



MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD ON 15th MARCH 2022

PRESENT: Councillor M Oates (Mayor), Councillors M J Greatorex, M Bailey, D Box, R Claymore, T Clements, D Cook, M Cook, C Cooke, A Cooper, S Doyle, A Farrell, R Ford, S Goodall, T Jay, J Jones, D Maycock, K Norchi, J Oates, S Peple, Dr S Peple, B Price, R Pritchard, S Pritchard, R Rogers and M Summers

The following officers were present: Andrew Barratt (Chief Executive) and Tracey Pointon (Legal Admin & Democratic Services Manager)

Apologies received from: Councillor(s) J Chesworth, J Harper, P Thurgood and J Wade

58 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor J Chesworth, J Harper, P Thurgood & J Wade

59 TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF A PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 22nd February 2022 were approved and signed as a correct record.

(Moved by Councillor Dr S Peple and seconded by Councillor J Oates)

60 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest.

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

The Mayor announced the funeral details of Alderman, former Mayor and Councillor Ken Lewis.

Councillor Dr. Simon Peple paid tribute to Ken Lewis.

Councillor Dr. Simon Peple gave a tribute to Councillor Ken Norchi who is retiring from Council in May. Tributes were also received from Councillor S

Pritchard, the Leader Councillor J Oates, Councillor D Cook and Councillor R Pritchard.

The Leader Councillor J Oates gave a tribute to Councillor Dr. S People who is retiring from the Council in May. Tributes were also received from Councillor D Cook, Councillor A Cooper, Councillor S People and Councillor A Farrell

62 QUESTION TIME:

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL NO.1

Under Procedure Rule No 11, Councillor Dr. Simon People will ask the Leader of the Council, Councillor Jeremy Oates , the following question:-

“Would the Leader of the Council explain why Marmion House reception remains closed to the public and what progress is being made to identify an alternative base for the Council?”

Councillor Oates gave the following reply:

Throughout the pandemic we have continued to deliver all of our services and remain committed to supporting the most vulnerable in our community.

Although Marmion House remains closed, face-to-face help is available from our staff at Tamworth Information Centre in Tamworth Assembly Rooms. This will continue until we find a new Town Centre base.

The pandemic has led us to look at more efficient, effective and targeted methods of delivering services, and we have seen changes in the demand for those services in terms of numbers seeking services and the change in the profile of when our services are accessed. What we saw when we had Marmion House reception was that our busy periods were when reception was open, what we now see is that we have busy periods outside traditional office hours and we need to respond to that increasing demand.

All our services are available via the phone or various online methods, as they have been throughout the pandemic. In the last 12 months, for example, the customer contact centre handled more than 45,000 enquiries and strive to have all queries resolved during the first contact.

With respect to future location a number of properties have been identified and viewed within the town centre area. An outline options appraisal is being produced for these that addresses factors such as size, location, condition and cost. This options appraisal will be used as the basis of making a recommendation to Cabinet in April for further discussion and a final position in June this year.

Mr Mayor, it has been said a number of times and I repeat the commitment that when Tamworth Borough Council moves out of Marmion House we are looking

for a town centre premise and we are committed to opening a reception within the Town Centre in a new location.

Supplementary

Would the Leader of the council confirm that on the website it says that if you're a struggling to fill in forms you can come into reception and use computers would the Leader of the Council please confirm that that will still be maintained, and could the Leader deal with the comment which is sometimes made that the goal of this is not a brand new headquarters, the goal is an efficient, effective and demonstrably cost efficient building for this Council to be based in.

Councillor Oates gave the following reply:

In terms of the offer on the reception we should always help people by helping them to help themselves so if someone is able to come in and we can provide access to a computer so they can do it themselves with support from the council then that should be maintained and we should be perusing that ability for people to help themselves wherever possible. In terms of the second part and the suggestion that we are not going to build a nice palatial new municipal office, the whole regime we have begun with the reset and recovery programme is about the long term sustainability of Tamworth Borough Council. That means we are not in the business of building large expansive office space for us to use, we are in the business of providing high quality service with the least level of burden. The reason we have decided to move away from Marmion House is because it is outdated and expensive to run and maintain. The people of Tamworth pay for that building to be ran and maintained and it's inefficient, it's our duty to make sure we have an efficient alternative. The whole process for me is the long term sustainability of TBC whilst delivering the services in the most efficient and effective way. So yes I can commit to what Cllr People is suggesting that this is about that long term saving and commitment and not about building that ivory tower somewhere.

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL NO.2

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

At the recent WMCA Housing Scrutiny review, the issue of Land Assembly was highlighted. Much effort to date has gone into remediating contaminated land but this brings limited benefit to Tamworth whilst there remains continued pressure to expand the housing stock across the West Midlands. Would the Leader of the Council join me in writing to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up citing this issue as one for greater emphasis within the technical delivery mechanisms needed to achieve the planned outcomes.

Councillor Oates gave the following reply

The use of brownfield sites and in particular those that can be remediated due to contamination is an entirely appropriate approach to housing delivery to meet

need across west midlands authorities. Whilst Tamworth is not awash with difficult contaminated land, that doesn't mean that Tamworth doesn't benefit from the WMCA contaminated land programme. In fact the more land that they can use for housing the less pressure it puts on our green belt and the borders around Tamworth.

In terms of land assembly it is often the case that brownfield sites have multiple land owners. Bringing multiple parties around the table to discuss positive regeneration whether it be housing or other projects closer to home. Land assembly within Tamworth hasn't blocked development per se but it has lengthened the time it has taken to arrive at a cohesive land strategy. Some land in Tamworth has covenant type arrangements that need to be mitigated and also land which has lease arrangements that prevent parties coming to the table to discuss potential options. All scenarios require time, effort or money to resolve. I would support Cllr Peaple in his offer to jointly write a letter to the SOS for Levelling Up highlighting this issue on the phone when we had our regular update and I will take up the offer and put a letter together for the SOS highlighting the issues around land contamination whilst taking the benefits we can around land opportunities in Tamworth.

63 PETITION TO STOP THE NETTING OF HEDGES IN TAMWORTH

A petition was submitted to the Council on 1st March 2022 seeking to stop the netting of hedges in Tamworth. The petition contained over 4,600 signatures

RESOLVED: That Council

1. noted and shares the sincere concerns of the signatories to protect our local natural wildlife;
2. noted that a prima facie review suggests that the power to act may lay outside the Council's statutory powers;
3. agreed that given the importance of this issue, the matter be referred to the Infrastructure, Safety and Growth Scrutiny Committee (ISG) with the brief that they review the relevant sections of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and new Environmental legislation currently before the Commons ,and any other material they believe relevant and;
4. agreed that the Infrastructure Safety & Growth Committee bring a report to Council by the Autumn so that there would be time to act on the report by the next breeding season

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

64 PERMANENT APPOINTMENT OF THE MONITORING OFFICER

Report of the Chief Executive to seek Council approval to appoint the Information Governance Manager to the statutory post of Monitoring Officer in accordance with the Council's Constitution and local government legislation.

RESOLVED: That Council

approved the appointment of the Information Governance Manager to the statutory role Council's Monitoring Officer on a permanent basis and with immediate effect.

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

The Mayor