



MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD ON 10th DECEMBER 2024

PRESENT: Councillor G Coates (Mayor), Councillors C Bain, C Adams, N Arkney, B Clarke, L Clarke, M Clarke, T Clements, M Couchman, S Daniels, C Dean, S Doyle, D Foster, H Hadley, T Jay, K Norchi, J Oates, P Pallett, L Smith, S Smith, N Statham, M Summers, P Turner, L Wood and A Wells

The following officers were present: Stephen Gabriel (Chief Executive), Nicola Hesketh (Monitoring Officer) and Tracey Pointon (Legal Admin & Democratic Services Manager)

48 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M Bailey, R Kingstone B Price and J Wadrup.

Cllr T Jay left the meeting at 18.15pm

49 TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 14th October 2024 were approved and signed as a correct record.

(Moved by Councillor L Wood and seconded by Councillor L Smith)

50 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest.

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

The Leader of the Council made the following announcement

I just wanted to say Merry Christmas to everyone and hope everyone as a wonderful time however you celebrate Christmas. We all know this year as been an eventful one for all sorts of reasons and I would like to thank everyone in the room, all my fellow councillors for the way that we have worked together over the

last several months. I know everyone's main concern is to improve the lives of the people of Tamworth and to improve our town especially during these challenging times. I would also like because its been such a traumatic upheaval for most people to thank Stephen and the Leadership Team and all of our staff, for the amazing work they have done over the last few months and how we have held everything together, I think its been really good, but especially I would like to thank our partners and the other organisations, the faith groups the charities for all the stuff that they do and the stuff that we know that they will do especially around this time of year there is always an increase demand on our partners and they do such sterling work to make sure no-one is forgotten or isolated. I will finish by saying there is a lot happening in the town, a lot to be proud of and we even have a visit of a premier league side to look forward to in the new year. So good luck to the Lamb and thank you for putting Tamworth on the map for the right reasons. A personal thank you from me to everyone and happy holidays.

52 QUESTION TIME:

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC NO. 1

Under Procedure Rule No 10, James Nicholson-Roberts, will ask the Leader of the Council, Councillor C Dean, the following question:-

With the announcement that the government wants to abolish Borough Councils, will Tamworth Borough Council undertake a governance review with the intention of creating a number of new parish councils covering Tamworth and therefore provide the first level of local government the majority of Staffordshire benefits from?

Response:

Thank you for your question Mr Nicholson-Roberts

We are closely monitoring the government's devolution deal and local government restructuring proposals. However, as of now, we are not aware of any plans to abolish district councils. I was at a meeting where the Minister spoke who was saying that District Councils were integral to the plans going forward. Should any information come to light, we will carefully assess its implications and obviously keep all members informed. There is an anticipated Devolution white paper which will be considered once it is released and we are expecting that report.

Cllr J Oates raised a point of order referring to pg. 116 of the constitution, rule 4.10.10 and moved the following motion:

That the matter of a Governance Review be referred to an appropriate Committee

(Moved by Councillor J Oates and seconded by Councillor T Clements)

The motion was carried by a unanimous vote.

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC NO. 2

Under Procedure Rule No 10, Paul Sharman, will ask the Portfolio Holder for Infrastructure, Heritage and Local Economy, Councillor N Arkney the following question:-

In the absence of Mr Sharman the Mayor asked the following question on their behalf:

With the council now securing the purchase of Ankerside shopping centre has a full structural survey of the building been carried out.

Response:

We haven't carried out a full structural survey, we have however completed a general condition survey and detailed inspection of the building.

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC NO. 3

Under Procedure Rule No 10, Paul Sharman, will ask the Portfolio Holder for Infrastructure, Heritage and Local Economy, Councillor N Arkney the following question:-

In the absence of Mr Sharman the Mayor asked the following question on their behalf:

How much will Repairs cost to Ankerside shopping centre to make it safe and presentable to the public.

Response:

The immediate investment requirements to address essential works have been estimated to be £124,000 in the car park area and £254,000 for the main mall area

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL NO. 1

Under Procedure Rule No 11, Councillor P Turner will ask the Portfolio Holder for Environmental Sustainability, Recycling and Waste, Councillor D Foster, the following question:-

Following the recent Environment Agency updated flood risk assessment from the River Tame in Tamworth.

Fluvial flood risk in Tamworth is primarily dictated by the River Tame, a "main river"

designated watercourse falling within the remit of the Environment Agency. Flood defences are located along the Lichfield Road and Coton Lane to prevent flooding from this watercourse to nearby properties.

In 2012 the previous modelling suggested the key residential and commercial areas in that location Tamworth benefitted from a 100-year climate change protection, the latest study 2023 show the over topping of the flood defences return period flood events as low as 1 in 30 years.

The flood levels generated during Storm Henk were approximately 0.3 lower than the crest of the flood defence along Lichfield Road.

A 100- year with climate change standard of protection could be reached if the flood defence crest height were increased by 0.5m .

The crest level of the existing flood defence along Lichfield Road is relatively uniform and thus overtopping occurs over a significant length, on either side of the A51/Lichfield road roundabout.

How well does the council believe its current strategic flood plan is robust enough to mitigate the flooding within the whole of the borough?

Response:

Thank you for the Question Cllr Turner and an appropriate question given the bad weather we have been experiencing.

Firstly, I would like to clarify that the current strategic flood plan is the responsibility of the Environment Agency. The Environment Agency has a set of priorities which includes increasing the resilience of people, property and businesses to the risks of flooding.

The Environment Agency has recently met with senior Borough Council officers and Members to brief them on their plans for a proposed business case (yet to be submitted through their appropriate processes) which is to increase the height of the flood defences in Tamworth to withstand future climate change. Modelling the rivers in Tamworth and a better understanding of the way in which weather patterns will change, as a consequence of climate change, has led the Environment Agency to acknowledge that better flood defences in Tamworth are required. Whilst further work needs to be undertaken on the business case the Borough Council has and will give every support to the Environment Agency in undertaking this important infrastructure improvement. It is too early to provide timescales however I would like to reassure the Committee that this matter is in hand. When more information is available, I would be happy to provide an update.

Supplementary Question

I agree that it is early days but as recent storms have shown, the world is changing, but I would stress that although you have stressed there is no timelines and you have stressed it is the environmental agency I think collectively that Tamworth Borough Council has the responsibility, yes the environmental agency

is working as we speak, but we urgently to address these issues and I would stress that you come back to council as a matter of urgency to explain timelines.

Response

I will be more than happy provide the information as soon as it becomes available to us. As you say it is not our responsibility but we can do it and there are moves a foot to have a meeting and a walk around Tamworth to look at the area in details and I will provide that information as and when it becomes available to us no problem at all.

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL NO. 2

Under Procedure Rule No 11, Councillor M Bailey will ask the Leader of the Council, Councillor C Dean, the following question:-

In the absence of Cllr M Bailey the Mayor asked the following question on their behalf:

A long running community project led by former councillor alderman Robert Pritchard along with the Staffordshire Regimental veterans is the installation of the statue of Colour Sergeant Watchman V in the Castle Grounds, I understand that the statue is ready but the council has faced difficulty identifying a suitable contractor for the installation.

Will the Leader of the Council confirm the council is doing everything it can to get the memorial installed as soon as possible and can the Leader update us on when they expect the council to complete the installation so we can continue to honour the memory of our brave men who paid the ultimate sacrifice and service for our country.

Response:

I would like to assure Cllr Bailey and Cllr Clements that Officers are working hard to secure a new stonemason to progress this project. As I am sure fellow members will appreciate this requires specialised skilled people to undertake this work. There have been numerous attempts to secure a number of different stonemasons and unfortunately non have come to fruition to date. It remains a key aim to complete the installation to honour the brave personnel who paid the ultimate sacrifice for our country. I will pledge that this will be on our to do list to keep asking questions about when it will be done.

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL NO3.

Under Procedure Rule No 11, Councillor M Summers ask the Portfolio Holder for Environmental Sustainability, Recycling and Waste, Councillor D Foster, the following question:-

According to BBC reports there were over a 1000 hours of raw sewage discharge in our local water courses. Since May 2023 scrutiny in Tamworth has been controlled by the Labour Party. In the 2023 local elections the Labour party also attacked the Conservatives over sewage going into rivers.

Just before the local elections the Conservative group moved a motion to make clear our opposition to this discharge and called on the council to investigate the matter via our scrutiny committees. Why has the labour group failed to deliver this vital public scrutiny?

Response:

The treatment of sewerage falls outside of the councils remit and is under the remit of water treatment companies for example Severn Trent Water. Improving water quality within rivers in Tamworth is set to be an agenda item in early 2025 and will be tabled at ISAG. We are engaging with partners who are keen to have a multi-agency approach to this item and a date is currently being confirmed for the new year. We are also looking at inviting the environment agency to that meeting.

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL NO. 4

Under Procedure Rule No 11, Councillor P Turner will ask the Leader, Councillor C Dean, the following question:-

Following the recent public meeting convened to discuss activities undertaken by Lightspeed Networks in Tamworth installing their fibre broadband network. I have contacted Lightspeed to understand there plans to rollout this network and enquire why their communications to the residents and this Council have been poor. And request they pause any further pole erection whilst we obtain a clear picture of their plans.

Having received a full and frank apology from Mr Brett Shepherd for their poor level of communication to the residents who are affected by the pole deployment. Plus, a willingness to cooperate with Tamworth Borough Council by taking up my suggestion of attending a Planning committee meeting also and IS&G meeting.

Bearing this very constructive offer, can I ask the Leader and CEO to find time in their diaries to meet with Mr Brett Shepherd personally to develop a professional communication strategy and action plan.

Also, can you instruct the chairs of the Planning & IS&G Committees to invite the Lightspeed teams to these committees to discuss this full fibre rollout plan so us councillors are fully up to speed with this exciting opportunity.

Response:

I can confirm that both the Chief Executive and I will be meeting with Brett Shepard of Lightspeed to discuss the roll out of this programme including how communications with residents can be improved by the company.

I am not in a position to instruct either the Chair of Planning or the Chair of IS&G to include this item on their agenda. I can however confirm that both are aware of this issue and I leave it to their discretion as to whether to invite representatives of Lightspeed to attend a future meeting of these committees.

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL NO. 5

Under Procedure Rule No 11, Councillor S Smith will ask the Leader of the Council, Councillor C Dean, the following question:-

With the impending 'Future High Street' development works, particularly around the Castle Gateway Bridge, many residents and local business owners are increasingly concerned about potential disruptions and the adverse effects these developments may have on our community's events and attractions.

Could the council please outline the mitigation and risk planning strategies that are in place to prevent negative impacts on scheduled events, local businesses, residents, and our iconic Castle during these works? Specifically, how will the council ensure that these important aspects of our town are protected and that any disruptions are minimised?

Response:

Thank you for your question. The Future High Streets Fund Programme of Works has reached a stage where there is considerable delivery on the ground.

In relation to the Castle Gateway there are still discussions and decisions to take around the programming of the works, however, key considerations will be to ensure that disruption is reduced as far as possible. Only yesterday I was speaking to the officers in charge of the Future High Street Programme and we talked about the movement around the town and how people can get around the town with minimal disruption.

Until discussions are concluded it is premature to realise what impacts may result. That said, the programme has a communications plan and an engagement plan

in place to ensure that messages are clearly articulated to the right people, in the right way. Cllr Arkney and myself have spoken about this and spoken to traders. Discussions will also be held internally with officers to determine, if there is an impact on events and activities, how these can be resolved.

I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate that the purpose of the Future High Streets Fund Programme of works is to tackle the difficult issues in the town centre and to halt and reverse decline. We all know that development and change in the built environment of any sort will lead to disruption. It is inevitable. Full Council knew this when it unanimously approved the bid submission to Government a number of years ago. Without this disruption it will not be possible to create the right environment for the town to flourish and whilst there will be short term pain, the long-term benefits clearly outweigh it.

The castle bridge projects are designed to better link the castle grounds and the town centre. The enhanced gateway including the wider bridge will facilitate more people coming into the town when events are on which will benefit town centre businesses. The long-term prognosis for this area will be enhanced footfall and prosperity as a result.

On a final point, it is important that this programme of works is delivered. Officers are working hard to make this happen, and unless there is a significant reason not to keep moving forwards, the programme will continue, even if there is an impact on the Borough Council's own events. Removing the footbridge to improve the gateway and success of the entire town centre makes it necessary.

Supplementary

You mentioned the plan, but where is the plan how do we go about finding the plan? If you could also provide some details on how the controlling group are actively steering decision and guiding officers to minimise this disruption. What daily actions are the Cabinet taking to oversee the project and ensure effect follow ups

Response

I am sure you remember from your time on the Cabinet that Future High Street Fund Board meet regularly, we talk through any disruptions we feel there maybe we talk through the communications plan that will be needed and we talk through the designs of things, and I'm sure you will be aware those things are a moving beast and changes have been made to original plans and should the need be felt we have to do that again we will do that to benefit the whole programme. I am quite confident that things are moving forward at a pace. Absolutely every part of the Future High Street Fund now have all the contractors and time frames in place we are moving forward and looking at everything being completed some time during the summer next year. We have had briefings for all Councillors on the FHSF, documents are available but if you need anything specific, I am quite happy to send them over

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL NO. 6

Under Procedure Rule No 11, Councillor S Smith will ask the Portfolio Holder for People Services, Leisure and Engagement, Councillor L Smith the following question:-

Following the recent Light Speed saga, which has significantly impacted and distressed many of our town's residents, it's evident that our current communications strategy is largely reactive rather than proactive. Can the council acknowledge this shortcoming, and what steps are being taken to improve our communications to restore confidence among the community?

Response:

Thank you Cllr Smith for your question.

Like you we too very disturbed to hear about the distress that this issue has caused some of our residents. Unfortunately, the council were completely unaware of the issue.

However, once we were made aware of this issue, we immediately made contact with our Staffordshire County Council colleagues.

I am pleased now to further update, that tomorrow the Chief Executive and Leader will be meeting with the Managing Director of Light Speed and part of that discussion will be to agree communications going forward.

Supplementary

In regard to the communication can you confirm when you first received that and also would you acknowledge this was a shortcoming from National Government.

Response

I can confirm that we received the information at the same time as the residents that did in terms of the work that was taking place and I wouldn't necessary say it was the fault of the national government but would say it was an error between the communications between the Borough and County and we can work on that to mitigate issues in the future by improving our communications with the County

53 TO CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING MOTION, NOTICE OF WHICH HAS BEEN DULY GIVEN IN ACCORDANCE WITH PROCEDURE RULE NO. 4.12.1 BY COUNCILLORS M COUCHMAN, L WOOD, C ADAMS, M CLARKE, H HADLEY AND K NORCHI -

Council considered the following motion, notice of which has been duly given in accordance with Procedure Rule No. 4.12.1 by Councillors M Couchman, L Wood, C Adams, M Clarke, H Hadley and K Norchi.

Tamworth Borough Council requests that SCC share with us their strategy to manage increased traffic demand in and around Tamworth. How will it ensure a safe and healthy environment for residents, particularly in respect of the ever-increasing housing developments, and proposed developments?

Will the County Council share with us any strategies that they wish to implement to improve the road infrastructure in Tamworth?

Councillors debated on the motion

Councillor M summers raised a point of order that it is correct that that Scrutiny Committees can put their findings and consider motions to the Executive or full council if they wish, it didn't have to come to Council straight away.

RESOLVED: That Council

requests that SCC share with us their strategy to manage increased traffic demand in and around Tamworth. How will it ensure a safe and healthy environment for residents, particularly in respect of the ever-increasing housing developments, and proposed developments? and

Ask the County Council share with us any strategies that they wish to implement to improve the road infrastructure in Tamworth?

(Moved by Councillor M Couchman and seconded by Councillor L Wood)

54 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT AND ANNUAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY MID-YEAR REVIEW REPORT 2024/25

It was agreed that 7,8 9 & 10 be moved en bloc

Report of the Leader of The Council to present to Members the Mid-year Review of the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy.

RESOLVED that Council

1. Approved the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and

Annual Investment Strategy Mid-year Review Report 2024/25

(Moved by Councillor C Dean and seconded by Councillor T Clements)

55 LOCAL COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME 2025/26

The Leader of the council moved that items 7 – 9 be moved en bloc

(Moved by Councillor C Dean and second by Councillor J Oates)

Report of the Leader of the Council to recommend that Cabinet and Council approves the Council Tax Reduction scheme from the 1 April 2025.

There was a slight change to the wording in recommendation 2. change from Cabinet to Council

RESOLVED that Council considered and endorsed the proposed recommended changes detailed below:

1. The continuation of the income banded/grid scheme for working age applicants to reduce the administrative burden placed on the Council by the introduction of Universal Credit and to increase the overall level of support for the lowest income families; and
2. Should material amendments be required to the scheme, Council authorise the Chief Executive, Executive Director Finance, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to make such required amendments as necessary.

(Moved by Councillor C Dean and seconded by Councillor T Clements)

56 PAY POLICY 2024

Report of the Leader of the Council detailing Tamworth Borough Council's Pay Policy Statement so that statutory guidance as set out in Section 38 of the Localism Act is adhered to.

RESOLVED that Council

Approved the Policy Statement 2024 for adoption and publication in line with the Localism Act 2011.

(Moved by Councillor C Dean and seconded by Councillor t Clements)

The Leader thanked Officers for all the work that has been carried out on this since 2017.

57 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY STRATEGY

Report of the Leader of the Council to provide an updated Equality and Diversity strategy which gives assurance that Tamworth Borough Council is committed to equality and diversity both within the organisation and in the service it delivers to the Borough. The council will also remain compliant with the public sector duty.

RESOLVED that Council

1. Endorsed the Equality and Diversity Strategy 2025-2028, the action plan and Equality, Social Inclusion and Health Impact Assessment and recommend it for formal approval and publication

(Moved by Councillor C Dean and seconded by Councillor T Clements)

58 TAMWORTH PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCY – REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS, POLLING PLACES AND POLLING STATIONS

Report of the Chief Executive to advise that in accordance with the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013, every council in England and Wales must undertake and complete a review of all of the polling district and polling places in its area. Guidance produced by the Electoral Commission sets out the process for a review, and this has been followed. Appendix A to this report provides a list of the recommended polling districts, polling places and polling stations, showing the changes which have been made since the last review.

RESOLVED that Council

1. Adopted the polling districts and polling places as listed in Appendix A to this report.
2. Set the polling place as the polling district plus any adjacent polling district(s).
3. Endorsed the polling stations proposed by the Returning Officer as listed in Appendix A to this report.

(Moved by Councillor M Couchman and seconded by Councillor C Dean)

The Leader thanked Officers for their hard work in producing the report.

59 GAMBLING ACT 2005 – REVIEW OF STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

Report of the Portfolio Holder for Environmental Sustainability, Recycling and Waste to bring before Full Council the Licensing Committee recommendation that they consider the draft Gambling Statement of Principles as suitable for adoption.

The Council's current Statement of Principles under the Gambling Act 2005 took effect on 31st January 2023. In accordance with the provisions of the Act, the Council is required to prepare and publish a Statement of Principles every three years. Therefore, a new Statement of Principles must be published by 31st January 2025.

RESOLVED that Council

1. Considered the recommendation of the Licensing Committee that the revised Gambling Act Statement of Principles is suitable for adoption effective from 31st January 2025.

(Moved by Councillor T Clements and seconded by Councillor B Clarke)

The Mayor