



MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD ON 27th OCTOBER 2020

PRESENT: Councillor , Councillors M Oates, 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, S Peuple, Dr S Peuple, R Pritchard, S Pritchard, R Rogers, P Standen, M Summers and P Thurgood

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

Apologies received from: Councillor(s) R Claymore, R Kingstone and B Price

22 TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 15th September 2020 were approved and signed as a correct record.

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

23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest.

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

Councillor J Oates announced the following;

“Thank you Mr Deputy Mayor. Just a very brief announcement.

We have been informed this afternoon that Tamworth and the whole of Staffordshire will be escalating on the COVID-19 risk and tiers and we will be moved to high risk, which means we will move to a tier two regime, we believe this will be at one minute past midnight on Saturday morning. We will have suitable communication sent out to all members over the next 24 hours.

The key differences in where we are at now is we will not be able to mix or meet family or friends outside of our household indoors, that does mean however you can still go for a meal with your household in a pub or a restaurant but you can't mix with households indoors. You could still meet people in the park just socially distanced.

The other key thing is that care homes will be asked to restrict their visiting to essential visits only.

They are the key changes when we move up to tier two. As I said communications will be sent out to all members and the public tomorrow.

I will just repeat that Tamworth and the rest of Staffordshire has now tripped into high risk in terms of the Covid pandemic and we are now operating at a tier two level. Thank you Mr Deputy Mayor."

25 QUESTION TIME:

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL NO.1

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

"On 24th May 2020 plans were unveiled by the housing secretary Robert Jenrick MP to commit to providing 3500 units for rough sleepers and a budget of 160 million for 20/21. Can I ask the portfolio holder how the 'everyone in' initiative worked here in Tamworth during lockdown?"

Councillor M Cook gave the following reply:-

"Thank you Mr Deputy Mayor.

Thanks also to Cllr Clements for her question.

Preventing homelessness and helping people, often some of the most vulnerable in society, accessing suitable housing is part of Tamworth's core strategic purpose.

Despite the national crisis facing our communities as a result of the pandemic, never more has our commitment been higher to supporting national, regional and local efforts to prevent homelessness.

The topic of the 'Everyone In' initiative was discussed at length in the meeting of Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny on 24th September. I'm aware Cllr Clements wasn't able to attend this meeting due to another commitment, however, from our conversations, it is clear you are fully versed in the outputs from this meeting.

In terms of Tamworth specifically, during "the everyone in" initiative, we supported 16 vulnerable people and put in place to support the wider homeless strategy, a number of measures including:

A free phone number set up for Rough sleepers to ensure the service is accessible to all.

All Night shelter guests were accommodated at the point the country went into lock down and the shelter was forced to close. In total, accommodation was sought for 7 rough sleepers. No one returned to Rough Sleeping, a bed was secured for all.

We purchased 5 rooms in local B&B's for 16 weeks, with unoccupied and occupied nightly rates negotiated in order to save money.

All placements into B&B and Temporary Accommodation (TA) are now completed remotely and virtually to protect people from becoming infected.

The Supported Housing Team from Ellerbeck and Chestnut Court provided support to those in TA stock, as well as those living in those units.

Continuing our detailed work with key partners such as social services to support vulnerable care leavers, Ministry of Justice (MOJ); prisoners due to early release requirements and hospitals to ensure no one returns to rough sleeping.

COVID-19 secure checklist through risk assessments and offering PPE to those in B&B and having self-contained units available for those high risk clients.

Plus we worked with all our normal partners, as well as third sector groups to support anyone who was at risk of homelessness.

I will just remind members of Health and Wellbeing that Cllr Ford has also asked for observations and feedback by the 3rd November so officers can integrate this into the Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy set to be considered by Cabinet on 3rd December 2020. Thank you Cllr Clements for your question, Im happy to take a supplementary.”

Councillor T Clements asked the following supplementary question-

“As we are all too aware we have people on our streets perceived to be homeless but are actually beggars, they are often seen with a vessel in front of them and although they may not be physically asking for money this is still classed as active begging. Please can the Portfolio Holder provide the figures for how many CPWs, CPNs or CBO notices have been issued if any to help stop this criminal offences and if necessary signpost these people to the right help.”

Councillor M Cook gave the following reply:-

“Thank you Mr Deputy Mayor and thank you Councillor Clements for the supplementary and also the early sight of this to enable me to get the information requested. We have successfully issued one CPN notice for a person who was

falsely claiming to be homeless in Middle Entry, this individual was subsequently prosecuted and issued with both a fine and a criminal record. The person was fully known to all services and is now compliant and has been successfully dealt with, although still has many of the outstanding problems which led to this behaviour in the first place.

We currently have an outstanding prosecution with the police for another person who has breached conditions which were to fully engage with us and others including after having a house allocated and not falsely begging in Tamworth unfortunately this individual hasn't yet stopped doing so, so we are currently prosecuting.

CPNs are dealt with through the single justice protocol which enables the magistrate to consider the evidence without having to attend court we and the police always hoped that this approach would prevent further issues, however people should be aware that if this behaviour continues the police will always consider more serious charges which I fully support and I hope members do too.

I am conscious that Tamworth fortunately has a very low rough sleeping count but we do seem to attract a number of individuals that like coming to Tamworth to beg. I believe it's due to the fact that Tamworth residents are kind hearted enough to see someone in need and try to help by giving them a couple of pound to help them out, however can I please urge all members of the public not to do so, not because I'm cold hearted which some might claim but because these people like taking our residents for fools. Apparently an average taking for beggars in Tamworth Town Centre can be upwards of £200 a day that's £200 a day of hard-working, members of the public's money that is getting given to people that are sitting with a bowl in front of them, with a perfectly good house around them as well.

So if members of the public do see somebody and are concerned please speak to us as a Council or call the police. We will always try to engage With those individuals to understand their issues, not to jump to conclusions or issue sanctions but actually try and understand why this is the case and in all instances will encourage people to get the support that they need because as Councillor Clements rightly said it is about getting people that support and getting them underlying issue tackled. Thank you very much."

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL NO.2

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

"The department for transport has launched a consultation on pavement parking and making pavements accessible to all. Cllr David Renard from the LGA has long called for the ban to be extended to all areas of England, not just London. When can we see some form of consultation here in Tamworth?"

Councillor S Doyle gave the following reply:-

“Thank you, Mr Deputy Mayor and Cllr Clements,

I’m aware of the consultation and believe this was covered previously, at the Full Council meeting on the 15th of September, where Cllr Bilcliff raised a very similar question.

To note the Government are looking to bring in regulations to support enforcement around parking on pavements and that the responsibility would still sit with Staffordshire County Council who are the Highways Authority and manage the civil enforcement.

Where there have been reports of concerns, we encourage that people report such concerns to Staffordshire County Council for consideration of a Traffic Regulation Order under current legislation.

For obstructive parking then Residents should also look to contact the Police, who have the authority to enforce obstructive parking where they believe it to be appropriate.

Tamworth Borough Council may be a member of PATROL, Parking and Traffic Regulations outside London, along with Staffordshire County Council.

Although the responsibilities for Tamworth Borough Council is limited to the management of its own car parks.

Also, to remind members the consultation process is still on-going and closes the 22nd of November this year.

I believe that Cllr Clements has taken up the option to participate in the consultation process and is championing the issue with members and Officers at the County Council.

Tamworth Council and Residents would welcome any improvements that can be made in resolving this issue by the County Council and Police.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Mayor & Cllr Clements”

Councillor T Clements asked the following supplementary question-

“I understand that most of the enforcement comes under the County Council remit obviously being a County Councillor. Does the Portfolio Holder agree that an overhaul of parking needs to be had with all partners working together so we know where the enforcement lies within each area of regulation? In a time where we are encouraging people to walk and cycle more, pavements need to be used for the right purpose and that’s for pedestrians. Thank you”

Councillor S Doyle gave the following reply:-

“Thank you Deputy Mayor and Councillor Clements.

Yes I agree we should.

From Tamworth's perspective we would look to publicise and support any measures taken by Staffordshire County Council and the police in dealing with this issue.

What we must remember though, the public have the freedom to own as many cars and vehicles as they choose which is at the hub of the problem.

Unfortunately, this has created a situation where many households now have 2, 3 or more vehicles this causes additional problems in the many areas/estates where the motor vehicle were never part of the original planning consideration or when included as part of the planning, having one car was considered a luxury rather than the normal.

Even today to purchase a home with ample parking for 3 or more cars can be expensive and beyond the range of the majority.

Thank you very much for your question Councillor Clements and Mr Deputy Mayor."

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:-

"Does the Leader of the Council support Marcus Rashford's campaign to extend free school meals for the poorest children into the holidays in Tamworth and the rest of England, and will he use his and this council's influence to continue the work to end child hunger in Tamworth?"

Councillor D Cook gave the following reply:-

"Thank you Mr Deputy Mayor,

I agree that the efforts by Marcus Rashford are indeed to his credit, but putting him aside as an individual for one minute. If the question is do I support the principle of ending child hunger, then of course, both this Council and myself support this principle fully. Members will be aware that at the start of the pandemic, extraordinary measures were put in place to help vulnerable children, including extending free school meals when schools were partially closed.

However, there are many ways of approaching this aim and I am confident at present these are being explored and used in Tamworth and wider Staffordshire. Thank you Mr Deputy Mayor."

Councillor P Standen asked the following supplementary question-

"Can I thank the Leader for his response?"

I never thought when I was younger that I would be speaking in public supporting a man united player

I understand that Heart of Tamworth, and I hope the other charitable groups are working to prevent hunger in this half term in Tamworth for the Tamworth children.

Perhaps we as Councillors can bear this in mind when it comes to allocate our £300 community grants that we each have. Does the Leader of the Council agree with me that no parent in Tamworth or anywhere in the Country should fear school holidays during the winter period, facing the choice of whether to feed their family or heat their home? If so does he agree that the current levels of universal benefit should be increased to help remove food and fuel poverty? Thank you Mr Deputy Mayor.”

Councillor D Cook gave the following reply:-

As stated before, at the start of the pandemic, extraordinary measures were put in place by Government to help vulnerable children, including extending free school meals when schools were partially closed. However, now schools are operating as normal; we must continue to find ways, alongside free school meals, to ensure children do not go hungry. Extra steps have been needed during the pandemic to help families in our area, including over holiday periods.

Free School Meals are intended to support children while they are learning and 99 per cent of schools are now back open. During the holidays, families must have a robust safety net, which can help them cope with the extra pressures of coronavirus. At the start of the pandemic, key benefits were boosted by the Government by over £1,000 per year for 12 months, part of a £9.3 billion increase to the welfare safety net. Upper tier Councils have been given an extra £63m to help those families most in need.

As the pandemic evolves, the Government must remain open to additional support measures based on the need at the time. However, it is also important to be clear about what Parliament decided recently.

While there has been considerable coverage of what Parliament did not agree, there has been less attention to what it did agree and what Conservatives supported – but this does not sell papers

MPs backed the existing new package of support measures for families, which is worth billions on top of Free School Meals. Parliament endorsed ongoing activities to help the most vulnerable children in society.

Anyone following the debate will see as the need has changed during the pandemic, so support has too. Indeed, the day after this parliamentary debate, which carried no weight in terms of being legally binding, new job support measures were announced. The Government is to continue in this spirit to support the most vulnerable children in a range of ways.

I know that many families are going through tough times at the moment, and this is reflected in the increasing numbers of children being registered for free school

meals. I am reassured that substantial support, such as increased universal credit among other measures, has already been put in place to help families through this crisis and to ensure children and their families do not go hungry.

I also very much welcome the recent announcement by Staffordshire County Council that thousands of low-income families in Staffordshire will be offered financial support over the October half term. This will be in the form of a £15 voucher to the families of up to 18,000 children, which can be used in major supermarkets on food or essential supplies. The scheme will be administered through schools and will be available to families of children who are eligible for free school meals during term time.

Now before anyone assumes the County Council is just bailing out Government. The money comes from £823,000 they were allocated in August from the 'Covid 19 Local Authority Emergency Assistance Grant for Food and Essential Supplies'. This is in line with the purpose of the grant as set out in the DEFRA guidance

They had not spent their whole allocation, and so Conservatives wanted to make use of it for families in need. The sequence of events, which led up to this is as follows:

- Wednesday 7 Oct – Discussion about the proposal to use the fund for FSMs at Pre-cabinet Cabinet.
- Thursday 8 Oct – Decision trailed at Full Council by Mark Sutton in response to a question from Sue Woodward. Mark makes clear in his response to Sue's supplementary question that we were considering Free School meals.
- Wednesday 15 Oct – Letter to all Head teachers notifying them of the Staffordshire Free School Meals scheme would continue in October half term,
- Thursday 21 Oct at 10.49am – Press release out to all MPs. A short time later, it was uploaded to the Staffordshire Newsroom on their website for all to see.
- Thursday 21 Oct at 4.32pm – Debate begins in Parliament with a vote at 6.59pm.

Parents across the country have been going through a particularly difficult and stressful time recently and so I am pleased that the Country Council are offering this unprecedented support. Thank you Mr Deputy Mayor."

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL NO.4

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

"Since the announcement by the Staffordshire Police and Crime Commissioner that the site of the former Tamworth Police station was being put up for sale; what steps has Tamworth Borough Council taken regarding the future of this property, given that it is integral to the "Gungate Masterplan" drawn up by the consultants?"

Councillor D Cook gave the following reply:-

“There have been discussions between Staffordshire Police and Tamworth Borough Council in relation the Council acquiring the police station. Offers have been made to purchase the police station on a commercial basis, unfortunately we have not been able to agree on a purchase price and as a result Staffordshire Police decided to market the property through an agent.

We are reviewing the market for the property and may make further offers through the appointed agent if appropriate. Ideally the Council would like to work with Staffordshire Police to reach an agreement for the transfer of the property but it will also need to consider other options available to it in order to acquire the site if required as part of the wider development. This could include CPO, but we would rather work in partnership

I have had many personal conversations with the PFCC Matthew Ellis to ensure we work as closely as possible to ensure the site works for both parties and especially the people of Tamworth.”

Councillor Dr S Peale asked the following supplementary question-

“Thank you Mr Deputy Mayor. I’m pleased to hear the Leader of the Council say that he is still wanting to negotiate a settlement but I’m also pleased to hear that he has put on record tonight the use of a Compulsory Purchase Order remains an option and I would ask him whether he agrees with me that that the police and crime commissioner has to bear in mind that ultimately the needs of the town as a whole will come first? Thank you Mr Deputy Mayor.”

Councillor D Cook gave the following reply:-

“Thank you Mr Deputy Mayor. Having had many conversations with Matthew Ellis the Police and Crime Commissioner I can assure all members that Matthews’s heart is still true to ensure the residents of Staffordshire and especially Tamworth are certainly put at the forefront of anything that happens.

Discussions do go on, We need to ensure that both parties, the police and the Council gain benefit but as said we especially need to work together to ensure the site delivers as best as it can for the people of Tamworth thank you.”

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL NO.5

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

“Whilst I appreciate that Covid 19 will have disrupted the timetable for the review of corporate assets, the community centre in the Leyfields was empty for a long time before Covid. Please would you inform the Council about your plans for the centre going forward?”

Councillor R Pritchard gave the following reply:-

“Thank you Mr Deputy Mayor,

Since the centre became vacant we have seen several expressions of interest but none of these have progressed as they have proven not to be viable.

We are in the process of inviting tenders for a condition survey of the Councils non-housing property portfolio.

This work is due to commence in early 2021 and will be used to inform the investment requirements for the stock which in turn will be used in the development of the wider Asset Management Strategy.

The strategy is likely to result in a series of Asset Management Plans and options appraisals; the future of assets such as the Leyfields community centre will be considered within this project.

In deciding the future of the building we will of course consider the needs of the wider community.”

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL NO.6

Under Procedure Rule No 11, Councillor S Peple will ask the Chair of Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee, Councillor R Ford, the following question:-

“Would the Chair agree with me that the commitment by University Hospitals of Derby and Burton NHS Foundation Trust to deliver more services at the Sir Robert Peel is a welcome step forward?”

Councillor R Ford gave the following reply:-

“The commitment by the UHDB NHS Foundation Trust to provide additional services at the Sir Robert Peel Hospital is incredibly welcome.

The presentation received by the UHDB NHS Foundation Trust at the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee on 20/10/20 highlighted some of the new services that have already been provided, as well as plans for additional services in the future. I believe this shows that they are dedicated to community hospitals and this can only be considered a benefit to residents of Tamworth.

Residents of Tamworth have my assurance that the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee will continue to work with all partners, to champion the Sir Robert Peel Hospital and press for further services to be made available locally.”

The Report of the Leader of the Council provided an updated Diversity and Equality Scheme which gives assurance that systems or work streams are in place where required in order that Tamworth Borough Council embraces equality and diversity and remains compliant with legislation.

RESOLVED That Council;

Approved the Diversity and Equality Scheme 2020 – 2024 and incorporated action plan for immediate implementation and publication.

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

27 PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2020

The Report of the Leader of the Council detailed Tamworth Borough Council's Pay Policy Statement so that statutory guidance as set out in S38 of the Localism Act is adhered to.

RESOLVED That;

The Pay Policy Statement 2020 was formally approved by Council for adoption and publication in line with the Localism Act 2011.

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

28 REGULATION OF MEMBERS CONDUCT

The Report of the Monitoring Officer advised Members of the number of complaints received for the period 01 May 2019 until 30 April 2020 in relation to alleged breaches of the Members' Code of Conduct arising from implementation of Part 1 Chapter 7 of the Localism Act 2011 which introduced provisions to assist with the regulation of standards of conduct for elected and co-opted Councillors.

RESOLVED That;

Council endorsed the findings of this report.

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

29 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

The Chair of Audit and Governance presented the Annual Report of the Audit & Governance Committee 2019/20 for Council's endorsement

RESOLVED That;

The Annual Report of the Audit & Governance Committee 2019/20 was endorsed.

(Moved by Councillor M Summers and seconded by Councillor J Faulkner)

30 SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2019-2020 ANNUAL REPORTS

Following circulation to all councillors by email on 2 July 2020, the attached Annual Reports were presented to Council by the Scrutiny chairs to formally update Council on the activities of the Corporate Scrutiny, Infrastructure Safety & Growth Scrutiny and Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committees over the year 2019/20 which included,

- Chair's overview
- Working Groups
- Recommendations made in the year to Cabinet
- Committee Terms of Reference
- Membership and Attendance
- Training & Effectiveness
- Work Plan
- Resource implications

Corporate Scrutiny

RESOLVED That Council;

Noted the Annual Report of the Committee

Noted the updated process for production and consideration of this Annual Report;

Noted a particular thank you to the Democratic Services Officer and to all Committee members for the hard work and positive contributions during the year.

(Moved by Councillor T Jay and seconded by Councillor R Bilcliff)

Infrastructure, Safety & Growth

RESOLVED That Council;

Noted the Annual Report of the Committee

Noted the updated process for production and consideration of this Annual Report;

The Chair of Infrastructure, Safety & Growth thanked the Committee, Officers and Portfolio Holders for their hard work on the Committee.

(Moved by Councillor S Goodall and seconded by Councillor Dr S Peuple)

Health and Wellbeing

RESOLVED That Council;

Noted the Annual Report of the Committee

Noted the updated process for production and consideration of this Annual Report.

The Chair of Health and Wellbeing also thanked all members of the Committee for their invaluable contributions and a mention of thanks was given to the Democratic Services Officer.

(Moved by Councillor R Ford and seconded by Councillor P Brindley)

31 OUTSIDE BODIES

RESOLVED That Council;

Endorsed the Outside Bodies List 2020/2021.

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

The Mayor