



MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CABINET HELD ON 17th JUNE 2021

PRESENT: Councillor J Oates (Chair), Councillors R Pritchard (Vice-Chair), M Bailey, D Cook, S Doyle and A Farrell

The following officers were present: Andrew Barratt (Chief Executive), Paul Weston (Assistant Director Assets) and Tracey Pointon (Legal Admin & Democratic Services Manager)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies were received

2 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 8th April 2021 were approved as a correct record

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

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest.

4 QUESTION TIME:

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC. NO. 1

Under Schedule 4, 13, Mr H Loxton will ask the Portfolio Holder for Finance & Customer Services, Councillor M Bailey, the following question:-

“What arrangements are in place to reopen the offices of Tamworth Borough Council so members of the public can access face to face help, and when can we expect them to be reopened?”

Councillor Marie Bailey gave the following reply:-

“Tamworth Borough Council through our Officers and Elected members are working hard to protect staff, services and the people of Tamworth ensuring our most vulnerable residents remain a high priority.

Since the pandemic began the Council has continued to deliver services to all of our residents albeit sometimes needing to deliver them in a different way due to the restrictions. We have listened to our customers and where they have not been able to access services in the way they normally did we have adapted our processes so that we were able to fulfil their requirements. We are pleased to announce that no formal complaints from customers have been received regarding access to services during these unprecedented times.

Data on how customers access services has been collected and analysed and there is a clear trend that residents are increasingly accessing our services via email, and other digital means and in the last year the number of web chats with customers has increased by 304%, emails increased by 71% with telephone calls decreasing by 6.4%. In addition the Repairs Contact Centre handled 24,153 telephone calls and 4,639 email enquiries.

As a council we are committed to providing a face to face service for our residents and will do so in line with government guidance. Given the PM's announcement on Monday 14th June Tamworth Borough Council will continue to deliver the services in the way we have since the pandemic began, however, officers are currently reviewing the way we will deliver front facing customer service in the very near future."

Mr Hoxton asked the following Supplementary Question:

"It seems wrong that I can come into the Council offices tonight to this meeting yet a homeless person cannot come into the Council Offices to get help with homelessness advice.

Could you not be offering a face to face appointment where they book it through email or over the phone and can you confirm that the Tamworth Advice Centre which is obviously Citizens advice which is based in the offices offer face to face appointments to those vulnerable residents that you speak about."

Councillor Marie Bailey gave the following reply:-

"At the minute appointments can be made but through contact through the customer services centre. With regards to the other question I will come back with a written response within 2 – 3 days. "

The following written response was sent to Mr Loxton.

Dear Mr Loxton

I am writing to respond to the supplementary question you asked at Cabinet on 14th June 2021 in respect of the Tamworth Advice Centre and the Councils Homelessness Service throughout the pandemic. Please accept my apologies for the delay in responding to you the Officers have been speaking to the services in order to give you as full a response as possible and unfortunately this has taken a little longer than expected.

As you will be aware Tamworth Advice Centre (TAC) are an independent organisation who operate from Marmion House. At the onset of the pandemic they continued the service entirely remotely, the team did however return to

Marmion House for a short period of time between lockdowns, in September and October and until the second lockdown came into force in early November. There was provision during this short time for face to face appointments and clients were seen in Marmion House. However, in many cases clients still preferred telephone or email contacts and continued to use this method.

The service reports that activity overall was not impacted by the pandemic and actually increased year on year. The data shows there's a clear shift from face to face to telephone and other technologies such as email, the client contacts can be summarised as follows:

- Overall client contacts increased slightly and were 105% of the previous year
- Phone contacts were 205% higher
- Email contacts were 261% higher
- Face to face contacts reduced to just 6% of the previous year
- Letter contacts reduced to 50% of the previous year
- Video calls were used as a means of contact for the first time in the latter months of 2020/21

Throughout the pandemic the Homeless Service has been operating with no reductions in the level of service, team members have interacted with clients via emails, telephone and WhatsApp and also met clients on a face to face basis regarding temporary accommodation issues where absolutely necessary (ensuring appropriate Covid health and safety measures were taken). Our officers have been approached for assistance 916 times in the 15 months from March 2020 to May 2021 which is just slightly less than client levels before the pandemic.

I hope my response answers your query.

Yours sincerely

Cllr Marie Bailey

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC NO. 2

Under Schedule 4, 13, Mr Tony Madge will ask the Leader of the Council the following question in three parts:-

With regard to the recent Traveller encampments on Stonydelph I would like to ask, why when the Council had a section 61 notice to enforce, the removal this was not carried out with Police assistance and instead another costly court case was initiated which also delayed for the local residents the removal of the Travellers?

A cost of £100,000 has been mentioned for the clean up of the site and surrounding area, does this amount include the legal cost and also where is this

money coming from and what services will be at risk with this large amount of money having to be spent in cleaning up the after the Travellers?

Finally if the money was in reserve for such instances, why can we not look at using it for a low cost effective method of stopping egress onto open land owned by TBC, wooden posts that are not obtrusively high but high enough to disable access onto open land by caravans etc., yet still allow small maintenance and grass cutter vehicles access. These posts can be concreted into the ground making removal difficult and if they are damaged to aid removal this would be an offence of criminal damage under Section 1(1) **Criminal Damage Act 1971** Will the Council look at this request including any other methods of deterrent so that illegal parking and traveller encampments can be stopped, giving not only peace of mind to residents but also to save valuable resources and the high cost of clearing up after they have moved on?

Councillor Jeremy Oates gave the following reply:-

“Thank you Mr Barratt and please pass on my thanks to Mr Madge for asking the question.

Section 61 of the Public Order Act 1994 gives the Police discretionary powers to remove trespassers from land, but there are strict conditions on when this power is used and the Council cannot require the Police to use these powers.

I was in a meeting earlier and heard an example of a nearby authority where a section 61 was served by the police service against 20 vehicles who left that particular site and set up 5 other unauthorised encampments within the same Borough so all of a sudden they went from a single site to manage to 5 separate ones. So there is various feedback on those.

Each time the Council deals with an illegal encampment, we liaise closely with our Police colleagues and establish whether they are able to use these powers. In relation to the recent encampments at Stoneydelph, the Police were not able to use Section 61, and after carrying out mandatory welfare checks, the Council issued a direction to the encampments to leave the land by a designated time and date under Section 77 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994. Where this was not complied with, the Council then had to make an application to a Magistrates court to secure a court order and unfortunately this process can take some time as we have secure a court hearing and serve a summons on the encampment. Once a court order was secured this was immediately served on the encampment and we then worked with our bailiffs and police colleagues to enforce the court order.

The second point that is raised around the cost of £100 thousand pounds I would like to know where that figure came from. We are not aware of where that figure come from or the source of that figure. The clean-up of the Lintly site took 2 days and 5 members of staff and 4 vehicles to clean the site, approximately 5 tonnes of waste was removed from that site, a further 2 members of staff were used to jet wash and sanitise the area

The total cost of the clear up of Lintly was £1987 which is of Street scenes time this is included in our normal operating budget. The members of staff involved in the cleaning of that site would have been in other areas of the town so it was a shift of resources rather than an additional cost.

Legal costs associated with the court hearing and paperwork etc. are covered within our existing budgets as part of our shared services we have for legal services with South Staffordshire and we are still awaiting the costs from the Bailiff's as we haven't yet had the invoice from them.

In terms of the last part of the question it does relate to the figure that was perceived to have been spent

We have been reviewing our open spaces and we are going to be having a comprehensive review related to unauthorised encampments. And a further discussion how we can better manage the process in future. I assume there is no supplementary Mr Barratt.”

5 MATTERS REFERRED TO THE CABINET IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PROCEDURE RULES

There were no matters referred to Cabinet but Councillor Simon Goodall Chair of Infrastructure Safety and Growth Committee attended the meeting to speak at agenda item 6 - Future High Street Fund: Terms of Reference.

6 FUTURE HIGH STREET FUND: TERMS OF REFERENCE

The of the Report of the Leader of the Council to seek to create a governance arrangement for the Future High Street Funds, Terms of Reference that is clear in terms of decision making and the application of financial guidance, the purpose of which is to allow decisions to be taken quickly and at the appropriate level of seniority within the authority.

Councillor Simon Goodall updated Cabinet on the full discussion that took place at Infrastructure, Safety & Growth Scrutiny on Tuesday 15th June.

Councillor A Farrell joined the meeting at 6.16pm

Cllr Goodall updated on:

The work programme – once the programme was completed the progress would be reported back to committee, against the baseline Plan.

College funding- clarified the status of the college funding, where that was and the impact on the programme as a whole.

Requested confirmation that reporting on the progress of the programme would be reported to IS&G on a quarterly basis depending on the information available at the time.

Committee was also interested how skills as a wider topic with regards to the college could be impacted by the Council and this could be something that would be included on a wider Scrutiny agenda through one of the Scrutiny Committee's

Committee also checked that the archaeology was being looked after and some input was being given from the County archaeologist to provide some guidance.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet

1. approved the report and;
2. approved the indicative Programme Timeline in accordance with the Terms of Reference.

(Moved by Councillor J Oates and seconded by Councillor R Pritchard)

Committee thanked officers for their hard work on this project and the ongoing work that is still being delivered

7 COUNCIL HOUSING GARAGE SITES

The Report of the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Leisure that sets out a series of proposals relating to the various council housing garages sites dispersed around the housing estate areas of Tamworth. This report builds on a proposed programme set out by the Portfolio Holder for Assets & Finance and the Portfolio Holder for Communities. The report identifies each site and provides costed proposals for consideration of the future of the site.

The report seeks to inform and guide Elected Members of the options available, and to devise a programme for delivery of the preferred options.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet

1. Approved the programme for refurbishment of retained garages sites as set out in the table at Appendix 1 using capital budgets approved for 2021/22 – 2022/23 (£1.5m in total)
2. Agreed to entering into negotiations with an EV charging point company to explore and if possible, implement the installation of EV charging points
3. Approved development of a programme during 2021/22 to further explore those sites identified for purposes other than retained garages/parking
4. Approved the creation of an additional temporary post to manage the decant, consultation and re-letting of garages

included within the programme with costs being capitalised against the project in 21/22 and 22/23, subject to approval through the Appointments and Staffing process and;

5. Approved reviewing the lettings policy for garages to allow more flexible use with the implementation of the final policy being delegated to the Portfolio Holder for Communities.

(Moved by Councillor R Pritchard and seconded by Councillor S Doyle)

8 TAMWORTH COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP PLAN 2020-2023 (2021 UPDATE)

The report of the Portfolio Holder Community Safety and Regulatory Services to ask Cabinet to endorse the annual refresh of the Tamworth Community Safety Partnership Plan.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet

1. Considered and endorsed the Tamworth Community Safety Plan 2021 Refresh

(Moved by Councillor S Doyle and seconded by Councillor M Bailey)

Committee thanked Jo Sands, Assistant Director - Partnerships for all the work in producing this plan.

Leader