

# NON-CONFIDENTIAL



## **Borough of Tamworth**

19 February 2018

Dear Councillor

You are hereby summoned to attend a **meeting of the Council of this Borough** to be held on **TUESDAY, 27TH FEBRUARY, 2018** at 6.00 pm in the **COUNCIL CHAMBER - MARMION HOUSE**, for the transaction of the following business:-

### **AGENDA**

#### **NON CONFIDENTIAL**

- 1 Apologies for Absence**
- 2 To receive the Minutes of the previous meeting** (Pages 1 - 18)
- 3 Declarations of Interest**

*To receive any declarations of Members' interests (pecuniary and non-pecuniary) in any matters which are to be considered at this meeting.*

*When Members are declaring a pecuniary or non-pecuniary interest in respect of which they have dispensation, they should specify the nature of such interest. Members should leave the room if they have a pecuniary or non-pecuniary interest in respect of which they do not have a dispensation.*

- 4 To receive any announcements from the Mayor, Leader, Members of the Cabinet or the Chief Executive**
- 5 Question Time:**
  - (i) To answer questions from members of the public pursuant to Procedure Rule No. 10.
  - (ii) To answer questions from members of the Council pursuant to Procedure Rule No. 11

**6 Corporate Vision, Priorities Plan, Budget & Medium Term Financial Strategy  
2018/19 (To Follow)**

*(Report of the Leader of the Council)*

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of stylized initials and a long horizontal line extending to the right.

**CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER**

*People who have a disability and who would like to attend the meeting should contact Democratic Services on 01827 709264 or e-mail [committees@tamworth.gov.uk](mailto:committees@tamworth.gov.uk) preferably 24 hours prior to the meeting. We can then endeavour to ensure that any particular requirements you may have are catered for.*

Marmion House  
Lichfield Street  
Tamworth



## **MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD ON 12th DECEMBER 2017**

**PRESENT:** Councillor J Chesworth (Chair), Councillors R Bilcliff, A Bishop, T Clements, D Cook, S Doyle, J Faulkner, R Ford, M Gant, S Goodall, M Greatorex, A James, R Kingstone, A Lunn, K Norchi, M Oates, S People, Dr S People, T People, R Pritchard, R Rogers, P Standen, M Summers and M Thurgood

The following officers were present: Andrew Barratt (Chief Operating Officer), Anica Goodwin (Head of Paid Service), John Wheatley (Executive Director Corporate Services), Jane Hackett (Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer), Stefan Garner (Director of Finance) and Janine Bryant (Scrutiny and Corporate Support Officer)

### **28 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors S Claymore, C Cooke, J Goodall, T Madge, J Oates and P Thurgood.

### **29 TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> September 2017 were approved and signed as a correct record.

*(Moved by Councillor D Cook and seconded by Councillor Dr S People)*

### **30 TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY COUNCIL HELD ON 12TH SEPTEMBER 2017**

The minutes of the Extraordinary Council meeting held on 12th September 2017 were approved and signed as a correct record.

*(Moved by Councillor D Cook and seconded by Councillor Dr S People)*

**31 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no Declarations of Interest.

**32 TO RECEIVE ANY ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE MAYOR, LEADER, MEMBERS OF THE CABINET OR THE CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER**

The following announcements were made:-

Councillor D Cook:-

Apologies for not making this announcement on 12<sup>th</sup> September, Councillor M Gant will replace Councillor J Chesworth on the Audit and Governance Committee.

Councillor Dr S Peaple:-

Announce that Councillor S Peaple will take up the place of the late Councillor Seekings on the Licensing Committee and replace Councillor Dr S Peaple on the Infrastructure, Safety and Growth Scrutiny Committee.

Chief Operating Officer, Andrew Barratt:-

At a special meeting of the Tamworth Borough Council held on Tuesday 12th September 2017, it was resolved that, pursuant to section 249(5) of the Local Government Act 1972 this Council do hereby confer the Honorary Alderman of the Borough Posthumously upon Mr Peter Seekings, in recognition of his eminent services to Tamworth, whilst he was a member of Tamworth Borough Council.

The Mayor called upon the Leader of the Council, Councillor D Cook and the Leader of the Opposition, Councillor Dr S Peaple to speak prior to the official presentation.

Councillor D Cook – “All I can really do Mr Mayor is reiterate the words that I used on the 12<sup>th</sup> September, words that I have continued to use since. Councillor Peter Seekings was a giant of Tamworth politics. As I joked about on 12<sup>th</sup> September Councillor Seekings was a long standing Leader of this Council as I have now been, we both are Yorkshiremen, we used to regularly joke about two Yorkshiremen that came South to conquer the World. We might have had opposite political opinions but we were Yorkshiremen through and through. The best way that I could possibly describe Peter from my own experience was a worth friend, a worth foe. He was always good in the pub, after a meeting, for a pint moving away from politics to talk about the things that genuinely mattered in life and while we did have some political differences I believe we both came to the same place, we both wanted the best for the people of Tamworth. As I am fundamentally aware no matter where Peter’s life took him, he gave back to his local community, he was a civic dignitary wherever he was Peter was a well-

respected member of this chamber who will be fondly remembered by the people of Tamworth.”

Councillor Dr S Peale – “Can I first of all say thank you again to Councillor Cook. On the night that the presentation took place it was convention that we don’t have the person or recipient of the award or relatives present, so you weren’t able to hear that said at the time and I wanted you to hear it now before I spoke. On that night what was so nice was that virtually every member of the Council on both sides spoke from the heart, Councillor Lunn entertained us on that sad occasion but none the less entertained us, with his stories of standing with Peter on the terraces of Tamworth, of variation of language that might have applied compared to the council chamber and their genuine analysis which equally did apply to the council chamber, but on a different topic and it brought a smile to many that night as it was Peter. Peter that we knew, Peter who would talk to us about things that were not right and should be sorted out and we had the benefit of that, we also had the benefit of Councillor Faulkner speaking from the heart as a man who had Peter as a very close friend as well as political colleague and somebody who therefore desperately missed and still misses the presence that we had in Peter. We have got a great whole to fill with the loss of Peter. Peter and I discussed many things in politics, we didn’t always agree as you would expect well prepared politicians to find differences at times, but one of the things that I could say to this chamber was he was a party man, he never let the Labour Party down and he would never have given you the satisfaction of seeing any disagreement on this bench, because he believed fervidly for the Labour Party to offer the best option for the people of Tamworth and the people of the Country. We respect that and what was so nice, on that night was that respect came from the whole chamber, the words that were individual and reflected different relationships with Peter but which none the less demonstrated how much we will miss somebody of such titanic competence, focus, belief and commitment to the community. He really believed that what you could do for your community you should do and if you could go further, try and go further. But what was also missed was for those of us like myself, Patrick and others who shared his faith, we saw him at church, we saw him at prayer, we saw him with his family or talking about his family and it was probably fair to say to you, if you didn’t know already and I think it was mentioned a lot at the funerals, that your parents were always talking about you or your children or whatever you were doing. More than one group meeting was entertained to alternative prospective gained from his sons involvement in local government and never without a lesson for the rest of us to take forward into the chamber. But all the time he knew that if there was one thing that meant more to him than politics it was his family through his faith and Peter and Violet were just wonderful people they gave their lives to each other in a way that was an example and whilst it was awful for you to lose them both in such rapidity one could not image one of them without the other and all I can say to you is we extend our condolences once again to you, but we also honour him, his commitment and Violet because all of us who are in relationships know you can’t give that much to your community unless the other person in the house is prepared to stand behind you and do it with you all be it without the fame and the glory. So to both of them whilst this is in Peter’s name you know, I know that Violet helped him all the way to take him to that honour.”

The Mayor invited Peter's children Annemarie, Andrew, John, Mark, Michelle and her husband Ian forward to collect the award.

Councillor Dr S Peaple:-

Welcome Councillor Bishop to her first meeting and congratulations on her wedding since the last meeting.

Welcome Councillor S Peaple to her first meeting.

### 33 QUESTION TIME:

#### QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL NO. 1

**Under Procedure Rule No 11, Councillor Bishop will ask the Portfolio Holder for Housing Services, Councillor M Thurgood, the following question:-**

"How as a Council are we ensuring that our rents are being paid, to both ourselves and private landlords, by the people who are receiving housing benefit and being paid through the new universal credit benefit?"

**Councillor M Thurgood gave the following reply:-**

Thank you Mr Mayor. And thank you to Cllr Bishop for your question.

As you will be aware from the briefing note supplied to all Councillors by the Leader of the Council on 29<sup>th</sup> November, which I note was sent after our question had been submitted, Tamworth Borough Council has been working hard to ensure that we are as prepared as we can be for the changes surrounding Universal Credit. This includes not only ensuring that we are clear of the changes ourselves and how this may impact us on things such as rent collection, but also working with our partners and service users.

There are a number of schemes available to support people, depending on their personal needs. These include:

- Referrals for the most vulnerable customers to Personal Budgeting Support, which offers money advice and help on the prioritisation their bills, including their rent or mortgage payments.
- Tamworth Borough Council and Private Sector Landlords can apply for Managed Payments, which means payment of Universal Credit can be paid directly to the landlord. There is of course a strict criteria for this as ultimately Universal Credit is about giving people control of their money and getting used to a monthly income. Anyone who was having their Housing Benefit paid directly to the Landlord will continue to have their Universal Credit paid to them, thus reducing defaults.

- Discretionary Housing Payments will also be considered for those most in need. These will be considered as part of a Personal Budget Support meeting and can also be applied for via our website and are available to both Private Sector and Social Sector tenants in receipt of either Housing Benefit or Universal Credit with the Housing element included. This payment gives the claimant additional financial support so that they can meet a rent shortfall or other housing costs.
- As stated in the members bulletin, we are working with other agencies including Tamworth Job Centre who has confirmed that they have been engaging with private landlords by offering support and education in understanding what Universal Credit is and the impact it may have on their tenants. The Job Centre is also working with customers to encourage, educate and ensure that when they go onto UC that they are aware how important it is to verify their claims.
- Referrals can be made to the Tamworth Advice Centre for debt and general advice. Members of the Housing Solutions Team will also be able to provide advice and assistance to Private Rental Sector tenants to ensure they sustain their current accommodation or are able to source alternative housing solutions in order to prevent homelessness.
- We can refer people directly to Brighter Futures, we can give additional support to those that need it.
- And finally, the Councils **rent first** campaign continues to promote rent payments being made as well as deter tenants from accessing high cost borrowing through door stop lending &/or high interest return stores.

Specifically regarding our own tenants, there are currently 49 claimants in receipt of Universal Credit and this is predicted to increase to over 200 claimants by April next year. Bad debt predictions are lower than envisaged at this stage, which is a major positive and a direct result of the comprehensive preparations made by the team.

As soon as we are made aware one of our tenants is claiming Universal Credit, our staff are contacting them to check if they have the means to pay or if the tenant will need to ask for an advance payment from the Department of Works and Pensions. Or if appropriate, they can also apply for a direct payment to the Council.

We will continue to monitor the demand over the coming months and we will shortly be introducing an intelligence income analytics digitised IT solution to enable housing officers to monitor rent balances and trends and focus on earlier intervention and those experiencing most hardship.

I hope all members have found this information useful and of course, if any member wishes to meet to go through this in more detail, I am happy to oblige.

Thank you Mr Mayor.

## **QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL NO. 2**

**Under Procedure Rule No 11, Councillor Bishop will ask the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Culture, Councillor J Goodall, the following question:-**

"Community minded residents regularly sweep up the leaves from the councils trees, then place them in their green bins.

Therefore doing the Council's work for them. You now intend to charge them £36 for doing the Council's work for them.

How many more staff are you planning to employ to ensure that all the leaves are collected, thereby protecting our residents."

**Councillor D Cook advised in Councillor J Goodall's absence that she would speak personally to Councillor Bishop on this matter. A copy of the written response will be attached to the Minutes of the meeting.**

Councillor J Goodall's written response was:-

Dear Cllr Bishop,

Unfortunately, I could not attend full council on Tuesday Dec 12th. Please find below response to your question:

*'Community minded residents regularly sweep up the leaves from the Council's trees, then place them in there green bins.*

*Therefore doing the Council's work for them. You now intend to charge them £36 for doing the Council's work for them.*

*How many more staff are you planning to employ to ensure that all the leaves are collected, thereby protecting our residents.'*

During the autumn, the Council undertakes an additional programme of leaf collection throughout the town. The timing and rate of leaf fall varies from one year to the next - this is due to variations in weather such as summer rainfall levels, wind and frost. Experience shows that the main clear up operation will be needed from mid-October to late December.

For most streets within the borough the Councils normal street cleansing operation will deal with leaf fall, accumulations of leaves, especially when wet, can make conditions difficult for both pedestrians and drivers.

The Council has reviewed locations where leaf fall is at its heaviest and targets these areas during the autumn period of up to 10 weeks. Street sweeping teams do priorities the clear-up of fallen leaves in areas outside schools, day centers where the borough's most vulnerable residents may be walking.



This is followed by shopping areas and public transport stations, then steep hills with slippery surfaces, and then other streets where heavy leaf fall could block drains and create a flood risk.

In locations where heavy leaf fall has been identified extra cleansing operations are undertaken, to enable these extra cleansing operations to be carried out the Council hires in additional machinery, and utilises community payback to assist and help target areas of heavy leaf fall; these additions help us deliver a more effective service.

The Council does not collect leaves from private property or residents gardens even when the leaves have fallen from a tree situated in the footway.

In terms of the legal position leaf fall is an act of nature and the occupier of the land upon which the leaves fall is responsible for their disposal rather than the tree owner.

Keep Britain Tidy's 'Love Where You Live' Campaign was set up to encourage community groups and residents to work with the Council to help keep their communities clean and tidy. Community groups and volunteers are active across the town, which is very encouraging and we want to take this opportunity to say thank you to all those residents who are doing their bit to Keep Tamworth Tidy and who take pride in where they live.

The Council is happy to work with and assist any community group with this campaign.

Councils across the country are having to become financially self-sufficient as the government continues to withdraw funding. Tamworth and Lichfield Councils made the difficult decision in April 2017 to charge for garden waste collection, knowing that residents will not welcome the extra charge. However by introducing a producer-pays principle we are aiming to make the charge as fair as possible, as only households who use the service will pay extra for it. We are hopeful that residents understand the financial pressures we face, and that by charging for the service, rather than stopping it, we can keep offering a garden waste service.

I hope this answers your question.

Kind Regards,

Joy.

*Cllr Joy Goodall.*

### **QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL NO. 3**

**Under Procedure Rule No 11, Councillor Standen will ask the Leader of the Council, Councillor D Cook, the following question:-**

"In April the controlling Conservative Group decided to impose a charge of £36 per green bin from the 1st January 2018 after the budget was set for 2017/18; As

the cost of green bin collection was already included within Council Tax charges levelled for 2017/18 can the Leader of the Council confirm whether there will be a rebate to cover this period when there is effectively a double charge?"

**Councillor D Cook gave the following reply:-**

Thank you Mr Mayor.

I could respond to this question Mr Mayor as to where in the Finance Act is the authority to complete Council Tax rebates on mass, but I will go further than that.

I can confirm that there will be no Council Tax rebate for 2017/18.

As far as I am aware, Council Tax is set statutorily in February each year and cannot be changed thereafter (unless challenged by DCLG). I am not aware of any Council's changing Council Tax in year due to changes in costs etc. during the year (otherwise we would be changing council tax mid-year every year due to changes in the budget). It would involve refunds / re-billing for all Council Tax payers.

Council and Cabinet decisions are taken in year every year and we do not re-bill Council Tax following those decisions.

Any surplus funds from the Collection fund (& the previous year's budget) are taken into account in setting the budget / council tax for the following year. For example, we budget to collect just below 98% of Council Tax every year, yet every out-turn the Revenues department shows that have collected beyond this through good practice, we do not, nor has any controlling group ever offered a rebate to residents.

In the same way, should there be a massive movement in the exchange rate or a destabilising incident in the middle east and oil prices, thus fuel prices increase to the council we do not re-bill Council Tax accordingly.

As an example we run a multi-business of services across all budget areas next year in excess of £80million including Capital and HRA. We will collect from Council Tax just over £3.5million; basically less than 5% of our whole spend. Council Tax does not run a Council; it is only one of very many funding streams but one of the lowest.

As already discussed several times in many formats, Green Waste Collections are not a statutory service, it is something we have always chosen to do, and thus it is highly arguable that Council Tax never funded this discretionary service.

**Councillor P Standen asked the following supplementary question:-**

"Does Leader of the Council believe that vulnerable members of our community who currently get a rebate of Council Tax should pay a flat rate for green waste?"

**Councillor D Cook gave the following reply: –**

As I have said many times this Council is about helping vulnerable people and we will continue where possible to help vulnerable people, if somebody has somebody who is genuinely struggling with any element of Council services fetch their details to myself or Officers and we will do what we can. But at the minute there are no plans change the fee.

## **QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL NO. 4**

**Under Procedure Rule No 11, Councillor Standen will ask the Leader of the Council, Councillor D Cook, the following question:-**

"Starfish Winter Night Shelter started operating on 1st December based in churches of Tamworth providing a place to sleep for some of the most vulnerable members of our society during the winter months. Previously the Leader of the Council has expressed support for the aims of the Winter Night Shelter scheme; would he use his office to ensure that Tamworth Borough Council work in co-operation with Winter Night Shelter scheme where possible?"

**Councillor Cook gave the following reply:-**

Thank you Mr Mayor, and can I thank Cllr Standen for the question. I am aware Cllr Standen gives a lot of time to this project and can I state he deserves, as with other volunteers, much credit for this effort.

I refer all members to the report that went to Cabinet on the 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2017 entitled "**Council support for the Starfish winter nightshelter for the homeless**". There were three recommendations approved, including some financial / officer support for the project. This Council has committed to the project and it fully deserves our support.

The Housing solutions team is working fully in co-operation with the night shelter and has been actively engaged with them. This is further demonstrated through the Council using the night shelter as its severe weather provision where it has been able to.

There has been frequent contact between the service and the winter night shelters co-ordinator and where potential issues have presented they have been jointly dealt with efficiently. To further ensure its success the night shelter has been actively promoted to relevant partners and agencies and positive working relationships are being developed between the council and the night shelter to go forward.

In short Mr Mayor, where possible the answer is yes.

**Councillor P Standen asked the following supplementary question:-**

"Thank the Leader for his response and acknowledge the help that is received. From the start of the winter night scheme I was contacted to check if I was one of the younger councillors who had tried to obtain a photograph with homeless guest, I was able to confirm that I was not but I must admit I was surprised that

would be the case. Rather than attempting to gain photo opportunities would the Leader agree that Members should consider volunteering as five Members of the Labour group have done in 2017."

**Councillor D Cook gave the following reply:-**

I am not sure of the matter that is being raised, but if Councillor Standen wishes to raise this personally then I am happy to look into it. I would say that there are members on both sides of the chamber who offer time to a lot of voluntary groups, a lot of charities. I encourage any Member to volunteer in any way they can to help across Tamworth. I commend the Labour councillors involved in this project. Thank you.

**QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL NO. 5**

**Under Procedure Rule No 11, Councillor Dr S People will ask the Leader of the Council, Councillor D Cook, the following question:-**

"At the most recent meeting of the Combined Authority Scrutiny Committee the report submitted by officers noted that the Office of National Statistics now regards the official unemployment statistics as an inaccurate representation of the economic condition of the UK. Will the Leader of the Council now plan to address the real problems of Tamworth which are insecure employment and low wages?"

**Councillor D Cook gave the following reply:-**

Thank you again Mr Mayor, thank you Councillor People.

For purposes of clarity I believe Councillor People needs to understand further, it is my understanding that the official unemployment statistics are not in fact inaccurate in representing the economic condition of the UK, but rather the way in which they have been calculated since April 2015 has changed. Since 2015 the Claimant Count includes all Universal Credit claimants who are required to seek work and be available for work, as well as all JSA claimants.

Between May 2013 and March 2015, the Claimant Count included all out of work Universal Credit claimants as well as all JSA claimants.

Between October 1996 and April 2013, the Claimant Count is a count of the number of people claiming Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)

The WMCA just highlighted that caution should be used when comparing historical figures and trends, as due to the changes in reporting figures will not be like for like.

With regards insecure employment and low wages the Borough Council is involved in schemes in order to support the growth of employment within businesses and create new opportunities for individuals.

The Council funded GBSLEP wide Enterprise for success programme has seen 29 individuals from Tamworth alone take up advice and support since February this year. This programme is giving people the opportunity to set up and establish their own businesses with support.

Linked to this is the Small Business Grant the Borough provides to these businesses, of which nearly £9000 has been allocated to 10 individuals to help them grow their new businesses. This Grant scheme has only been running since April and demand is already outstripping the budget.

The Borough Council is also actively supporting small to medium businesses across the Borough with grants based on long term job creation. So far the Business Growth Programme, ran by Birmingham City Council has seen 7 businesses benefitted to the value of £191,000 over the last 18 months creating 22 jobs and investing a further £353,000 into the local economy themselves.

Council Officers actively work with businesses looking to invest in the area and create skilled jobs, through the provision of intelligence around development sites and identifying vacant commercial units.

The Borough is also actively involved in supporting the Southern Staffordshire Employment Skills Board. The aim of this group is to raise the profile of employment opportunities available in the area and address skills gaps in needed for the future workforce.

The Council also works with partners who have a greater responsibility for skills such as the County Council, Colleges and Universities to promote opportunities for educational and skills attainment within the workforce.

So, I believe we are positioned to address the concerns the Councillor raises through our own local Economic Policies, our involvement with the two LEP's, the WMCA and our ever increasing lists of active partners.

Nation stats show that unemployment fell by over 70% in Tamworth between 2008 and present day and that average wages have increased. In fact in just 2015 average wages in Tamworth increased by 16% in one year according to the Annual Survey for Hours and Earnings (ASHE).

However, there is still more to do and more will be done over coming years. Any ideas on further improvement of opportunities to the people of the Borough are gratefully received.

**Councillor Dr S People asked the following supplementary question:-**

“The difficulty that we have is that there is a massive problem in terms of the hotspot of having people in employment with low attainment in term of skills and background, which means that we are struggling to get the skills level up and therefore the grade level up. Therefore I would ask Councillor Cook if he would commit now to a meeting early in the New Year where we can sit and discuss the ways in which we can improve the employability attainment rather than just the

education attainment of local so that we can raise the economic performance in the Town.”

**Councillor Cook gave the following reply:-**

Myself and Councillor Peaple share this desire and this concern and I think every Member of the chamber does. We know in Tamworth for some reason GCSE and A level results have not been all we hoped they would be. I am happy to commit to the meeting early in the New Year and I am not sure that I have raised this with Mr Barratt yet, but we will be dropping this onto his agenda very quickly and would with his permission involve him in this meeting.

Thank you Mr Mayor.

**QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL NO. 6**

**Under Procedure Rule No 11, Councillor Dr S Peaple will ask the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Councillor S Claymore, the following question:-**

"Following the failure of the BID to gain approval, will the Council take a radical look at the way forward for the "Town Centre", as I have urged already on several occasions?

**Councillor Cook confirmed on Councillor Claymore's behalf that he would like to meet with Councillor Dr S Peaple on this matter.**

Councillor Dr S Peaple confirmed to Councillors that he raised with Councillor Claymore interest in developing the opportunities available. A copy of the written response will be attached to the Minutes of the meeting.

**QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL NO. 7**

**Under Procedure Rule No 11, Councillor S Peaple will ask the Portfolio Holder for Housing Services, Councillor M Thurgood, the following question:-**

“Would the Portfolio holder for Housing agree that we are seeing a growing level of debt amongst those in the rented sector?”

**Councillor M Thurgood gave the following reply:-**

Thank you Mr Mayor.

Thank you for your question Cllr Peaple. I am obviously aware that you are new to the Council and may not be aware that this question would be better directed to either Cllr Doyle or Cllr Pritchard as their portfolios cover debt far more than mine, however I will do my best to answer on a housing portfolio perspective. I am

however sure that either Cllr Doyle or Pritchard would be happy to meet and discuss debt and our support services in more detail after the meeting.

I am aware that for anyone who gets themselves into debt, it must be a difficult and frightening experience, whatever their circumstances are.

I am pleased that this Conservative government continues to add more jobs, reduce taxes and ensure that people have more money available to spend on what they want or need. Today more than ever before are in work and I'm sure we would all agree that the best way to pay rent is to be in work and therefore not need to go into debt.

However, for all those people who are better off, there will be lots of people tonight who will be worrying not about buying Christmas presents, but instead will they still have a house after Christmas. For those people debt remains a real concern.

In Tamworth, debt continues to be cited as one of the main causes for homelessness due to the loss of private rented accommodation due to rent arrears.

This has been the case for many years and is why continue to bolster our Housing Solutions team with extra resources to ensure we can offer appropriate advice and solutions for those affected. These include:

- We are partially funding the Tamworth Advice centre through the homeless prevention grant to provide advice and assistance to those struggling financially to prevent homelessness through early intervention
- Developing measures that we can put in place to help mitigate the effects on homelessness through homeless prevention pathway plans.
- As part of the wider strategy to prevent homelessness work is ongoing to support those transitioning to universal credit and the effect of wider welfare reform so as that further debts do not arise through this process.
- Utilising the housing solutions fund
- Funding the Crisis support and intervention project to assist those most in need at points of crisis
- Referring clients to other services in the area which can provide further support services and to develop a holistic approach.

We will continue to invest in our Housing team and its offer to assist those affected by issues such as debt, which can lead to homelessness and I hope that you and all Members will support these proposals when they come to the Budget Council meeting in February next year.

Thank you Mr Mayor.

**Councillor S Peale asked the following supplementary question:-**

“One reason for debt is usurious lending, pay day loans need to be addressed. Despite recent legislation such loans can still charge 1300% APR and borrowers

can end up paying back twice the amount borrowed. Can lead to a spiral of debt, which can lead to homelessness. What measures are in place to ensure our tenants have access to appropriate impartial advice and information and would you support credit union being set up?"

**Councillor M Thurgood gave the following reply:-**

Agree interest level on pay day loans is excessive. One of the things that Tamworth Borough Council has already done is to share our own tenants data to indicate that if they are paying their rent on time this will give them a credit rating for all those who have chosen to opt into it. Tamworth Advice Centre give people the options of making an informed choice but if further detail is required I am happy to discuss further.

Thank you.

**QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL NO. 8**

**Under Procedure Rule No 11, Councillor T People will ask the Portfolio Holder for Communities and Wellbeing, Councillor S Doyle, the following question:-**

"Following the most recent fire on the Amington Recreation Ground would do you consider it important for the Council to examine using RIPA powers to combat this appalling destruction?"

**Councillor S Doyle gave the following reply:-**

I would agree that all avenues should be examined by Officers in consultation with the Local Ward Members and our Partners (Police) when looking to address ASB or incidents of crime using the appropriate measures.

If members refer back to the recent training and the training material you were recently provided with regarding the deployment of RIPA, action must be necessary and proportionate and follow the regulations as laid out in the policy.

Also there has been no recent approach by Ward Members for such a response from the Ward. It is acknowledged that a small fire has been recorded by the Staffordshire FARS which was an abandoned small fence panel left in the recreation ground.

There has only been one recorded call to the Police regarding ASB in the last month and only minor issues throughout the summer.

The play area is inspected on a weekly basis and there have been no safety or vandalism concerns reported and Street Scene reports only minor levels of littering in comparison with other play areas.

The levels of anti-social behaviour recorded by the Police and other partners are consistent with or less than those of other play areas in Tamworth.



The use of RIPA for covert surveillance is not permitted for general use in an area without considerable evidence of criminal activity and the Council does not own or have access to covert camera technology at this point in time. You also have to bear in mind the area where you wish to deploy it is where kids play.

I would also like to highlight that the area in question does not have a power supply or electrical lighting which would be required for the purposes of any surveillance given TBC current level of CCTV.

Also while discussing the topic of surveillance and RIPA may I remind Members that the Council is limited to the use of Directed surveillance only?

At present the levels of low level ASB does not have an evidence base for overt surveillance; however the area will be kept in view as part of normal patrols by both the Police and Community Wardens.

The current review of the public CCTV system may allow for the possibility of deployable cameras in future, as part of the recommendations and Scrutiny input, but these will also be subject to deployment where there are substantive proven issues.

Thank you.

**Councillor T Peale asked the following supplementary question:-**

“Once again we hear very few calls to the Police, but don’t you find it concerning that the official report differs from the various issues that have been reported to me as a local Councillor by people that actually live around there?”

**Councillor S Doyle gave the following reply:-**

This is the first time that this has been brought to my attention , you ask me to comment on something that you have not previously approached me on. The last time there was any serious arson in that area was in 2015/2016. If I remember correctly in April 2016 I offered to work with yourself and the other Councillors in that area, since then I have not heard anything from that direction.

**QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL NO. 9**

**Under Procedure Rule No 11, Councillor T Peale will ask the Leader of the Council, Councillor D Cook, the following question:-**

“It was reported in the Birmingham Mail that Michael Fabricant MP apologised for his disparaging remarks about Tamworth after being contacted by you. Can you explain to this Council what this correspondence involved?”

**Councillor D Cook gave the following reply:-**

Thank you Mr Mayor.

I can confirm I asked Mr Fabricant to clarify his light hearted comments about Tamworth. Thus he did!

Thank you.

**34 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT AND ANNUAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY MID-YEAR REVIEW REPORT 2017/18**

Report of the Portfolio Holder for Assets and Finance to present to Members the Mid-year Review of the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy.

**RESOLVED:** That Council

accepted the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy Mid-year Review Report 2017/18.

*(Moved by Councillor R Pritchard and seconded by Councillor Dr S Peaple)*

**35 LOCAL COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME 2018/19 ONWARDS**

Report of the Portfolio Holder for Assets and Finance to advise Members of the results and feedback from the recently undertaken consultation on the proposed Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme from 2018 onwards and to review the consultation feedback when considering potential changes to be applied in the 2018/19 onwards Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme;

The report will also advise members that the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme for working age customers for 2018/19 should include continued alignment to Applicable Amounts with those of Housing Benefit and ask that Council endorses the proposed change, moderately supported by the consultation results that Council Tax Reduction awards will disregard in full Bereavement Support Payments.

**RESOLVED:** That Council

1. considered the results of the public consultation on the current scheme, carried out 18 August to 10 November 2017, and endorsed the proposed recommended change;
2. Approved the base scheme going forward with the following;
  - a) That the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme for working age customers for 2018/19 will continue to be aligned to Applicable Amounts with those of Housing Benefit, and

- b) That Council Tax Reduction awards will disregard in full Bereavement Support Payments.

*(Moved by Councillor R Pritchard and seconded by Councillor D Cook)*

**36 REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT 2000, ADOPTION OF POLICY AND PROCEDURE (2016/17)**

Report of the Portfolio Holder for Assets and Finance to advise Members of the proposed amendments to the Corporate Policy governing the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 in light of the recent inspection by the Office of Surveillance Commissioner and seeks their consideration and recommendations in relation thereto.

**RESOLVED:** That Council

1. considered the changes to the RIPA policy on Directed Surveillance, Covert Human Intelligence Sources (CHIS) and Acquisition of Communications Data;
2. agreed that the changes meet the requirements imposed on the Council, and
3. approved the policy

*(Moved by Councillor R Pritchard and seconded Councillor D Cook)*

**37 CONSTITUTION REVIEW AND UPDATE**

Report of the Leader and Solicitor to the Council & Monitoring Officer to obtain Council comments, endorsement and approval of the reviewed Constitution and Scheme of Delegation as provided in the link at Appendix 1 to the Report.

**RESOLVED:** That Council

1. Endorsed the changes to the reviewed Constitution and Scheme of Delegation
2. Agreed to adopt and approve the changes as presented in Appendix 1, subject to the Fee in relation to the Information Commissioners Office being identified as such within the Constitution.

*(Moved by Councillor D Cook and seconded by Councillor Dr*

*S People)*

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The Mayor