

MINUTES of the Meeting of the **TAVISTOCK TOWN COUNCIL** held on **TUESDAY 22nd NOVEMBER, 2022 at 5.30pm** at **THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, TOWN COUNCIL OFFICES, DRAKE ROAD, TAVISTOCK**

PRESENT Councillor P Ward (Mayor)

Councillors Ms M Ewings, A Fey, A Hutton, Mrs A Johnson, J Moody, P Peers, B Smith, H Smith, P Squire, A Venning, P Williamson*.

IN ATTENDANCE Town Clerk, General Manager, Assistant to the Town Clerk.

Prior to the commencement of the Meeting there were a few moments of Quiet Reflection led by the Reverend Christopher Brown of Tavistock Methodist Church.

COMMENCEMENT OF MEETING

275. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Ms L Crawford, A Lewis and Mrs U Mann, and for late arrival by Councillor P Williamson*.

276. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following Declarations of Interest were made;

- Councillors A Hutton and B Smith in respect of Budget & Policy Minute No. 261 by virtue of being members of Tavistock Lions Club; and
- Councillor Mrs A Johnson, also in respect of the same Minute by virtue of a close family association with the current Tavistock Lions Club.

277. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

RESOLVED THAT the Minutes of the Meeting of Tavistock Town Council held on Tuesday 18th October, 2022 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman (Appendix 1).

278. PUBLIC REPRESENTATIONS AND QUESTIONS

No public representations or questions had been received prior to the Meeting.

ITEMS REQUIRING A DECISION

279. GENERAL FINANCE

The Council considered the following: -

a) Schedule of Payments

The Council received and considered copies of the monthly accounts as at 31st October, 2022 (Appendix 2) as listed on the Council's website;

b) Budget Monitoring Report

The Council received and considered a copy of the Budget Monitoring Report (Appendix 3) as at 31st October, 2022;

c) External Audit Report

The Council welcomed the report of the External Auditor which had 'raised no matters of concern' for its Annual Return for the 2021-2022 financial year.

280. BUDGET & POLICY COMMITTEE

The Council considered the Minutes of the Meeting of the Budget & Policy Committee (Appendix 4) held on Tuesday 8th November, 2022, the recommendations being reported by rote.

During the ensuing discussion in respect of Minute Nos 259 (Budget) and 260 (Review of potential start times for Committee/Council Meetings), reference was made variously to:

- The timetable for setting of the Budget and Precept, together with the:
 - extent of information underpinning the proposed approach;
 - financial constraints necessarily appertaining to ability to deliver the Rolling Capital Programme (ie only when all necessary funds were secured);
 - short-term arrangements for funding of same.
- With regard to Meeting commencement times reference to:
 - the background to current meeting start times;
 - two Members of Council who had recently resigned;
 - the importance attached to attracting a representative range of Councillors, including younger Councillors, at

- the forthcoming Election in May 2023 and the extent to which amending start times might/might not assist;
- the implications of different start times for both Members, officers and the public, including the potential impact of time off in lieu and consequential potential effects on staffing levels;
 - the benefits and drawbacks of historic meeting arrangements;
 - that those start times under review related solely to meetings of Council and Standing Committees;
 - that the current start time of 5.30pm had proved difficult for some Councillors;
 - that each individual's circumstances were different, so any chosen start time would not be universally ideal;
 - that any final decision on start times of Meetings would be made by the new Council at the next Annual Meeting of Council, on 16th May, 2023.

RESOLVED THAT subject to consideration of Minute No. 264 being deferred to a later point in the Meeting, in view of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, the recommendations included in the foregoing report of the Committee (Minute Nos. 256 - 263) be approved and adopted.

Noted That:

- Councillor P Williamson* arrived at the Meeting during consideration of the above;
- Councillors A Hutton, B Smith and Mrs A Johnson reiterated the interest declared in connection with Minute No 261.

281. DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT & LICENSING COMMITTEE

The Council considered the following: -

- i) Development Management & Licensing Committee – Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday 1st November, 2022 (Appendix 5).

RESOLVED THAT the recommendations included in the foregoing report of the Committee be approved and adopted.

Noted That – reference was made to the current vacancies on the Neighbourhood Development Plan Steering Group. Arising therefrom the Council was reminded that the next meeting of the

Steering Group would be on Wednesday 7th December, 2022 at 6.30pm in The Robing Room and any Members who might be interested in joining the Group were invited to attend.

282. ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

The Council received and considered the Briefing Note of the Town Clerk (Appendix 6), which outlined the options available to the Council following recent Councillor resignations.

Reference was made to;

- the sadness and disappointment felt following the resignations of Councillors James Ellis and Trudy Eperon, with thanks being extended for their contribution to the Council and the community, during their tenure;
- that the different perspective younger Councillors brought would be missed, together with links to different sections of the community;
- that the applicable legislation allowed for the appointment of a Vice Chairman (Deputy Mayor), but the choice whether to do so fell to the Council;
- that there was no legal requirement to fill casual vacancies arising within six months of an Election;
- whether it would/would not be preferable to appoint a Deputy Mayor for the remainder of this Council;

RESOLVED THAT

- a) as it was now less than 6 months to an Election and the Council had (until the resignations) a full complement of Members no co-options now be undertaken this civic year unless the number of casual vacancies on the Council should come to exceed 25%;
- b) For the reasons outlined in the report nominations be sought for the position of Deputy Mayor at the next Meeting of the Council.

Noted That –

- Members wishing to consider standing as Deputy Mayor at the next Meeting of Council (scheduled for 3rd January, 2023), could appropriately advise the Mayor or Town Clerk of their intentions beforehand. It being noted it would be preferable, in the interests of continuity, for any potential candidate to also be intending to stand for re-election at the 2023 elections.

- A Member drew attention to upcoming changes in identity requirements in connection with voting at elections.

ITEMS CIRCULATED FOR INFORMATION ONLY

283. CORNWALL & WEST DEVON MINING LANDSCAPE WORLD HERITAGE SITE AWARDS

The Council was informed that The Guildhall project had been awarded the '2022 World Heritage Site Award for the Best Conservation of an Historic Building' at the recent Cornwall & West Devon Mining Landscape World Heritage Site Awards ceremony.

Congratulations were extended to the Architects, Officers and staff, Townscape Heritage Trust Board and RM Builders for their contributions to this project.

It was noted that this project had been the only Devon-based project to receive an award at the event.

284. SERVICE REPORTS

The Council received, for information, the reports of the General Manager, Pannier Market, Works Department and Town Hall & Butchers' Hall (Appendices 7-10 refer).

Reference was made to:

General Manager's Report:- representations which had been made by members of the public in respect of anticipated works being undertaken on Whitchurch Down, at Middlemoor including:

- should any area of Town Council-owned land be affected any development would need to accord with proper practices and respect both landowner rights and the wider planning framework;
- West Devon Borough Council and the Dartmoor National Park Authority were understood to be aware of the alleged potential works;
- A Member, who also sat on West Devon Borough Council, undertook to ensure that the Borough Councillor covering that area was made aware of this situation.

Pannier Market Report; - Clarification was provided on the Coach Drivers' Incentive Scheme.

Works Department Report:- Councillor Mrs A Johnson Declared an Interest in this Report by virtue of being involved with the arrangements for the upcoming Christmas Tree Festival.

285. FINANCE AND OTHER MATTERS

The Council received, for information, the following: -

- a) Report of the Assistant to the Town Clerk (Appendix 11);
- b) Report of West Devon Borough Councillor, Ms M Ewings (Appendix 12);
- c) Report of Devon County Councillor, Mrs D Sellis (Appendix 13)
Noted That: concern was raised that Devon County Council was once more considering the imposition of on-street parking charges in Tavistock and the adverse impact this might have on trading volumes, footfall, town centre vitality/sustainability and community cohesion at a time of intense financial pressure on households and businesses including a view that:
 - if this did proceed (which it should not) that the first hour of parking should be free of charge; and
 - that the Tavistock BID Company should be (alongside the Town Council) fully consulted by Devon County Council.
- d) Updates
 - i) From representatives serving on outside bodies – no feedback brought forward;
 - ii) From Members who had attended training sessions – no feedback brought forward.

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

286. 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 REQUIRING A DECISION

287. BUDGET & POLICY COMMITTEE (CONT'D)

(**CONFIDENTIAL** by virtue of relating to legal and/or commercial

matters, staffing and/or the financial or business affairs of person or persons other than the Council).

The Council received and considered Minute No. 264 of the Meeting of the Budget & Policy Committee (Appendix 4 refers) held on Tuesday 8th November, 2022.

The Council received and endorsed an oral update advising of progress, in consultation with senior Members, being conducted in accordance with legal advice and the prior instructions of the Council in respect of this ongoing issue. Further reports would be made as new instructions became necessary.

288. PROPERTY LEGAL & FINANCE MATTERS

(**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).

i) Debtors

The Council considered and noted the list (Appendix 14) of all those with debts to the Council dating from earlier than the last Quarter Day.

Noted That – The Assistant to the Town Clerk was commended for work in keeping debts to the Council at a minimum, especially in view of the trading and financial difficulties some tenants had experienced during the pandemic.

CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS CIRCULATED FOR INFORMATION ONLY

289. PROPERTY LEGAL & FINANCE MATTERS

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The Town Clerk provided an oral update on the following;

- a) Insurance – the Council had recently received notification of an alleged incident which was outlined, and which had been passed to the Council's Insurers.
- b) Water Ingress – there had been a water ingress issue in one of the Council's commercial properties on the previous weekend,

remedial action had been undertaken and responsibilities were currently being investigated;

- c) Insurance visit – there would be a property visit on Friday 25th November 2022, to review practices and processes being undertaken in a selection of the Council’s commercial properties.

The Press and Public were re-admitted to the Meeting.

The Meeting closed at 6.30pm.

Signed:

Dated:

CHAIRMAN