



MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD ON 15th DECEMBER 2020

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

The following officers were present: Andrew Barratt (Chief Executive), Anica Goodwin (Executive Director Organisation), Stefan Garner (Executive Director Finance), Sarah McGrandle (Assistant Director Operations and Leisure), Lynne Pugh (Assistant Director Finance), 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)

32 TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 27th October 2020 were approved and signed as a correct record with the agreed amendment to “Heart of Tamworth” from “Part of Tamworth” on Agenda item 4, Questions from members of the council no.3, supplementary from Councillor P Standen.

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

33 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest.

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

Councillor R Pritchard made the following announcement -

“Thank you Madam Mayor with your indulgence Madam Mayor in light of our experiences this year and adapting to the format of meetings in this public health

situation, I would like to move the following motions without notice under rule 4.2.27 and 4.13q

No 1 that the Council formally thank all officers for their efforts to ensure that this Council could still meet during the pandemic

No 2, that in order to help the authority begin to deliver the early stage of the reset and recovery plan, the Council continue to hold virtual meetings for the coming municipal year subject to legislation;

No 3 that we return to the constituted membership for Cabinet meetings, and;

No, 4 we ask Officers to continue to seek feedback to improve both members and the public's experience of virtual meetings and I hope for a second Madam Mayor."

(Moved by Councillor R Pritchard and seconded by Councillor C Cooke)

A vote was taken the 4 motions were carried.

Councillor D Cook made the following announcement -

"Thank you Madam Mayor and Merry Christmas

Please can I ask Councillor and Officer Colleagues of Tamworth Borough Council to note my intention to resign as Leader of the Council.

I have been Leader of this Council for 11 years and 8 days, and other than my family, it has been the greatest privilege of my life and I hope you all agree I gave it my all. I never took it for granted and was honoured to be this Council's choice for so long.

During this period I have also held a full time day job and was for a couple of years of my leadership I was also a single father – again while fully employed in the demanding Logistics sector and Leader of this Council 24/7. That takes a lot of managing - and is exhausting. But I made it work as best as my abilities enabled.

However, 11 years is long enough for anyone to juggle these demands. Being Leader of TBC is all my youngest daughter remembers me ever being – she is actually in pieces knowing I do this because she sees it as part of who her father is.

For those who did not know, my wife Cllr Michelle Cook is pregnant and it is time for me to give her my fuller attention as well as my daughters.

Leadership has been a journey full of up's and down's, full of success and the odd failure. I have never believed I am infallible and I am certainly not perfect, but

no one can be, certainly not when governing for 77,000 people and their complex needs and desires.

I am a great believer in “Time will not dim the glory of their deeds.” a quote from General John J. Pershing.

I say this because I recall a conversation as my leadership began so long ago with two former Council Leaders, Cllr Jeremy Oates and Cllr Peter Seekings - who sadly passed away a few years ago. They asked me over a cup of tea what legacy I wanted. I responded, “Not to be remembered”. Simply because 99% of the time in politics you are remembered for your failings rather than your successes. It is a cruel truth.

As the sun sets on my time in this role, I see it different now. I look back with pride on the journey undertaken, on how we collectively moved the Council and the Town forward with confidence and energy. Its strange how at the end, you start to recall the beginning.

Early December 2009, I was on a training course called the “Leadership Academy” in Coventry and on this day my predecessor resigned as Council Leader. I walked into the course on Monday 8am as Deputy Leader, by 6pm I was Leader of the Council (well while awaiting a Council vote). The company running the course still dine out on that, Deputy Leader walked in to our Leadership Academy training course and he was Leader 10 hours later.

I will never forget that Monday afternoon, on the phone with former Council Leader Jeremy Oates. It was clear one of us needed to step up to Leader. It was an hour’s conversation along the lines of - you have to take Leadership, no way, you do. No you do. I’m not, you do it. This went on a long time before I caved.

I had declined Leadership 5 months earlier in June 2009, so tried twice to refuse, succeeded once.

I never aspired to Leader and yet here I am 11 years later.

I think of the challenges myself and colleagues met head on. We didn’t always make popular choices, but we made the choices with the evidence available.

HRA Reform in 2011 as the nature of financing Council Housing stock budgets changed. A massive long term financial commitment

The decade of Austerity we navigated was challenging year to year since the first government cut to our finances in February 2010 from Gordon Brown. 7.2% if memory serves. The fact that today we still have not ceased a Council service to our residents gives me great pride. Yes, some services are different and some changed to deliver outcomes differently, but they all still exist.

We had the courage to finally resolve the financial black hole that was Tamworth Golf Course and provide much needed houses. This was a hard road to walk and I recall answering 100’s of E-mails at 2am / 3am some nights from residents, as I insisted it was my role to stand on the front line of the decision and give residents the answers myself. Leaders lead from the front.

Had the courage to introduce Green Bin charges, not a single Councillor wanted to do this, including me? Still hate it! However, we knew it had to be done due to the changing nature of Recycling credits.

The demolition and re-build of Tinkers Green and the Kiera housing estates. In the 21st Century, people should not have to live in homes of that poor quality.

We took our involvement in economic development away from just Staffordshire, but joined Economic Partnerships with Councils around Greater Birmingham. This is where Tamworth's economy truly sits and we wanted a seat at the table.

Resourcing £1.1million pounds to secure the foundations of the castle in 2011/12 ensuring it stands for future generations to enjoy.

Securing £6 million plus to bring the Assembly Rooms back to life. It looks and is spectacular again. It is just a shame that during Covid 19 it remains temporarily closed.

Agreed to take refugee families from war torn Syria and give them homes in Tamworth. And then almost hand in hand with Cllr Simon Peuple, Leader of the Labour Councillors faced down an EDL protest over the decision.

I recall that in 2015 for the first time since 1981 we actually increased the number of Council houses the council had in total over that 12 months. In fact, in my own ward we doubled the number of Council houses. Not many Conservative Leaders can state that, well if any. In fairness, it went from 8 to 16, but there you go!

The largest percentage drop in unemployment in the UK between 2008 and 2015 – a fall of 71% in unemployment.

Led the 2019 campaign “Tamworth – What’s next”. From this campaign, we are designing a master plan to change our Town Centre and evolve it into a 21st century destination of choice.

Watched this Council and our superb voluntary sector navigate the Pandemic, working so hard to help and protect those who needed us. I will never be able to thank Council officers and volunteers fully for their efforts.

But one of my proudest successes is under my Leadership was I led us away from Political whims and ideology, all our policies and decisions became purely evidence based working hand in hand with public sector partners. Let us recall that our Peer Review in 2013, completed by the Local Government Association stated the council has “Strong Political Leadership”.

Oh and also spent the 2015 General Election dealing with a pig with a Policeman's helmet, Great fun!

In my time of Leadership, I have employed 3 Chief Executives, a total of 12 Cabinet members and had some great sparring sessions with 3 different Opposition Leaders. Hence my point, 11 years is enough for the present. Always leave with them wanting more. (I say tongue in cheek).

At this point Madam Mayor, I wish thank a few colleagues for support and friendship over the last decade or so. I hope all appreciate I cannot thank everyone tonight, there are simply too many and in my own time I will thank them all personally. However, here is a few who deserve mention.

My rock, Cllr Robert Pritchard. You have been my deputy leader for 10 years, In fact, you were never a deputy, you were stood with me every day shoulder to shoulder, a rock of political advice and support.

My great friend Cllr Jeremy Oates. I was your deputy leader so long ago and you taught me so much. Your continued advice and sound thinking has been essential. In fact, my wife thinks I talk to you more than her.

My go to guy, Cllr Stephen Doyle. I have changed your Cabinet position so often I cannot remember them all. This was not because you ever failed, but that you are so capable of bringing fresh insight and hitting the ground running no matter the terrain. I will never be able to fully thank you and your wife Jenny for all the childcare you provided for my daughter during some hard times and making her so welcome in your home.

The legend, Cllr Steve Claymore. As we all know, Steve sadly passed away in 2019, without Steve my leadership would have been a failure. His achievements for Tamworth out live him and he was the finest cabinet member I ever saw operate.

And of course, the two Chief Executives I gave the roles. Tony Goodwin and Andrew Barratt, I would not have changed either of you for any other Chief Exec I ever met. Your professionalism and passion for Tamworth shine through daily.

As I say, others need to be thanked and I will be doing the rounds so to speak.

So Madam Mayor, I stated at the beginning of this short speech it was my intention to resign. I will now set out the timetable for this.

I invite this Council to elect a new Leader at the Council meeting of 23rd February 2021 after I have presented the Budget, the new leader to take the office on the 1st March 2021.

My intention is to ensure over the next two months that the Council sets a solid budget for the coming years and this will be challenging. We know the impact of the pandemic and of the proposed government changes to retained Business Rates have put a hole in our finances and strong Leaders do not run from a problem. Thus, I will deliver the budget in February, the Council will then elect a new Leader and I have a few days for a smooth hand over leading to the 1st March.

I feel this is the right time for me to stop, a decision I took while on family holiday in Crete in July 2020. In fact I had already informed the CEO and Leader of the Opposition this would be my final year no matter what earlier than that. The timeline gives a new Leader the right to set the State of the Borough Debate in March 2021 and potentially outline their vision. The new Leader can then lead their political group into the next local elections.

It is not for me to decide who follows me Madam Mayor; it is for all the Councillors to decide on the 23rd February. I am sure all Political groups will discuss this over coming weeks leading to a democratic vote.

Let me finish with some hard-earned advice for whoever follows me into Leadership. Be strong, be honest, be humble, never hide and hold the line on your decisions, don't see a popularity contest, see long-term opportunities to improve the lives of the residents we serve. Follow the evidence, not an ideology. And, never underestimate the intelligence of the residents of Tamworth.

Tamworth is a magnificent place. Full of diverse and wonderful people. They deserve our best and I know we all give all of ourselves to the principle. We might not always align in agreement, but I know every single Councillor in Tamworth came into the role with the right intentions.

Therefore, it's not quite goodbye yet, but the process can begin. It been an honour to continue to gain your support year after year and I thank you for the confidence you have shown in me.

I believe tonight that I see how lucky I am to have had something that makes saying Goodbye so hard, but the earth continues to turn and the seasons change for us all. Few things are constant and we all move through life in the best way we know how.

It is time for a new challenge. Leadership is about strong character, I leave the same way as I arrived, head held high and determined. I have a quotation from Bret Stephens, a New York Times reporter I believe is apt, "Before the word 'resignation' became a euphemism for being fired, it connoted a sense of public integrity and personal honour." I leave on my terms Madam Mayor and with a sense of pride.

I look forward to spending more time with my perfect wife Michelle, my two daughters, my granddaughter and the little bundle of joy currently doing gymnastics inside Michelle.

Thank you Madam Mayor."

Councillor R Claymore made the following announcement-

"Thank you Danny. I have a list of people here that want to speak but can you just please indulge me for a couple of minutes, just to say that I can't really let this moment go without saying a huge thank you to Danny for his unfailing dedication to the role as Leader and his commitment to ensure he's always done his best for

the people of Tamworth and I know that has meant a lot to you Danny, and on a personal level, Danny has supported me through some difficult times and I'm proud to call him my friend."

Councillor J Oates made the following announcement-

"Thank you Madam Mayor like yourself I couldn't let this moment go without saying thank you to Danny Cook, and I'm going to start with a big wow for somebody that wanted to be forgotten or not remembered as he put it that is one heck of a legacy. It's difficult to add to his list of achievements there. Danny as you know I was Leader for a Short period before you and I experienced a couple of years at it nowhere near 11 and I know it's tough and all the things you said there I recognise, it's tough answering emails at 3 o'clock in the morning, it's tough being stuck between policy procedure and doing what is the right thing, and you've held that office and you've done that and achieved that consistently throughout the whole 11 years that you have been Leader. you've took a Conservative group which was all be it five years into control was fractious and with significant divisions and very quickly you swept that to one side and you did that by engaging with people, by ignoring the old factions and actually getting on and getting stuck in and building those bridges and I know I'm being party political now but the Conservative group changed significantly when you became Leader and is also privilege to work with you during that but also to watch your growth and maturity. The brash lad from Yorkshire who would enter the eighth floor having being upset by something that had happened we knew Danny had arrived we could hear the door bang at the end of the corridor, to now the measured individual who yes you still get emotional, you still get excited about things but the balance and the approach really illustrates the statesman position that you've got. You've done a cracking job Danny I'm not going to speak for too long as it's already nearly 7 o'clock I'm privileged to have worked with you on your Cabinet

I'm privileged to have worked so closely with you and also very privileged in the times when I know you've had to have that conversation when something has been on your mind for example when your phone bleeps and you look down and it's a message from Danny saying I could do with a pint mate then you know there's a tough decision going on and it's been a privilege to be one of those people that had those text messages, gone out for a pint with you and dealt with the business and then had an enjoyable evening.

Don't go too far away you have still got two months of this and hopefully you've got plenty more to give afterwards but fully appreciate the position. 11 years as I say wow and what a legacy, you've listed a number of items there Danny you should be proud of what you've achieved, politically and as Leader of the Council and Madam Mayor I think Danny deserves a big pat on the back and a big thank you from this Borough Council.

Councillor Dr S people made the following announcement

"Thank you madam Mayor first of all when I asked to speak I was going to make the point following the previous vote that in order that there is no misrepresentation to the staff I shall be writing to the Chief Executive on behalf of

the opposition to state that we had no difficulty with the motion to thank them for all their work and that the vote was effectively driven by a political decision

Second thing that I will say then Madam Mayor and I acknowledge the kind comment that Councillor Cook made in his speech indicating that he is going to step down in the near future that personally on a personal level we've managed to get on very well occupying our roles and have usually manage to do so with courtesy as he said to me once not long after I became Leader of the opposition there's days when we've got a throw bricks at each other proverbial bricks at each other but because our sides expect it but we know that we have to work together and that we have done in an appropriate manner he did indeed tell me about his intentions to step down and I kept that to myself as appropriate apologies if you're getting any background there, so that's what I wanted to say with regards to the point that Councillor Oates made about how Councillor Cook swept away fractions well recent coverage following Councillor Kingstone's resignation, some of the group suggests that they may be re-emerging and tonight's decision to be more party political has only re-emphasised that but I would personally on a personal level say to Councillor Cook thank you for working together in where we can and I shall say more when he formally steps down thank you."

Councillor R Prichard made the following announcement -

"Thank you Madam Mayor so I just wanted to add my thoughts on this announcements without a doubt Danny was the best man for the job he only ever wanted the best for the town and its people I think sometimes far more important than some of the achievements that have taken place over the years is the integrity and the candid mind-set that he brought to the role as Leader his years will be a legacy of guts, determination, careful reflection and action. It has been an absolute honour to be his Deputy and by his side during these years. Danny has never been interested in in the headlines, in the glitz or the glamour just about getting the job done, knuckling down making sure the work is done in the background. He can hold his head high, he can reflect on a decade of achievements and growth and stability and I think on behalf of all of us we can thank Danny for the work he has done for this town and the Council over the past decade."

Councillor A Farrell made the following announcement -

"Thank you madam Mayor it's just a quick one I'm conscious of the time. I just want to pass my thanks onto to Danny if it wasn't for him I wouldn't be here. I've only been on the Council for about a year and a half now, we met 11 years ago he had just become Leader, he took me for a drink and two hours later I joined the Conservative party, for my sins. He's been there by my side ever since I'm thankful I've been able to join the Council recently and experience his leadership first hand. Danny brings people together he is a fantastic Leader and I hope you won't go too far away and I'm sure he'll be back in the future."

35 QUESTION TIME:**QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC NO. 1**

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

“Councillor Peale asked for an information update on the acquisition of the Police Station at the October Council Meeting. He was in essence informed that negotiations were ongoing. What progress has been made in the intervening period and how much longer is our Council prepared to protract the negotiations, rather than simply issue a Compulsory Purchase Order so that its plans can be implemented in timely fashion and not be subject to the indeterminate delays created by the current owner?”

Councillor D Cook gave the following reply:-

“Thank you Madam Mayor,

Thank you for the question. There have been a number of meetings between the Police and the Borough Council since October in relation to the potential acquisition and future regeneration/development of their site.

You may be aware that the Police Station site has been marketed on the open market to enable its disposal. So far, purposeful discussions have been held to support the police in this process and to ensure that the Council's aspirations for the site are reflected in any decisions taken by the Police for the future purpose of this site

At this point in time it is not felt that using CPO powers are helpful, especially as there are positive and proactive discussions underway. The Council is working with the current owners, their agent and potential purchasers in an attempt to arrive an outcome that is beneficial to all parties without the need to resort to using any process.

Making use of Compulsory Purchase Order powers is not something to be taken lightly and where possible other mechanisms to either acquire a site or achieve the desired outcomes for the site are preferable. A Compulsory Purchase Order always remains an option open to the Council but there are no guarantees that it will be granted and the process itself can be both time consuming and costly.

In fact one of the tests for a successful CPO application is all parties have exhausted every avenue of negotiation and discussion – Clearly at this point in time we have not. Further, if we can facilitate and influence regeneration without acquisition it provides a more sustainable position for the wider site.

To deliver regeneration across the Gungate site will require a high level of investment. If we as a Council can get another party to deliver part of the plan and finance it that would take some pressure from us. We just need to ensure it all dovetails with our aspirations for the whole piece of regeneration that our town desperately needs.”

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC NO. 2

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

“Under what circumstances might Council consider it appropriate for Councillors to promote non-Council events or business activities and use the "Councillor" title before their name?”

Councillor D Cook gave the following reply:-

“As Councillors we have many different roles to balance. While our primary role is to represent our wards and the people who live in them, we are also community leaders who work in partnership with local communities and organisations, including the public, voluntary, community and private sectors, to develop a vision for our local area, working collaboratively to improve services and quality of life for our citizens. These are appropriate circumstances for us to use the title Councillor in undertaking legitimate council business.”

Mr M Hopkins asked the following supplementary question-

“Thank you for the response Councillor, what is the Councillors opinion on the wisdom of Councillors promoting a festival during a pandemic/ Tier 3 situation noting that there has been no public statement of whether or not the regulations in the future time are being permitted unless of course the Councillors have or Councillor has prior knowledge of the future regulatory position.”

Councillor D Cook gave the following reply:-

“Thank you Madam Mayor, I understand where Mr Hopkins is coming from, however what a Councillor chooses to do in their own personal time to promote any event is entirely their own business as long as it is compliant with legislation. Thank you Madam Mayor.”

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC NO. 3

Under Procedure Rule No 10, Ron Brown, of Tamworth will ask the Mayor, Councillor Rosey Claymore the following question:-

“Independent studies - including evaluations with multiple participants - reveal that removal of the Speaker video component from a Teams event must be invoked, as a deliberate act. (None of our neighbouring Local or County Authorities do that.)

Which elected Council Representatives, by name please, have authorised this “Speaker-video-removed” regime of information limitation, imposed upon all Public Viewers, over the last 6 months?”

Councillor R Claymore gave the following reply:-

“New regulations (*The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020*) came into force in April 2020 to allow Councils to re-commence Council and Committee meetings safely and remotely during the pandemic. 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 a person participating in such meetings remotely, must be able to hear and be heard (and where practicable, see and be seen) by the other members in attendance at the meeting. The same conditions apply where members of the public attend remotely.

This Council uses Teams Live Events to publically live stream our meetings as this meets the requirements of the Regulations. The current arrangements were implemented following the advice and support of officers from Governance, IT and Democratic Services and was the choice for many other local authorities, and government bodies. The Cabinet were kept apprised of the situation during implementation.”

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC NO. 4

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

“What documented steps has our Council taken to produce a regularly-updated, and timely record of Town footfall and traffic flows made from specifically-planned sampling operations, from our Town’s existent multiple-CCTV camera recordings?”

Councillor D Cook gave the following reply:-

“Thank for your question. I can confirm that the Council entered into a shared CCTV service with West Midlands Combined authority on the 31st March 2020, which not only provided significant savings to the councils operating costs but has improved the service offer through increased and accelerated investment in the camera infrastructure of over £150k in its first year. The shared service has continued uninterrupted during COVID due to the organisational resilience with its dedicated operators and our staff.

The cameras are there for public safety, reassurance and prevention of crime. They are not installed for traffic flow/footfall monitoring - this type of monitoring remains a Staffordshire County Council Highways function. Recordings are not reviewed unless required by the Police investigating crime and subject to strict

data control and audit arrangements to ensure data breaches or collateral intrusion is mitigated.

It has been agreed that Officers together with WMCA will attend IS&G scrutiny committee in February 2021 to discuss performance and outcomes from the new services as always we welcome that debate and any service improvement can be built into the future plan.

To be fair, the data we have we get from town centre businesses as trend analysis, but the data does not belong to us so is commercially sensitive. But we do have it.

Subject to award of Future High Streets Fund, we must monitor and evaluate the success and impact of the project and its components, and the wider medium term change in the Town Centre. This will result in the purchase and ongoing costs of digital footfall counters (one off purchase funded through existing budget) and the tender and award of a specialist evaluation consultant to monitor and evaluate the impact of the FHSF project. The proposal results in a 6 years revenue fund of £20k per annum to cover day to day costs of footfall monitoring and the cost of the contract for the monitoring and evaluation service.

The FHSF requires footfall monitoring as part of the evaluation of the project. We have tendered and have chosen a preferred supplier, but have not awarded – waiting instead for the FHSF announcement (due imminently). The approach of the preferred supplier is to use a data based approach, there's no physical infrastructure, cameras, monitoring etc. Real world location behaviour insight is captured by tracking the anonymised GPS events captured from GDPR compliant 3rd party mobile apps. The GPS data is used to get patterns and trends.

In short the monitoring will not be undertaken via CCTV camera.”

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL NO.1

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

“In conducting casework on behalf of a self-employed person, it has now been confirmed to me that the pot of money allocated to those asked to self-isolate by Track and Trace, has run out. Does the Portfolio Holder agree with me that this demonstrates that having let down councils by not fully funding the cost of covid measures; the government is now letting down those individuals who are trying to do the right thing? Will the Portfolio Holder raise this issue with his colleagues on the local outbreak control board as this will only further discourage people from getting tested?”

Councillor R Pritchard gave the following reply:-

“Thank you Madam Mayor. Thank you Councillor Peale for your question. Tamworth Borough Council and other local Councils have been at the forefront of

the national response to the pandemic providing invaluable support to communities, businesses and vulnerable people. The spread of the virus has placed unprecedented demands on local services and I'm proud of our key and public sector workers. You could not accuse the Government of being insensitive to the needs of individual businesses and organisations. The UK Government has introduced some of the most generous support schemes in the world. An unprecedented package of financial support has been made available. Since March, £7.2 billion pounds worth in funding has been made available to Councils to relieve local pressure and help vulnerable people, this includes 4.6 billion in unringed funding, 1.1 billion for care homes, 300, Million to support test and trace as well as funding allocated to Councils from local alert level systems and a number of grants to support businesses, communities and vulnerable people. Funding to address homelessness people during this crisis and rough sleeping has been raised by over 750 million alongside 1.3 billion towards adults and children's social care. 220 million is been allocated to help local areas prepare for the shared prosperity fund. I'm encouraged because this additional funding will provide local authorities with resources they need to recover from the outbreak. The Government has being nothing but generous to Local Government during this pandemic. Is the funding system perfect? No!, I myself have been helping people who had issues claiming some of the available support grants and benefits available. No system is perfect but the one thing you can't complain about is the funds being made available to Local Government. The funding available to local authorities is not an issue I would raise with the local control board so I'm not sure why the Leader of the opposition is asking this. I believe this is an issue that should be raised with the Government and it has being raised with the Government who are aware of the situation that Local Government faces. The Leader of the opposition has said that this particular scheme does not have enough funds allocated, perhaps you can provide me with the amount that should be allocated for this scheme. Thank you."

Councillor Dr S People asked the following supplementary question-

"Thank you Madam Mayor and yes as usual the answers given are long and largely not directed at the question. I specifically said that I'd sent this question into Councillor Oates and therefore asked him to raise it with the control board members, so I regard it particularly as a cheap shot from Councillor Prichard that he should've responded in that manner to that particular point. With regards to this particular fund it has been exhausted, that was sent in writing to a Constituent and then confirmed by the Officers concerned. So my point stands the fact that Councillor Prichard feels the need to defend the Government is fine it's perfectly understandable and is his political role. My question to him is does he really expect the people will continue to listen when they don't get their genuine concerns answered. Thank you."

Councillor R Pritchard gave the following reply:-

"Thank you Madam Mayor. Any shortfall in the support available to Local Authorities and Communities, is been raised with the Government. Nobody is working harder than this Council to ensure our residents are having everything they need. Thank him for the supplementary Madame Mayor."

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:-

“New Planning Laws with “fundamental changes” are about to be introduced by the government to accelerate the delivery of new homes by streamlining planning applications which by-pass planning committees and introduce locally-produced design codes. Many believe this faster approach to decision making will affect the quality of determinations. Can the Leader of the Council please inform Council how he feels about these new sweeping changes and where the funding is coming from to produce our local design codes?”

Councillor D Cook gave the following reply:-

“Thank you Madam Mayor,

On the 6th August 2020, Government published the Planning White Paper: Planning for the future for a 12-week consultation. This set out the Government’s proposals to reform the planning system in England.

The reforms aim to “streamline and modernise the planning process, bring a new focus to design and sustainability, improve the system of developer contributions to infrastructure and to ensure more land is available where it is needed.”

Officers drafted responses to the specific questions in the White Paper and consulted with Members on the proposed responses. Once the responses had been agreed by all parties, a report was taken to Cabinet for final approval on 22nd October.

The consultation contained 26 specific questions relating to 24 proposals. The proposals related to a wide spectrum of ‘planning’ matters, including policymaking, decision taking and planning enforcement.

In response to the specific point raised relating to the funding of design codes, no specific details are included within the White Paper clarifying such. To this end, TBC, within their consultation response raised similar concerns and requested that more details be provided on this specifically, and more generally in relation to the overall funding strategy proposed.

Overall TBC raised significant concerns to the White Paper Consultation in regards to the potential impacts on Tamworth. On the basis of the suggested proposals, it would appear that planning system reform would result in a more ‘top down’ approach, thus reducing power and influence at a local level.

At the current time, Government is considering the consultation responses received. No further clarity has yet been provided in regards to timescale or whether the reform will be pursued and if so, in what guise.

Therefore, to summarise, we have collectively raised concerns with government through the consultation process and I have made my concerns known to our MP as well. The proposals went through a cross party working group and a members seminar before going to cabinet.

We await a final decision from government with fuller clarifications. Thank you”

Councillor R Bilcliff asked the following supplementary question-

“Thank you Madam Mayor, But I think Danny has hinted at the answer but I will ask it anyway. These radical new planning changes will eliminate democratic oversight of future developments in our town many people including planning officers and architects are concerned it will lead to slum dwellings and could kill off affordable housing does the Leader of the Council share the same concerns?”

Councillor D Cook gave the following reply:-

“Thank you Madam Mayor. I am not sure if I share the exact same concerns because I want to see what comes out the other side of the consultation I think a lot of Councils, a lot of architects and even a lot of property developers have raised concerns about how these proposals are unfolding. The Government is currently considering them and this Council is not done fighting to ensure we get the very best for our residents I fundamentally appreciate where Councillor Bilcliff is coming from and happy to speak to him offline. I think we have got to wait and see what comes from the other side Madam Mayor but yes I understand where the question is coming from.”

36 PETITION: BENCH – WIGGINTON CEMETERY

A petition was submitted to the Council on 15 October 2020 regarding the request for a bench to be placed at Wigginton Cemetery for Keeley Bunker. The petition contained 2,016 signatures.

Councillor D Cook proposed the following, to refer the policy to corporate scrutiny for immediate review and make all officer time required available to fully understand the impacts of the policy and ensure corporate scrutiny can get this done by the end of January so not to prolong the matter further for Keeley's family

Motion without notice under rule 4.13 (n) to suspend a particular Council Procedure rule.

RESOLVED That

The 15 minute debate/ speeches rule be suspended due to the delicate nature of the petition.

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

Rule 4.14.6 Amendment to motions

Council accept and action the petition this evening to agree to the bench in addition to sending the policy to Corporate scrutiny for review.

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

After a vote this amendment was not carried

RESOLVED That Council;

Referred the policy to corporate scrutiny for immediate review and make all officer time required available to fully understand the impacts of the policy and ensure corporate scrutiny can get this done by the end of January so not to prolong the matter further for Keeley's family

(Moved by Councillor D Cook and seconded by Councillor J Chesworth)

Councillor M Cook left the meeting at 18.58 and returned at 19.43 therefore an abstention was noted on all votes for this agenda item.

- 37 TO CONSIDER A MOTION REGARDING A LOCAL REFERENDUM, NOTICE OF WHICH HAS BEEN DULY GIVEN IN ACCORDANCE WITH PROCEDURE RULE NO. 4.12.1 BY COUNCILLORS J FAULKNER, K NORCHI, S PEUPLE, DR S PEUPLE AND P STANDEN**

Motions without notice rule 4.13

Interruption of the meeting rule 4.9.1

RESOLVED That;

The meeting be continued past 8.30pm

(Moved by Councillor P Standen and seconded by Councillor S Peuple)

RESOLVED That;

The meeting will continue till 9pm

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

The following motion was proposed, before acceptance of any re-organisation, merger or other arrangement which would result in Tamworth Borough Council being merged or otherwise combined with other local authorities' bodies, that the matter be put to the electors of Tamworth in a local referendum

(Moved by Councillor J Faulkner and seconded by Councillor S Peuple)

After a vote this motion was not carried

38 TO CONSIDER A MOTION TO ENJOY FIREWORKS RESPONSIBLY, NOTICE OF WHICH HAS BEEN DULY GIVEN IN ACCORDANCE WITH PROCEDURE RULE NO. 4.12.1 BY COUNCILLORS DR S PEAPLE, J FAULKNER, S PEAPLE, P STANDEN, C COOKE, R BILCLIFF AND D BOX

It was proposed by Councillor D Cook that agenda items 8, 9, 10 and 11 are moved en bloc to agree to the recommendations with the exception of agenda item 8 in which motions 1 and 2 are moved to be agreed and 3 and 4 are to be referred to scrutiny. The below reflects this proposal.

After a unanimous vote this motion was carried.

This Council notes the enjoyment many people gain from firework displays and the major strides made in improving safety. In order to balance the wishes of those who enjoy fireworks responsibly with the needs of others. The following were proposed

RESOLVED Council agreed;

- 1 To require all public firework displays within the Tamworth Borough Council area to be advertised in advance of the event, to allow vulnerable people to take precautions; and for those with responsibility for animal welfare (livestock and pets) to be able to take precautions on their behalf
 - 2 To actively promote a public awareness campaign regarding the precautions which can be taken to mitigate the impact of fireworks on vulnerable people and animals
- To refer recommendation 3 and 4 to Scrutiny for further discussion.
- 3 To write to the UK government asking them to limit the noise level of fireworks sold to the public for private display to 90dB and to reduce the period of sale of fireworks for private displays to 25 October – 10 November, and
 - 4 To encourage local suppliers of fireworks to stock 'quieter' fireworks for sale to the public for private display

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

39 LOCAL COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME 2021/22 ONWARDS

The report advised members that the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme for working age customers for 2021/22 should include continued alignment to Applicable Amounts with those of Housing Benefit

RESOLVED That,

- 1 Council considered and endorses the proposed recommended changes detailed below
- 2 That the planned review for the introduction of a banding scheme for Council Tax Reduction be deferred until 2021 and that the current scheme for working age customers continues to be aligned to Applicable Amounts with those of Housing Benefit for 2021/22.

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

40 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT AND ANNUAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY MID-YEAR REVIEW REPORT 2020/21

The report advised Members of the Mid-year Review of the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy.

RESOLVED That Council agreed;

- 1 The Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy Mid-year Review Report 2020/21;
- 2 That the planned investments in property funds be deferred, with a review during Spring 2021 when the situation should be clearer, to inform future investment plans

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

41 REVIEW OF THE CONSTITUTION AND SCHEME OF DELEGATION

The report sought to obtain the Council's approval to the refreshed Constitution (including the Scheme of Delegation).

RESOLVED

That Council;

Approved and adopted the Council's refreshed Constitution (including the Scheme of Delegation) at Appendix 1.

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

The Mayor