities attaching to/required of service providers and staff;

e) The need for an internal 'pre market test' exercise to review current arrangements internally and then report back regarding issues and options to properly inform any service specification and anticipated associated timeframes.

RECOMMENDED THAT the Council endorse the principle of Market testing property management services for the Council including:

a) as a minimum, services it already receives (ie demand led/reactive);
b) in addition the conduct by its chosen provider of annual property inspections (ie scheduled) of all its let properties to monitor covenant compliance and report on any material condition issues;
c) exploring any areas of 'added value' that can be provided; and:
d) a further report be brought to the Committee setting out the draft specification and anticipated budget envelope.

Noted that to assist with the above, the Committee and Council further endorse as a necessary preliminary step, an internal review of how within the organisation property management takes place, and associated recommendations for improvement.

171. TOWN HALL AND EVENTS STAFFING ARRANGEMENTS

(CONFIDENTIAL by virtue of relating to legal and/or commercial matters, staffing and/or the financial or business affairs of a person or persons other than the Council).

The Committee considered the Report of the General Manager in connection with the above (Appendix 6).

RECOMMENDED THAT the Council

i) agree the recruitment process to appoint a temporary Market and Events Assistant on the basis of a 12 month fixed term contract to cover temporary flexible working arrangements;
ii) agree that a further report be brought before the Committee and Council appertaining to suggested next steps to be submitted in June, 2027, or earlier if circumstances demanded, in place of the prior decision.

Noted That currently it was anticipated this could be funded in 2026-27 by an anticipated underspend on the salary Budget.

The Meeting closed at 7.56pm

Signed:
Dated:

CHAIRMAN