AGENDA ITEM No 13

TAVISTOCK TOWN COUNCIL
BUDGET & POLICY COMMITTEE
2nd SEPTEMBER 2025

TAVISTOCK TOWN COUNCIL
COMMUNITY ECONOMIC PLAN

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To consider whether to accept an offer from South Hams/West Devon (SH/WD) Councils to facilitate the production of a Community Economic Plan (CEP) for Tavistock.

2. CORPORATE POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

The Tavistock Town Council Strategic Plan sets out the strategic framework and key organisational goals and objectives which provide the basis for delivery of Council services over the plan period. In this case several of the Plan objectives are potentially engaged, but most especially the Vision itself, together with Ec1 (Economic Development) -2 (Working Together).

3. LEGAL AND RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

There is no legal obligation for the Council to put in place a Community Economic Plan, or associated arrangements. However, clearly articulating goals and objectives to support the local economy can assist to afford clarity of purpose and potentially evidence/support future initiatives. There is of course the risk that a poorly prepared or inadequately supported (either prior to, or after adoption) economic plan leads to unrealistic/conflicting expectations and/or poor resource allocation.

4. RESOURCE ISSUES

SH/WD Councils have confirmed that the activities associated with preparation – administration, consultation, communication, facilitation, publication etc of a CEP would appropriately be met by the Principal Authority. This is particularly helpful as it avoids placing the Town Council in a position of potential conflicted interest both as a larger landowner and landlord in the Town. On adoption the CEP would then become adopted/ 'owned' by the Town Council. The resource issues for the Town Council prior to that stage are consequently primarily associated with attendance at/representative input to meetings, events

and activities. Thereafter resource implications would form part of the annual service planning process.

5. ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

There are no issues arising directly in connection with this report beyond such themes as may be considered appropriate for individual reference as arise. However, where projects, workstreams or initiatives are agreed in due course, the relevant reports/delivery framework will address these in connection with sustainability/the environment.

6. COMMUNICATIONS ISSUES

A CEP provides opportunity to engage stakeholders and the community (business stakeholders most especially) in identifying, developing and (where possible in due course) delivering positive economic outputs for the Town - a pathway to improved economic resilience.
Communications in the development stage would be led by SH/WD Officers who have reviewed and are in agreement with the content of this report.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee and Council:

a) Endorse in principle the approach as set out in this report, with particular regard to the criteria set out in para 1.6;
b) If considered necessary/appropriate, a presentation to an informal Meeting of the Committee (at which all Councilors are invited to attend with representatives of the BID Co) be arranged to receive a presentation from representatives of the SH/WD Economic Development Team.

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 An approach has been received from the Officers of SH/WD Councils to offer support for the development of a Community Economic Plan for the Town. This is an initiative already rolled out to Towns in the South Hams Area of whom Ivybridge has completed: The Ivybridge Community Economic Plan 2025 - 2030

1.2 In March this year the WDBC Hub Committee considered and adopted a WD Delivery Plan including an item enabling a comparable approach in West Devon; https://democracy.swdevon.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=221&MId=2002&Ver=4

including reference to:

'Work with Town Councils and partners to develop town plans to help shape the economy of our places…

Support each of our main Towns to develop Economic Plans should they wish to do so'

1.3 Following enquiries there does not appear to be an initiation or concept report to either principal Authority, ie. setting out the scope of the initiative, cost/benefit analysis and/or goals in the normal manner.

1.4 In those circumstances the approach set out in this document necessarily therefore reflects:

a) The views of the author following discussions with the Economic Development Team of SH/WD and the BID Manager;
b) The necessary emphasis that needs to be placed upon a CEP: ie clearly
    i. addressing and articulating economic needs and benefits for the Town; and
    ii. providing an evidential base for the identification and prioritisation of future projects and programmes which complement and support the local economy.

1.5 For clarity a CEP is of course not a Neighbourhood Development Plan (which addresses the built environment), nor a Community Plan, notwithstanding that however it should be complementary to both. For further reading, and whilst not addressing a CEP directly (and therefore not to be wholly relied on in this context), some of the anticipated principles and issues can likely be seen in the following https://cles.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/ced_report_2017.pdf

1.6 The approach which has therefore been scoped in principle with SH/WD, should the Council wish to proceed, is in outline terms, as follows:

i) SH/WD will provide administrative and other resource and support for the development and delivery (to adoption stage) of a CEP for Tavistock, in particular working closely with the Town Council and the BID Co; (NOTE for an example of a (indicative only) project timeline/critical path please see the appended Kingsbridge presentation (Appendix 1));

ii) Governance arrangements and terms of reference to be agreed;

iii) Town Council representation to be agreed but constituting Member and Officer cohorts;

iv) The primary focus of the CEP to be linked to economic outputs/outcomes. In order to provide both rigour, and maximise the chances of future impact, these will be linked to a preparatory review/audit by SH/WD of the key criteria for recent town centre support schemes such as UK Shared Prosperity, Levelling Up, Rural England Prosperity Fund, NLHF etc;

v) So as not to limit the scope of the consultation/ engagement activities, if/where community outputs/outcomes incidentally arise (ie non-economic or substantially non-economic), these will be separately treated to economic outputs/outcomes, both so as not to be lost on the one hand, whilst not being conflated with the primary economic purpose of the Plan on the other. However, the main focus of activity will be on economic aspects (see also (iv) above);

vi) Commencement to be in the Autumn of 2025;

vii) If the Committee and Council are minded to support this initiative then if it is the will of it and Council, either at the next meeting, or a Special informal Meeting to be convened beforehand, a SH/WD Officer could be invited to attend, present and answer any questions.

2. CONCLUSION

2.1 Notwithstanding the absence of a principal authority 'foundation document' setting out the case for action as previously noted, your Officers consider this proposal worthy of support in principle on the basis set out. Strains on the local economy have been evident for some time now and competition for scarce resources to support local economies has increased. Those that are best prepared, most co-

ordinated and better placed to move at pace are likely to maximise their opportunity for success.

2.2 Through a robust, disciplined and evidence led approach a CEP has the potential, amongst others, to:

- Link both with existing groups (eg BID Co/Chamber), initiatives (eg Town Marketing initiative), public/private partners and wider community;
- Develop and grow understanding with the Principal Council tier;
- Review and test the existing evidence base for the local economy, identify strengths weaknesses, opportunities and threats (and gaps);
- Then following consultation and collaborative investigation provide a new and current evidenced baseline (ie 'where we are');
- Enable prioritisation of potential issues, projects and resource allocation (ie 'where we want to go');
- Contribute to project/programme development over various timeframes (ie 'how we can get there');
- Be designed so as to meet current/anticipated funder requirements;
- Identify and explore funding opportunities;
- Support the BID Co in seeking a further term.

2.3 Not least this has value as the extent to which any new unitary authority will/will not be in a position to provide resources of this type is necessarily unknown, alongside affording the opportunity to begin to identify, select & prioritise economic initiatives beneficial to the Town.

2.4 The instructions of the Committee and Council are sought.

CARL HEARN
TOWN CLERK
TAVISTOCK TOWN COUNCIL
AUGUST, 2025