



**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
COUNCIL
HELD ON 15th SEPTEMBER 2020**

PRESENT: Councillor R Claymore (Mayor), Councillors M Oates, R Kingstone, M Bailey, 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, S Peuple, Dr S Peuple, R Pritchard, R Rogers, P Standen, M Summers and P Thurgood

The following officers were present: Andrew Barratt (Chief Executive), Stefan Garner (Executive Director Finance), Rebecca Neill (Head of Audit & Governance and Monitoring Officer), Tracey Pointon (Legal Admin & Democratic Services Manager), Jodie Small (Legal, Democratic and Corporate Support Assistant) and Adam Deakin (Technical Infrastructure Engineer)

Apologies received from: Councillor(s) D Box and B Price

17 TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 31st July 2020 were approved and signed as a correct record.

(Moved by Councillor M Oates and seconded by Councillor Dr S Peuple)

18 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest.

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

Councillor D Cook announced the following;

“Madam Mayor, it gives me great pleasure to announce the creation of a members Heritage Project Group lead by the Heritage Champion Councillor Paul Brindley on behalf of the Portfolio Holder for Heritage and Growth Councillor Jeremy Oates who will present to Cabinet on behalf of the Project Group. By announcing this at full Council it will provide validity and formality to the group’s existence. The membership of the group will be announced by the Leader shortly after consultation with the Portfolio Holder and must include representation

selected by the leader of the opposition group. This group will have a defined set of tasks under the umbrella project of “safeguarding Tamworth’s historic assets”.

Tasks will include, evaluating the current position, evaluating predicted costs (in regards planned maintenance), scoping any consultation work, assessing and recommending to cabinet and or full Council any decision relating to the project around our heritage assets. Just to announce that’s formally created now. Madam Mayor I will distribute on email its membership shortly.

Thank you Madam Mayor.”

Councillor Dr. S People announced the following;

“Thank you Madam Mayor, sorry I was slow on the unmute button. Firstly can I allude to something the Minister of Saint Francis said before the meeting during prayers? I understood that Councillor Lunn isn't well and can I ask the members of the controlling group to convey our best wishes to him for a speedy recovery? He was here with us on many occasions and I'm sure he would be delighted to know we are wanting him to recover, so all the best to him please via the Conservative group.

Secondly can I welcome the announcement from the Leader of the Council regarding the Heritage group which I think is something we need if we are to secure the long-term future of our heritage given all the pressures facing the Councils finances?

I can announce that as regards the opposition the Labour group were 100% behind me being the representative on it, given my background as a historian. So I look forward to Councillor Cook confirming who else is on the group. Thank you.”

20 QUESTION TIME:

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC NO. 1

Under Procedure Rule No 10, Mr R Brown, of Tamworth will ask the Leader of the Council, Councillor D Cook, the following question:-

“When the current COVID Pandemic is over, what preparation is our Council making to place a curtain between the Public Gallery and the Councillors’ seating area at Public Council Meetings, to conceal the Councillors from Public view during those Meetings?”

Councillor D Cook gave the following reply:-

“Thank you Madam Mayor. Thank you Mr Brown for your question. OK, I will play along knowing the devil in the detail will be in the supplementary. My answer is of course we have no plans to buy curtains. Thank you Madam Mayor.”

Mr R Brown asked the following Supplementary question-

“Thank you for your response Councillor Cook the supplementary question is, what measurable and timely plans and action does our Council have to add a video of Councillors’ attendance and to maintain livestream availability of public Council meetings to its electorate when face to face meetings, become restored after the pandemic? And curtains may be necessary to do that.”

Councillor D Cook gave the following reply:-

“Thank you Madam Mayor, not entirely sure about curtains I would have to take a deeper view in to that but there are two parts to the answer in my opinion. The Councils position and my personal position.

Firstly, our corporate position on the matter. As you may be aware, new Regulations (1) came into force in April 2020 as a response to the Pandemic, yes we are in the middle of a pandemic, they allow Council’s to re-commence Council and Committee meetings safely and remotely during lockdown with the current restrictions in place thereafter. These Regulations addressed the previous condition of Schedule 12 of the Local Government Act 1972, which required that Councillors must be present at a meeting in ‘one place’ (i.e. Marmion House or the Town Hall) for Council and Committee meetings.

The minimum requirement of the Regulations is that one person participating in such meetings remotely, must be able to hear and be heard (and where and if possible, see and be seen) by the other members in attendance at the meeting. The same conditions apply where members of the public attend remotely.

As you can appreciate, for all authorities, this posed a significant change to our way of working and the change itself had to be implemented remotely. It was, however, a priority for us to restart the democratic process in Tamworth as soon as we could, to give assurance to our residents that democracy continues and the “new normal” was starting to take shape.

With the advice and support of officers from Governance, IT and Democratic Services, we implemented Microsoft Teams Live Events as our platform for Council and Committee meetings, which was the choice for many other local authorities, and government bodies.

Currently, due to the number of participants logging into these meetings at one time, the safest option to protect the stream against failure and to enable the meetings to run efficiently, is that Chairmen of the respective meetings are the only ones ‘camera’ and the rest of the Committee will be on ‘audio’. This is not ‘censorship’ and is entirely in accordance with the Regulations which again states as a minimum attendees must hear and be heard.

In terms of the use of the Microsoft Teams Chat function during meetings, this is only to allow participants to indicate their wish to ‘speak’, in a similar way that they would ‘raise their hands’ if they were there in person. There is no debate or the

Chairman and Democratic Services closely monitor dialogue within the chat function to ensure it is only used to indicate willingness to speak.

At present, there are no plans to make recordings public and neither do the Regulations require us to do so. Meetings are minuted fully as they have always been and are the Council's record of the meeting.

While the Regulations remain in place, which is until May 2021, we will clearly look to continue to review and refine the system where possible.

Now to my personal thoughts, and apologies if this in anyway seems brutal.

I have led this Council for almost 11 years. In this time, all I have known is spending controls and cost reduction to try and keep the Council afloat. A job I believe the Council and myself and colleagues have achieved through grit and hard work. Then came along a Pandemic that was going to cost some people their lives. I threw my Conservative fiscal responsibility principles clearly out of the window, and rightly so.

Just like the national government, the Council has had a massive financial hit during this period and we now need to start work to fix an £8million pound hole in our finances.

Just so you are all aware, let me tell some of the more devastating conversations I have had this year. A review of the number of body bags in Tamworth at any one time. A discussion on possible mass burial plots should these be needed. Luckily they were not. How we operate without a centralised building and ensure benefits were paid to those that most need them.

Officers from Tamworth Borough Council have gone above and beyond and continue to do so. Protecting the vulnerable and socially isolated. Ensuring the disabled have food and medication. And much more.

When we went to virtual meetings, we had licenses for MS Teams, so we used this system. With a financial black hole growing that may hit service levels, with a continuing Pandemic risking lives and officers operating on fumes I cannot bring myself to believe you seeing our faces on screen in virtual meetings needs to hit mine or the Council's top priority list. In fact several Conservative Councillors have raised the issue as well with me, it has been looked into, but difficult with the platform we have.

I do not say it is not an issue that at some point needs improving, but may I request you understand that we have bigger battles to fight at present.

I will not prioritise a new system with its associated costs in this financial and health climate. Thank you Madam Mayor."

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC NO. 2

Under Procedure Rule No 10, Mr R Brown, of Tamworth will ask the Portfolio Holder for Heritage and Regeneration, Councillor J Oates, the following question:-

“The now-abandoned old school buildings at the Fountain Junction in North Tamworth continue to decompose. What are the timescales and actions that our Council is taking to produce some method of preventing this public eyesore from worsening and actually implement a proper remedy to the entire situation?”

Councillor J Oates gave the following reply:-

“Thank you for the question, there are a number of buildings throughout the County, Throughout Staffordshire and particularly Tamworth which have either specific local interest, national interest or are good examples of a type of architecture. The one you highlight has been repeatedly chased over recent years by the late Councillor Michael Greatorex he’s done this in consultation with the Spital Councillors he has invested a great deal of time and effort over a number of years to try and get improvements to protect this property. He had a thing for architecture. We've also seen some works completed, because they have being chased by Councillor John Chesworth he successfully had a number of windows repaired. The property you refer to is not a Tamworth Borough Council property and therefore not the direct responsibility of Tamworth Borough Council the owner is entirely responsible for maintenance of this building.”

Mr R Brown asked the following Supplementary question-

“I get the impression from that response that certain actions have been conducted and we are now left in a stalemate situation where the County Council, don't want to do anything and our Council don't seem to want to do anything either. I would like to see a plan and a forecast, published in advance so that electors can fully and fairly appraise the council's performance.”

Councillor J Oates gave the following reply:-

“Thank you Madam Mayor. As I've said, with many properties in Tamworth they don't come under the direct responsibility of Tamworth Borough Council therefore Tamworth Borough Council will not be taking up the upkeep or maintenance of those properties. However, as displayed in the first part of my answer, to the original question the local Councillors do you have an adversarial role and we have seen over recent years Councillor Michael Greatorex get really stuck in and involved and over more recent years Councillor Chesworth and the other Spital Councillors fully utilising their adversarial role to apply pressure not just on the County Council but the owners of the property. I'm confident they will continue to do that on behalf of residents, albeit not a direct responsibility of theirs.”

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL NO.1

Under Procedure Rule No 11, Councillor R Bilcliff will ask the Portfolio Holder for Regulatory & Community Safety, Councillor S Doyle, the following question:-

“In London pavement parking is illegal, why is Tamworth Borough Council not taking action to stop pavement parking which in some areas is becoming a huge problem and putting pedestrians and the disabled at risk?”

Councillor S Doyle gave the following reply:-

Thank you Madam Mayor / Councillor Bilcliff for your question.

In response to your question Tamworth Borough Council do not have powers to enforce currently, or are likely to soon.

Where there have been reports of concerns, we encourage reporting to Staffordshire County Council for consideration of a Traffic Regulation Order under current legislation or the Police (who can enforce obstructive parking where they think appropriate).

Councillor R Bilcliff asked the following Supplementary question-

“Thank you I understand that the Traffic Regulatory Orders can help stop this pavement parking. You can then actually introduce them on individual streets or specific areas so enforcement officers could then issue parking control notices, but can the Council or will the Council campaign to raise awareness of the issues and dangers regarding pavement parking and a growing problem of parking too close to road junctions, which is illegal. Thank you.”

Councillor S Doyle gave the following reply:-

“Thank you Madam Mayor. There is a consultation in progress, currently looking at the following:

Firstly, improving the Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) process which you mentioned, under which local authorities can already prohibit pavement parking, in this case Staffordshire County Council are the responsible body.

Secondly, a legislative change to allow local authorities with civil parking enforcement powers to enforce against ‘unnecessary obstruction of the pavement’, again Staffordshire County Council to enforce.

And thirdly legislative change to introduce a London-style pavement parking prohibition throughout England.

This is run through PATROL, Parking and Traffic Regulations outside London, which both Staffordshire County Council and Tamworth Borough Council are members of.

Also, the consultation is open to everyone and a number of Residents have already contributed to the discussion, the consultation closes midnight 22nd of November this year. Thank you.”

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL NO.2

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

“How many fines have been issued over the last 12 months for littering?”

Councillor D Cook gave the following reply:-

“Thank you Madam Mayor, since September 2019, three littering fines have been issued – disposal of household waste where evidence was found and littering from a vehicle.”

Councillor R Bilcliff asked the following supplementary question-

“Thank you Madam Mayor. Discarded packaging from fast food outlets in the Town is still a major problem, could the towns CCTV cameras not help identify the culprits in known problem areas. Thank you Madam Mayor.”

Councillor D Cook gave the following reply:-

“Thank you Madam Mayor. I think first point Madam Mayor obviously, since March, officers have not been able to patrol it the same manner, but all cases of fly tipping are investigated where evidence may be found (envelopes/bills etc.).

The idea of using CCTV - I haven't got an answer off the top of my head, which sounds very costly and could be very expensive and would need working out how we could do it, how somebody could constantly monitor somebody dropping a crisp packet or a McDonalds Wrapper or whatever it is. I'm not sure how to approach that at the moment. Can I kindly request that Councillor Bilcliff gives me a few days to ask a few questions and I will feed back to him and obviously what I feedback back to Councillor Bilcliff, I will be happy to submit for the minutes thank you Madam Mayor.”

Additional information relating to the use of CCTV

Public CCTV cannot be used in isolation for littering fines where the offender cannot immediately be recognised as this needs to be witnessed by an authorised officer on the ground who is able to take name and other details and issue an incident ticket for the fine. We are not able to ask the public to identify the offenders just from CCTV so we could not act.

Whilst investigating an incident however, as a criminal offence and if in an area where there is CCTV the recordings can be reviewed and used as evidence by investigating officers.

CCTV can, however, report incidents of fly tip or litter which is picked up on routine camera observation where there is clear evidence e.g. a vehicle registration which can be followed up or evidence of someone clearly coming out of a premises (shop or domestic) to deposit litter. We have had incidents in the past for example where the CCTV room have seen someone simply throwing rubbish out of their car onto our car parks

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL NO.3

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

“On 6th August the Government published White Paper “Planning for the Future” with consultation windows of six weeks I know now its 12 weeks Has or will the Leader of the Council respond to this consultation and what does he believe the impact will be on this council, for example, the change to Section 106 Agreements?”

Councillor D Cooke gave the following reply:-

“I am deeply concerned about this White Paper, and the planning team at Tamworth Borough Council are currently going through the consultation document to enable Cabinet to consider the Council’s responses later in October, prior to the submission deadline of the 29th October. There is much in this consultation and the team are working hard to understand any potential impact this could have if it results in changes to the current system. It is too early to understand what and where these impacts will be, but we are going through it with a fine tooth comb.

While we all agree that Tamworth is pro-growth, I remain concerned there seems to be little mention of infrastructure, and more importantly the need to ensure border developments such as Arkall Farm, Robeys Lane have regard to ensure sufficient and suitable infrastructure is in place before they are granted permission which is essential.

I have asked our MP, who is also the Minister for a sit down chat around these proposals as well. Happy to keep members updated on those conversations. Thank you Madam Mayor,”

Councillor P Standen asked the following supplementary question –

“Thank you for your response Councillor Cook. I'm glad he is deeply concerned because so am I. There are parts of the White Paper which I agree scare me quite a lot, hopefully the consultation can help even that out. I understand that there are preparations underway for officer responses to the planning of the White Paper as this is likely to be a significant impact for Tamworth. The Government objectives as they have said is to “build” “build” “build”. There is potential for major developments on our borders which would only happen if they come with the required infrastructure to fully support them. What options are being reviewed to include all Council members in the consultation process feedback for example, a seminar? Thank you Madam Mayor.”

Councillor D Cook gave the following reply:-

“Yes thank you, sorry Madam Mayor I was having problems with my mute button. Yes happy to respond. If Councillors want a seminar on this I will speak to the Chief Executive in the morning. I say that loosely as I know the Chief Executive is listening and to see how quickly we could potentially pull something together. We also of course have a local plan working group which I'm happy if somebody

wants to take a lead and arrange a meeting I'm happy to attend with members of the local planning working group which I believe Councillor Standen is a member, also to review it. This is an important conversation, we have become fundamentally aware that nationally there is a housing shortage and it's been that way for a long time. I remember the Lyons Report from 2008 which showed a developing problem in the housing market because we simply do not build enough houses in the UK currently. My battle has always been, where I agree, I am pro-growth, we don't do the infrastructure right and we haven't under successive Governments for a long time, so I'm happy to talk to Councillor Standen offline and see what we can put together as a way that all members can input into the conversation and again I will be meeting with the MP about this and will feedback to all members on what's said there. Thank you."

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL NO.4

Under Procedure Rule No 11, Councillor Dr S People will ask the Portfolio Holder for Heritage and Regeneration, Councillor J Oates, the following question:-

"Would the Portfolio Holder confirm that the only substantial bid considered by Stoke and Staffs LEP was the "Tamworth Town Centre Regeneration Catalyst" which had already performed poorly when analysed according to the modified Treasury Green Book Rules?"

Councillor J Oates gave the following reply:-

"Thank you Madam Mayor. Whilst I should accept the question as it's written I believe the essence was that it's not that staffs and stoke LEP only considered this project but it was the only one from Tamworth that was considered as there are other projects obviously around the County so I believe that's what Councillor People was asking. Tamworth Borough Council selected one application to staffs and Stoke LEP under the getting Britain Building Fund and this is under a wider project name of Tamworth Town Centre regeneration catalyst this comprises of two parts. Funding towards an improved Corporation Street including the paving area and the churchyard and this was a £2.28 million ask and secondly funding to convert the Carnegie Centre in to an annex of the Enterprise Centre - this was a £190,000 ask.

The Corporation Street elements have been fully worked up to HMRC green belt compliance status and had a strong cost ratio benefits and they are also part of the future High Street fund bid. The Carnegie Centre had a less detailed business plan element but did also show strong outcomes. Staffordshire and SOT LEP use Hatch Regeneris to score the projects and conduct an evaluation resulting in a decision to support the Carnegie Centre element. Prior to this project it had not been scored or evaluated, both projects fit the aims and objectives of the fund and were the only projects that we had ready for submission it should be noted that the turnaround time to submit projects was only five working days and so the Council had to respond very quickly and submit these bids, thank you Madam Mayor."

Councillor Dr S People asked the following supplementary question-

“Thank you Madam Mayor. I thank the Portfolio Holder for his answer. At the end of the day the first part, Corporation Street part was judged by many Councillors in the original discussions on the town centre regeneration to be clearly weaker than some of the others and the fact that we eventually got some money towards the Carnegie centre, £190,000 means out of £22 million given to Staffordshire, Tamworth the second largest settlement in the county after Stoke-on-Trent. Does he agree with me that if we are going to be members of the Stoke and Staffordshire LEP that its time they woke up to the economic significance of Tamworth. Thank you Madam Mayor.”

Councillor J Oates gave the following reply:-

“Thank you and I completely agree with the sentiment of Councillor Peuple, we are in a competitive market and it's up to us to make sure we are recognised and it's also up to the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent LEP to recognise that we exist and as a representative of the district of Tamworth and now Lichfield. I'll be pushing for investment in Tamworth at every board meeting including the one this Thursday, which has 19 items on the agenda. Thank you very much Madam Mayor.”

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL NO.5

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

“As the Leader has stated; “Councils face ongoing budgetary challenges against continued reductions in government grants and this means tough decisions”. Would he agree that these decisions are even tougher for Tamworth because ten years of austerity cuts have done nothing to improve the resilience of the local economy as evidenced by the recent research showing how over-reliant Tamworth is on retail and logistics? Thank you Madam Mayor.”

Councillor D Cook gave the following reply:-

“Thank you Cllr Peuple for the question. I agree with the point you are trying to make around an over reliance on logistics and retail in Tamworth, that said the whole situation goes deeper.

There are several differing ways to look at economic success / failure of a place, in this case Tamworth Borough. There are also many measures, including Universal Credit claimants.

I have figures for all West Midlands areas. I will not read them all but give a few examples. However, will submit the whole list for the minutes. Under Universal Credit a broader span of claimants are required to look for work than under Jobseeker's Allowance. As Universal Credit Full Service is rolled out in particular areas, the number of people recorded as being on the Claimant Count is therefore likely to rise.

You will note that Tamworth is below both regional and national average. 7.5% in West Midlands, 6.5% nationally – its 6.2% currently in Tamworth.

West Midlands Local Authority areas - average 7.5% / national 6.5%			
rank	Authority	number	%
1	Birmingham	80,165	10.9
2	Wolverhampton	17,025	10.4
3	Sandwell	18,995	9.3
4	Walsall	15,150	8.8
5	Stoke-on-Trent	12,975	8.1
6	Dudley	14,530	7.5
7	Nuneaton and Bedworth	5,350	6.8
8	Coventry	16,310	6.7
9	Telford and Wrekin	7,110	6.4
10	Redditch	3,260	6.2
11	Tamworth	2,940	6.2
12	Wyre Forest	3,605	6.1
13	Solihull	7,475	5.9
14	Cannock Chase	3,660	5.8
15	Worcester	3,820	5.8
16	East Staffordshire	3,915	5.4
17	North Warwickshire	2,040	5.2
18	Lichfield	3,055	5
19	Malvern Hills	2,185	5
20	Rugby	3,290	5
21	Newcastle-under-Lyme	3,980	4.9
22	Shropshire	9,080	4.8
23	Wychavon	3,530	4.8
24	South Staffordshire	3,140	4.7
25	Bromsgrove	2,720	4.6
26	Herefordshire, County of	4,935	4.4
27	Stafford	3,590	4.4
28	Stratford-on-Avon	3,065	4.1
29	Warwick	3,740	4.1
30	Staffordshire Moorlands	2,185	3.8

Economically, whilst measures and information monitored is different, patterns are almost identical to 2008 – 2012 recession, it is therefore important to note, that Tamworth was one of the fastest recovering areas when we came out of the recession. I expect this pattern to be mirrored. Yes, we are listed in the top 10 nationally of local economies that will be hit hard, but we need to collectively plan how to succeed again. Please recall between 2008 and 2016 Tamworth had the biggest fall in unemployment percentage in the UK.

Reasons for high levels of UC are most likely as follows:

- Significant amount of uncertainty at the moment, causing uncertainty in businesses.

- Exposure to wider economies, typically our workforce is transient and therefore shocks in other areas, may disproportionately affect us.
- Automotive and aviation businesses have been significantly affected, our economy plays a significant role in these sectors through logistics / engineering / design / manufacturing supply chain and these businesses across the wider region do employ a fair number of our residents.
- Security sector – employs a lot of people, limited market for this at the moment due to no events and concerts – NEC unable to function.
- Parts of the retail, hospitality and tourism sectors have been disproportionately affected and we do have exposure to these areas – broader hospitality sector nationally is down 60% - Drayton manor a big local employer has limited, lots of café, food establishments, hotels etc. have seen redundancies.
- Social distancing has meant that in many customer-facing businesses, they simply cannot have as many staff or customers physically in the building so cuts have been made.
- Some comparison retailer's clothes shops etc. have made redundancies.
- There's been a rationalisation of what staff businesses need to be doing and how they do this – home working has allowed many sectors to reevaluate what is important and what can be done more effectively – expect this pattern to increase.
- Children's nurseries have also been hit – people staying at home can look after their own children so do not need services.
- We do have a higher than average exposure to logistics and retail but this seems to be limited in impact on local unemployment, other factors more likely as above.
- Positives:
 - Change in economy – logistics sector on the whole more important than ever – drivers, home food deliveries, just eat / uber eats, parcel couriers – have ocado on doorstep that have taken huge new contract with M&S.
 - Investment by large European theme park and zoo owner into Drayton manor, this will be positive going forward with planned investment into park.
 - Businesses are being cautious but generally, those adapting across all sectors are doing well, those that have not adapted will continue to struggle.
 - Strong housing market in terms of locally based suppliers and house building companies – seeing significant growth and demand in these areas. Many trades have done very well during pandemic and continue to do so.
 - On the whole the economy has become more resilient, less reliant upon larger businesses and more flexible to change.
 - We're seeing huge increase in demand for small office space at TEC – could fill centre 3 times over.

- Increase in support for start-up businesses including grants – this mirrors patterns in recession.

Let us also remember that 50% of our work force commute out of Tamworth.

All that being said, I still take Councillors People's point around over reliance on a few sectors. It is essential Tamworth continue with its hard work and links to the GBSLEP, WMCA and Staffs LEP to ensure training and skills as well as quality employment can be accessed by Tamworth residents. Thank you."

Councillor Dr S People asked the following supplementary question-

"Thank you very much Madam Mayor. Just briefly, to particularly welcome the final part of Councillor Cook's statement because the key thing that I think we need to recognise is that Educational standards of attainment have usually been at or near the lowest within Staffordshire and therefore the ability to provide skills and opportunities for well-paid and secure jobs is important and therefore I hope you would agree with me that we need to emphasise not only is Tamworth open for business, but it's also open for investment and that we will use our best offices and available investments to support residents and build employment in the Town."

Council of the Cook gave the following reply:-

"Absolutely Madam Mayor, thank you. No argument there whatsoever thank you."

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL NO.6

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

"I thank the Portfolio Holder for ensuring that as Chair of Heart of Tamworth, I was included in the interviews conducted by HQN in relation to the social isolation strategy. The homelessness strategy, also being developed by HQN, is due to come to Scrutiny in October. What steps have been taken by officers and the consultant(s) to engage with the voluntary sector in developing the policy?"

Councillor M Cook gave the following reply:-

"Thank you Madam Mayor and I thank Councillor People for her question.

One of our core tasks at Tamworth Borough Council, is supporting our communities to have good local resilience, this is achieved by maximising and building on the work of our 'anchor' and third sector organisations. And of course, empowering our communities by creating independence in our neighbourhoods. This is especially important as we continue to manage the impact of COVID-19 going forward.

Councillor People has referred to two separate pieces of work that we have been progressing over the last few months, supported by an expert consultancy team, including HQN.

The first piece of work mentioned in the question was about the work we are undertaking to understanding vulnerability. To clarify, this is not part of a social isolation strategy. The purpose of this work on vulnerability was four-fold.

Firstly, to propose a definition around vulnerability; secondly to map vulnerable groups across Tamworth, which was followed up by describing the base line services to these groups during the incident response to the pandemic and finally to make suggestions regarding actions going forward.

This ultimately has and will form part of the councils' recovery and reset planning as part of our COVID-19 response and will allow us, and our partners to help support the most vulnerable in our communities.

Councillor People will know that the consultants spoke to a range of stakeholders, including her in her voluntary sector role, to inform this work.

The report is only just in and we are currently reviewing this detail to agree where this fits in the recovery and reset agenda and will be sharing with all members when that phase of the work is done and when there is a clear set of proposals. I'm more than happy to meet with Councillor People in her housing shadow role to go through that in more detail.

The work will also provide an evidence base for the Partnerships team to further develop an approach to grants, commissioning and ongoing support for the voluntary sector with the County Council, Support Staffordshire and SCVYS to continue the excellent work that took place and continues during the ongoing COVID pandemic.

With regard to the evidence base and updated Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, the Council has engaged a range of partners in relation to the draft produced. This includes elected members, the voluntary sector, key contacts and others.

This evidence building process is moving into the final stages, in advance of officers reporting to Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny on the 24th September 2020. I have asked for more detailed inclusion on who the responses were received from during that meeting. A full report and presentation will be made available and have also asked that to be shared after the meeting to all other members. All stakeholder feedback including Scrutiny observations will be reported to Cabinet as we receive the final strategy for approval by the end of 2020.

I would just like to add my thanks to Councillor People for raising this matter. In a time such as this, it is very easy to lose sight of topics such as this in a public forum, so any opportunity for me to be able to shout about the wonderful work being undertaken by our team, those who support us and most importantly of all, the voluntary sector who are championing improvements for those most in need, is one I will always take.

Thank you Madam Mayor.”

Councillor S Peale asked the following supplementary question –

“Thank you Madam Mayor. Can I thank Councillor Cook for her response and for the clarification on the vulnerability strategy, Councillor Cook would it surprise you to hear that the charity Heart of Tamworth which was responsible for running the winter night shelter last winter and Starfish who ran it the previous year so far, as I'm aware, have not been consulted on the homelessness strategy and I can say that with some authority as I'm still chair of the Heart of Tamworth and I'm company secretary for Starfish.”

Council M Cook gave the following reply:-

“Thank you for that I'm not 100% certain at this stage but I'm more than happy to take that away and get an answer back to you within the next couple of days thank you.”

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL NO.7

Under Procedure Rule No 11, Councillor S Peale will ask the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Culture, Councillor J Chesworth, the following question:-

“Would the Portfolio Holder please clarify what the Council's policy is on the maintenance of trees?”

Councillor J Chesworth gave the following reply:-

“Thank you Madam Mayor and thank you Councillor Peale for your question. The Council manages its own tree stock within the borough, trees provide both benefits and challenges in our urban environment.

Trees in parks, woodlands, and other green spaces create an attractive and sustainable place where people can live, visit and invest. Trees not only look good but also provide many benefits including habitat for insects, bats and birds, shading from summer sun and shelter from winds, carbon capture and storage, interception of rain and removal of dust and grime. Without trees the district would be a poorer and less attractive place.

The Council has a legal obligations to ensure that the trees on its land are safe, are not causing damage to property or obstructing the highway.

For some people trees can cause inconvenience where it is felt that they block out light or views, interfere with TV signals, drop twigs, leaves, fruit and sap on to paths, drives and cars.

The Council do not remove/reduce healthy trees to alleviate any of the above issues.

The Council do remove/reduce dead, diseased or dangerous trees on its own land and in extreme situations, where there is a danger to the public on private land.

The Council may remove trees that may be causing subsidence or other damage to property, dependant on individual circumstances.

The Council manages public trees covered by Tree Preservation Orders or in Conservation Areas.

Most public trees near private property have been there for many years and help to create a more attractive and sustainable urban environment. We are under no obligation to remove a tree on public land simply because it is disliked or may cause inconvenience to people who live nearby.

Property owners who have trees growing on their land have similar obligations to the Council and are responsible for ensuring that their trees do not pose a danger to their neighbours. Private owners should also ensure that trees and shrubs growing on their land do not obstruct or encroach on the highway, including foot paths.

Property owners are broadly entitled to cut back any overhanging branches or encroaching roots from a neighbouring tree, up to the boundary of their property. If your tree is subject to a Tree Preservation Order or is in a Conservation Area any work must be formally approved by Planning. Thank you Madam Mayor.”

Councillor S People made the following comment-“Madam Mayor thank you very much I don’t have a supplementary question I would just like to mention that my question was prompted by the large number of issues I’ve had raised by

residents about trees particularly street trees so felt it was useful to have clarification. Thank you.”

21 ANNUAL REPORT ON THE TREASURY MANAGEMENT SERVICE AND ACTUAL PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS 2019/20

The Annual Treasury report is a requirement of the Council’s reporting procedures. It covers the Treasury activity for 2019/20, and the actual Prudential Indicators for 2019/20.

RESOLVED That Council;

- 1 Approved the actual 2019/20 Prudential and Treasury Indicators within the report and shown at Appendix 1;
- 2 Accepted the Annual Treasury Management Report for 2019/20; and
- 3 Further to the Assembly Rooms update report to Cabinet on 30th July, Council approved the financing of the projected £1.2m overspend and the increase required in the capital programme

(Moved by Councillor R Pritchard and seconded by Councillor Dr S Peuple)

Councillor Dr S Peuple moved a motion seconded by Councillor R Bilcliff to add an additional recommendation, which following a unanimous vote was carried

RESOLVED That Council

Congratulated all staff involved in the making of the report and achieving positive outcomes in such extraordinary circumstances.

The Mayor