



MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD ON 25th FEBRUARY 2020

PRESENT: Councillor R Kingstone (Mayor), Councillors R Claymore, M Bailey, D Box, P Brindley, J Chesworth, R Bilcliff, T Clements, D Cook, M Cook, C Cooke, S Doyle, A Farrell, J Faulkner, R Ford, S Goodall, M J Greatorex, T Jay, K Norchi, J Oates, M Oates, S Peale, Dr S Peale, B Price, R Pritchard, S Pritchard, R Rogers, P Standen, M Summers and P Thurgood

The following officers were present: Andrew Barratt (Chief Executive), Stefan Garner (Executive Director Finance), Lynne Pugh (Assistant Director Finance), Rebecca Neill (Head of Audit & Governance and Monitoring Officer), Linda Ram (Public Relations Officer and Copywriter) and Jodie Small (Legal, Democratic and Corporate Support Assistant)

28 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence received.

The Mayor formally welcomed Councillor Steven Pritchard to his first meeting of full Council.

29 TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 10th December 2019 were approved and signed as a correct record.

(Moved by Councillor D Cook and seconded by Councillor Dr S Peale)

30 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Mayor reminded all Councillors that as this is the Budget meeting, Councillors need to consider the provisions of s 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, in this regard.

In particular it is an offence for a Councillor in council tax arrears (which have remained unpaid for at least two months) to vote at a meeting of the Council where financial matters relating to the budget or council tax calculation are being considered. Any such members need to disclose the fact that s106 applies to them and whilst they are not debarred from speaking on such matter, they must not vote on such matter.

There were no Declarations of Interest.

31 TO RECEIVE ANY ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE MAYOR, LEADER, MEMBERS OF THE CABINET OR THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Councillor D Cook announced the following;

“I would like to welcome Councillor Steve Pritchard back to this Chamber.

As we are all aware Councillor Pritchard is a dedicated resident, cares for others and again is a surrenderance in this town and we welcome him back.

With that in mind Mr Mayor I emailed the Chief Executive and the Leader of the Opposition to inform them of the new Committee Allocations following the Bi election on the 12th December. The email was dated the 8th January.

Just to confirm the new Committee arrangements, Councillor Michael Greatorex had 4 Committee places, I have allocated the Infrastructure, Safety and Growth Committee place to Councillor Richard Ford.

Councillor Steve Pritchard has taken on Audit & Governance, Planning and Licensing.

Under the Constitution I am required to also inform full Council of this and I duly do so at this meeting. Thank you Mr Mayor.”

Mayor R Kingstone announced the following;

“I have just one announcement which is to remind Councillors that I sent out an invite to all of you to attend the special meeting this Thursday night in regard to revamping and extending the skate park. The meeting is at 7pm here in the Town Hall if any of you are free to attend to be briefed on the potential proposals that will be put to our Council with regards to the skate park extension.”

Councillor Dr S People Announced the following;

“In that regard Mr Mayor unfortunately IS&G was also moved to this Thursday so would you accept apologies from any of us who are still at IS&G at that point.”

Mayor R Kingstone responded;

“Certainly and if you want to come after IS&G just drop me a text to see if we are still here or not.”

32 QUESTION TIME:**QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL NO. 1**

Under Procedure Rule No 11, Councillor Dr S Peple will ask the Portfolio Holder for Assets and Finance, Councillor R Pritchard, the following question:-

“Having reported to Corporate Scrutiny that the cabinet has prepared a review of garage sites, would Councillor Pritchard tell the members of the Council which sites in Amington, Belgrave and Glascote wards have been earmarked for inclusion in the demolition programme and which of them have been designated for new housing to be built upon?”

Councillor R Pritchard gave the following reply:-

“No final decisions have been made on the future use of any of these garage sites; however a few sites have been demolished in recent months because the sites are structurally unsafe and often therefore vacant.

Sites demolished recently or in progress include -

Barnbridge
Neville Street
Canning Road
Orchard Street
Colbourne Road
Kennet
Stonepit
Bamford Street

In the meantime, these sites are either allocated for temporary residents parking or blocked off.

A report will be coming to cabinet in due course to decide on the future use of the sites.

All sites will be subject to consultation and options appraisals on their future use, which could include housing, parking, new garages, open market disposal or other uses.”

Councillor Dr S Peple asked the following supplementary question:-

“Thank you Councillor Pritchard for the detailed response I have received, noting that Canning Road has caused problems since it’s been blocked off and has denied access to the Bus Stop for some residents, but no doubt that will be rectified.

Can I therefore ask Councillor Pritchard how many of the proposed works are covered by the “Capital Programme” that is due to be passed tonight, bearing in mind that I understand, the estimate for a parking space to be created is £17,000 and therefore If you care to enlighten the Councillors how far the Capital Programme makes provision in advance for the not, necessarily specified but, total works?”

Councillor R Pritchard gave the following reply:-

“Thank you Mr Mayor, we have allocated in the Budget, monies to do works but at the moment we don’t yet know in terms of sites, which sites will be used for what. In terms of some of the works being done this will be over 3, 4, 5 years so at the moment I couldn’t tell you because we haven’t made that decision, but we have put money in the Budget to enable us to carry out those works when we make that decision.”

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL NO. 2

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

“In their preferred options contained in their Local Plan Review, Lichfield District Council has stated that they would like to achieve significant housing growth in Fazeley, Mile Oak and Bonehill as well as Whittington. This significant development on our borders, by just one of our neighbours, further threatens the infrastructure of Tamworth and will only worsen environmental pollution. What representations is the Leader of the Council making to government, and other bodies, regarding the pressure of development on Tamworth?”

Councillor D Cook gave the following reply:-

“Thank You Mr Mayor,

Firstly, can I refer all members to the minutes of the Council meeting on 10th September 2019 when The Deputy Leader of the Opposition asked me almost the exact same question, much of our efforts in regards the important matter are contained within the answer I gave at the time.

However to update Council on any progress since, myself and the CEO have met with the new Housing Minister within the last few weeks, he was much easier to track down than the last one we met. We discussed the topic at length and await his feedback.

I also asked the Assistant Director to regularly update me on possible progress on our borders, which I get on a regular basis.

I am happy to prepare a briefing for all Councillors on the situation within the next 2 weeks if you find this acceptable Mr Mayor?”

Councillor Dr S People asked the following supplementary question:-

“First of all, yes I’m aware what we said in September but as you mentioned at the recent meeting, you were going to be meeting with the new Housing Minister so seemed sensible to ask for an update.

In the Plan review, Lichfield note that they have not provided Fazeley and Mile Oak with tremendous support and therefore I wonder whether the Council Leader would agree that perhaps the referendum went the wrong way in Fazeley and mile Oak and that they would actually be better off becoming part of Tamworth which fits with their functioning economic geography, much more than it does with Lichfield and would provide us with some support and protection. So will the Leader extend his discussions to include any revision to the borders that might be possible?”

Councillor D Cook gave the following reply:-

“Thank you Mr Mayor.

On the lighter side Mr Mayor I used to joke with an Officer of this Council many years ago, that we do need to adjust the borders of Tamworth and I mentioned Polesworth, Hurley, Fazeley, Mile Oak, Elford, etc. etc., That junior Officer of the Council at the time said I lacked ambition, it should be just the south of Stafford and North of Coventry, God bless that Officer, he is now Chief Executive of this Council.

I absolutely agree, the borders of Tamworth are actually wrong for the construct of Tamworth and they do need adjusting. The problem is, as I understand it would need an act of Parliament to change those borders.

I absolutely agree with the sentiment of Councillor People I just don’t know how to deliver it, so we have to continue down the line we are on which is to influence and beg, steal and borrow where we can to influence where we can, and that is the line we will continue on Mr Mayor.”

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL NO. 3

Under Procedure Rule No 11, Councillor S People will ask the Portfolio Holder for Housing services and Communities, Councillor M Cook, the following question:-

“Would the Portfolio Holder agree with me that the freezing of local housing allowance in 2016 meant that austerity bore most heavily upon those private sector tenants who were least able to manage, and would she therefore agree with me that it not only needs to be unfrozen now but needs to be raised significantly above the 13th percentile level, if it is to be of real help to the many younger people in Tamworth trying to secure rented accommodation in a town in which the average purchase price now stands at ten times average salary.”

Councillor M Cook gave the following reply:-

“Thank you Mr Mayor, thank you Councillor Peple for her question regarding Local Housing Allowance.

The freezing of the allowance for a number of years was part of the overall change on how we provide benefits in the UK – ultimately to ensure our system supports those most vulnerable in society, but also protecting the UK taxpayer from an unnecessary burden.

Whether a household is in receipt of benefits or not, any period when outgoings rise faster than income to the household is likely to be challenging. It is understood that some households have likely had to make changes in how they live to accommodate a perceived loss of income into the family unit due to a freezing of benefit. This situation is replicated in households up and down the country not on benefits who may not have had a pay rise but seen costs such as food, hobbies or child care rise.

From a homelessness point of view all our officers now must try to prevent homelessness in every opportunity, so when approached by someone seeking support they always look at the LHA rates when assisting our clients in private sectors, or seeking to go to private sector for example when they are questioning the fact they cannot afford to maintain their current accommodation. This assessment is discussed and always recorded on our applicant's personal housing plans.

As Councillor Peple may be aware, the allowance will be increased by CPI from April 2020, thus ending the freeze in this area. This will give those in receipt of housing support in the Private Rented Sector an increase of approximately £10 per month.

So I think the only other thing to say to address the question regarding people wanting to rent properties, we are doing a session in March that the housing team are running which will allow anyone who wants to come to the Assembly rooms and look at their options to do with rental, buying, potential access to Council housing but also things like shared ownership and rent to buy, to give a real broad spectrum of the different types of housing options that are available in the town, because we know that not everyone is aware off all their options so I would encourage people to attend that session.

We will be getting details circulated shortly not only to Councillors but also online to promote the session to the wider residents. Thank you Mr Mayor.”

Councillor S Peple asked the following supplementary question:-

“Thank you Councillor Cook for your answer, I wonder if your aware that this question is very pertinent or was very pertinent to a person who was in a homeless shelter who struggled for many months to find accommodation outside the shelter simply because the housing allowance did not meet the market value rent we are being charged in the vicinity

So I think it's a welcome change that it is been unfrozen but I think more needs to be done and would you not agree with me on that?"

Councillor M Cook gave the following reply:

"Yes obviously I won't discuss individual cases and members are aware they can bring that to us at any time not just waiting for full Council which I'm sure was not what Councillor was doing however yes there is more to be done , that's part of why this budget is in front of us tonight, which will increase the amount of support that we will see go to members of the public from a homelessness or housing perspective and that's why I'm delighted and I'm hoping the member will be able to support us in our Budget because of that reason. Thank you."

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL NO. 4

Under Procedure Rule No 11, Councillor S Peaple will ask the Portfolio Holder for Assets and Finance, Councillor R Pritchard, the following question:-

"Please would the Portfolio holder categorically confirm that there are no covenants or other restrictions on the building known as the Carnegie Centre which would prohibit its proposed use as a restaurant?"

Councillor R Pritchard gave the following reply:-

"Thank you Mr Mayor I am curious why this matter is being raised now, at such a late stage in this project. The Carnegie Centre is a key part of a huge regeneration project that is the first step in revitalising our town centre.

The project has been to many committees, full council, discussed in various other forums and featured prominently in local media for many years. As well as the proposed change of use being in the original HLF and other funding submissions.

The change of use of the building was permitted following formal planning permission that was granted on 30th January 2018.

Regardless of this late questioning of the building status, as far as I am aware there were no covenants or other restrictions prohibiting the buildings use as a restaurant.

Indeed this change of use is something that we should all support because it would add a much needed cultural element to a historic regeneration project."

Councillor S Peaple asked the following supplementary question :-

"Thank you Mr Mayor, Thank you for your answer, I'm glad that you say "to the best of your knowledge there are no covenants" but I did actually ask for categorical assurance so I would be grateful if an appropriate Officer could check the and make sure there is nothing in the deeds.

My supplemental question is whether there is anything legal there. Would the Portfolio Holder not agree with me that there is a morale issue here? The Carnegie Centre was given to the town as I understand it by Andrew Carnegie who was a great benefactor, for the benefit of the people of the town, to be used as a library and a cultural centre and I'm sure he would be rolling in his grave to think it was going to be turned in to a restaurant."

Councillor R Pritchard gave the following reply:-

"To address what I think was the last question not sure how many questions was there, but the answer is no."

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL NO. 5

Under Procedure Rule No 11, Councillor P Standen will ask the Portfolio Holder for Regulatory and Community Safety, Councillor S Doyle, the following question:-

"Could the cabinet member please advise what Section 106 funding is available for the provision of cycle tracks in Wilnecote ward?"

Councillor S Doyle gave the following reply:-

"After reviewing the question you've put forward for Full Council myself and Officers have identified that from the position of Tamworth Borough Council there is no Section 106 funding allocated for Cycle tracks in Wilnecote from current agreements.

As some Members may not be aware from a planning perspective Cycle tracks are provided and funded by the County Council.

So to truly understand the County Council position queries on available funding for Cycle Tracks, including any possible section 106 agreements should be directed to them.

Regarding cycle tracks in Wilnecote, Councillor Tina Clements is currently championing the matter with Highways Officers as part of her County Councillor role.

Feedback from Councillor Clements is that a path potentially identified as a Cycle Track, from Falcon down to Quarry Hill is not deemed suitable.

Highways are looking at an alternative path and Councillor Clements would be more than happy to update you on what is happening within the Ward of Wilnecote.

Please feel free to approach Tina for more help/information as she's a very capable and experienced Councillor and more than willing to help you understand the issue in greater detail."

Councillor P Standen asked the following supplementary question:-

“Thank you Mr Mayor, I think I actually understand it fairly well especially Falcon as I live there. The pavement is already used as a cycle track, but my supplementary question was prompted by discussion and a query raised at my residents association and I effectively asked this question on their behalf, though a bit later than I originally intended as I was going to ask at the December meeting but a few elections got in the way.

Would the Cabinet member look in to ways in which any information such as this could more easily be made available, I’m sure Councillor Tina Clements as her role of County Councillor would help with that, I can’t remember if she was present during the November meeting when this was discussed. There is nothing political behind this it’s just to try and get the residents association the information that they have asked for. Thank you Mr Mayor.”

Councillor S Doyle gave the following reply:-

“Thank you Mr Mayor. I believe I have given you the information you are looking for, and you’ve actually answered your own question. Councillor Clements will be more than happy to help you with your investigation, thank you.”

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL NO. 6**Under Procedure Rule No 11, Councillor P Standen will ask the Leader of the Council, Councillor D Cook, the following question:-**

“On the 11th February 2020 the planning committee reviewed and passed a planning application regarding provision of Anker Valley new primary school. Despite this the general consensus of members present was that a golden opportunity to design out many of the problems experienced with existing primary schools in Tamworth was missed, especially in area such as drop off points and coach parking. Does he agree with me that it would be beneficial to Tamworth and it’s people that a review between Tamworth Borough Council and partners such as Staffordshire County Council into how we can avoid losing potential gains in future primary school developments be done and be report back in the near future on how he thinks this could be achieved?”

Councillor D Cook gave the following reply:-

“Thank you Mr Mayor, Thank you Councillor Standen

The matter is a fair question and it is a rarity I do this Mr Mayor, but may I look into the matter in more detail given its complications and revert back to Councillor Standen in writing or a personal conversation with the Planning Officers together and actually look in to this matter properly, I think it’s too big of a question for political grandstand in this room and that’s not a dig at Councillor Standen. It is a big question thank you.”

Councillor P Standen asked the following supplementary question:-

“Thanks Mr Mayor I would like to ask a question, comment that feeds in to it if possible.

As a planning Councillor I had nothing in our Local plan in which we could refuse that application, well you could have but you would have been stretching at doors, you could have done it on design, EN5 but in reality it wouldn't have got through an inspector.

We need to tighten up our policies in areas like this but one of the things I've always thought we should do as an authority is the local plan working group is not any direct links with the planning Committee, I believe there should be some more formal way in which members of the Planning Committee should be able to feed it back in to the policy decision making where we think we are missing bits of policy, like parking provisions, or drop off points for schools.

There was nothing we could point to in appendix C which is the parking provision, there is no formal way we can actually feedback to get that modified at the moment, I was wondering if the Leader could take this and consider ways in which we can achieve that in the future?”

Councillor D Cook gave the following reply:-

“Thank you Mr Mayor, I thank you again Councillor Standen.

Part of the complication Mr Mayor is this, Couple of years ago there was an application in my ward of Dostill that actually removed several car parking spaces to vulnerable residents, I actually used are lack of parking policy to defend these residents, so depends which side of the fence you're on at any given time.

However I do accept we do have a hole in our Local Plan and during the Local Plan review and using the local plan working group maybe we can look to tidy how our parking policy fits and I would be happy to embrace that with Councillor Standen and push that forward, without taking away my original answer, will have a better conversation it is a bigger matter. I think we also need to realise what exactly we are asking here. I probably support Coach parking, parking for school drop offs, when we have been talking climate change recently. There is several agendas coming together, we need to be very careful of.

I'm happy to embrace Councillor Standens point and join him in helping to work that out.”

33 CORPORATE VISION, PRIORITIES PLAN, BUDGET & MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2020/21

The Leader of the Council proposed the Vision Statement, Priority Themes, Corporate Priorities and Plans and their inclusion in the Corporate Plan

The recommended package of budget proposals to enable the Council to agree the;

General Fund (GF) Revenue Budget and Council Tax for 2020/21;

Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget for 2020/21;

5 Year General Fund Capital Programme (2020/25);

5 Year HRA Capital Programme (2020/25);

3 Year General Fund Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) (2020/23); and

5 Year HRA Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) (2020/25).

To comply with the requirement of the Council's Treasury Management Policy in reporting to Council the proposed strategy for the forthcoming year and the Local Government Act 2003 with the reporting of the Prudential Indicators and the requirement to prepare an annual Corporate Capital Strategy

RESOLVED

That Council Approved;

- 1 The Vision Statement, Priority Themes, Corporate Priorities and Outcomes for 2020/21:
- 2 The proposed revisions to Service Revenue Budgets (Policy Changes):
- 3 The sum of £77,339 be applied from Council Tax Collection Fund surpluses in reducing the Council Tax demand in 2020/21:
- 4 The sum of £322,619 be applied from Business Rates Collection Fund surpluses in 2020/21:
- 5 That on 28th November 2019, the Cabinet calculated the Council Tax Base 2020/21 for the whole Council area as 22,367 [Item T in the formula in Section 31B(3) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended (the "Act")];
- 6 That the Council Tax requirement for the Council's own purposes for 2020/21 is £4,068,334:
- 7 The following amounts as calculated for the year 2020/21 in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Act:

- a.** £49,783,001 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) of the Act (Outgoings excluding internal GF Recharges);
- b.** £45,714,667 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) of the Act (Income excluding internal GF Recharges);
- c.** £4,068,334 being the amount by which the aggregate at 7(a) above exceeds the aggregate at 7(b) above, calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act as its Council Tax requirement for the year (Item R in the formula in Section 31A(4) of the Act);
- d.** £181.89 being the amount at 7(c) above (Item R), all divided by Item T (at 5 above), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B(1) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year;
- 8** The Council Tax level for the Borough Council for 2020/21 of £181.89 (an increase of £5 (2.83%) on the 2019/20 level of £176.89) at Band D;
- 9** An aggregate Council Tax (comprising the respective demands of the Borough Council, Staffordshire County Council, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority) of £1,780.17 at Band D for 2020/21 be noted (£1,715.41 in 2019/20);
- 10** The Council Tax levels at each band for 2020/21;
- 11** The sum of £1,074,572 be transferred from General Fund Revenue Balances in 2020/21;
- 12** The Summary General Fund Revenue Budget for 2020/21;
- 13** The Provisional General Fund Budgets for 2021/22 to 2022/23, as the basis for future planning;
- 14** Minimum level for balances of £500k to be held for each of the General Fund, Housing Revenue Account, General Capital Fund and Housing Capital Fund;
- 15** Cabinet be authorised to release funding from the General Contingency budget and that the release of

funding for Specific Contingency items be delegated to the Corporate Management Team in consultation with the Leader of the Council;

- 16 Proposed HRA Expenditure level of £15,259,760 for 2020/21;
- 17 Rents for Council House Tenants in General Accommodation for 2020/21 be set at an average of £87.93 (2019/20 £85.62), over a 48 week rent year (including a 2.7% increase);
- 18 Rents for Council House Tenants due for 52 weeks in 2020/21 be collected over 48 weeks;
- 19 The HRA deficit of £1,337,210 be financed through transfer from Housing Revenue Account Balances in 2020/21;
- 20 The proposed 5 year General Fund Capital Programme of £5.820m;
- 21 The proposed 5 year Housing Capital Programme of £46.862m;
- 22 To delegate authority to Cabinet to approve/add new capital schemes to the capital programme where grant funding is received or there is no net additional cost to the Council;
- 23 The Treasury Management Strategy Statement, the Treasury Management Policy Statement, Minimum Revenue Provision Strategy and Annual Investment Statement 2020/21;
- 24 The Prudential and Treasury Indicators and Limits for 2020/21 to 2022/23;
- 25 Adoption of the Treasury Management Practices;
- 26 The detailed criteria of the Investment Strategy 2020/21 contained in the Treasury Management Strategy; and
- 27 The Corporate Capital Strategy and associated Action Plan.

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

Named Vote

Named vote takes place *In accordance with Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, the Council is required to take a recorded vote on decisions which approve the budget or set the council tax.*

FOR

Councillor M Bailey
Councillor P Brindley
Councillor J Chesworth
Councillor R Claymore
Councillor T Clements
Councillor D Cook
Councillor M Cook
Councillor S Doyle
Councillor A Farrell
Councillor R Ford
Councillor S Goodall
Councillor M J Greatorex
Councillor T Jay
Councillor J Oates
Councillor M Oates
Councillor B Price
Councillor R Pritchard
Councillor S Pritchard
Councillor R Rogers
Councillor M summers
Councillor P Thurgood

AGAINST

Councillor R Bilcliff
Councillor D Box
Councillor C Cooke
Councillor J Faulkner
Councillor K Norchi
Councillor Dr S People
Councillor S People
Councillor P Standen

The Mayor