



## **MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD ON 25th FEBRUARY 2014**

**PRESENT:** Councillor J Garner (Chair), Councillors R Kingstone, M Clarke, S Claymore, T Clements, D Cook, C Cooke, S Doyle, J Faulkner, D Foster, K Gant, M Gant, M Greatorex, G Hirons, A James, J Jenkins, M McDermid, R McDermid, K Norchi, J Oates, S People, R Pritchard, S Pritchard, E Rowe, P Seekings, P Standen and M Thurgood

The following officers were present: Anthony E Goodwin (Chief Executive), John Wheatley (Executive Director Corporate Services), Jane Hackett (Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer), Stefan Garner (Director of Finance) and Ryan Keyte (Senior Legal Officer)

### **53 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors L Bates, M Couchman and A Lunn.

### **54 TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 December 2013 were approved and signed as a correct record.

*(Moved by Councillor J Garner and seconded by Councillor D Cook)*

### **55 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no Declarations of Interest.

### **56 TO RECEIVE ANY ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE MAYOR, LEADER, MEMBERS OF THE CABINET OR THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

None.

### **57 QUESTION TIME:**

**QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

**NO.1**

**Under Procedure Rule No 10, Mr P Hill, 55 Strode House, Tamworth will ask the Portfolio Holder for Public Housing and Vulnerable People, Councillor M Greatorex, the following question:-**

"There are more people dying through hypothermia than there is through non sprinkler systems in the high rise flats so why aren't they changing the central heating systems which are 40 years old?"

**Councillor M Greatorex gave the following reply:**

"Mr Mayor. I thank Mr. Hill for his question.

I do not have mortality figures before me about hypothermia as against non-sprinkler systems in the high rise flats.

The decision to fit sprinklers has been taken because the Council considers that it is prudent to do this work.

You draw my attention to the heating system in the flats being 40 years old. We regularly review what maintenance work needs to be done in the flats and we have to make decisions about what work is appropriate and when it should be done and what we can afford to do.

The heating systems in the flats are electric storage heaters supplemented with panel heaters in the bedrooms and fan heaters in the kitchens and bathrooms.

There is no gas supply in the blocks so gas central heating is not a viable option. There are no plans to upgrade the heating systems but we do renew/repair/service the heaters as and when required.

I will continue to keep under review what further maintenance work can be done to improve the flats."

**Supplementary Question:**

Some of the flats have been sold off so who pays for the sprinklers to be fitted in these flats?

**Councillor M Greatorex gave the following response:**

Under the terms of sale the Council gives notice about any proposed work. Notice has already been given to the owner occupiers and they will have the opportunity to respond. The Council will have regard to the responses.

## **QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

## **NO.2**

**Under Procedure Rule No 10, Mr A Madge, 7 Coreen, Tamworth will ask the Leader of the Council, Councillor D Cook, the following question:-**

"Can you enlighten me on Tamworth Councils position on protecting open spaces, as we seem to be intent on selling land where we can and destroying

anything green, does the leader of the Council deem more houses more important than protecting bio diversity in Tamworth?"

**Councillor D Cook gave the following reply:**

The Borough Council has two roles in open space.

**The first is as a provider of open space.**

The borough's green spaces vary greatly in size and type, including formal urban parks and informal amenity grassland, allotments, cemeteries, sport pitches, floodplain and grazing marshes, designated wetland areas, and linear green and blue elements, such as Public Rights of Way, cycling routes, roadside verges and rail corridors, rivers and canals and their verges. We provide access to a large number of these.

We are certainly not intent on destroying anything green – in fact we have recently acquired more land to manage as open space (Broad Meadow)

We must recognise that we have increasing need to provide homes and jobs for Tamworth residents and for their children in the future. I have 2 kids, others have 3 or 4. Where do we expect this generation to live in 15 years if we do not provide homes? This generation will need access to good quality open space and that is what I want to focus on, it is not just about quantity.

But in the face of increasing central government budget cuts we need to ensure we use the resources we have in the most efficient and effective way. It's a large balancing act, and we try to get it as right as possible.

**The second role is as planning authority.**

We have designated a network of open spaces through our current Local Plan and have policies to protect these (the policy does allow their loss when certain criteria are met as per national law).

The current Local Plan also sets a standard for the provision of new open space on new developments.

We must also remember that the fight against for loss of green space and bio-diversity is a worthy goal, but Tamworth is utterly surrounded on all sides by green space, we must not just think in terms of political boundaries.

**Supplementary Question:**

In public meeting if people want to visit countryside can leave Tamworth and go to North Warwickshire. When Council sells land for development this leads to outline planning application and then application goes to the Planning Committee. How can fairness and a sound decision be made when the vice-chair is also the portfolio holder, surely this overrides the democratic process?

**Councillor D Cook gave the following reply:**

Every member of the Planning Committee will consider the merits of the application and make a decision. Councillor Claymore will do his duty. Sound decision and sound professional judgement. He does not behave that way and he will look at all matters and deliver a decision in the best possible way.

### **QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC NO.3**

The person asking question 3 was absent so the question was not tabled.

### **QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC NO.4**

The person asking question 4 was absent so the question was not tabled.

### **QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC NO.5**

**Under Procedure Rule No 10, Mr S Patrick, 24 Carnoustie, Amington, Tamworth will ask the Portfolio Holder for Economy and Education, Councillor S Claymore, the following question:-**

"Can the councillor please explain how council are are in position to allocate the golf course site within the Local plan only 4 weeks after the decision to close the course and the draft redevelopment project plan only becoming available on 13th February 2014. When have the necessary local plan assessments taken place?"

#### **Councillor S Claymore gave the following response:**

Work on the Local Plan which is intended to be considered by Cabinet in March has been ongoing for several years. More specifically since May last year work has been continuing to assess the potential of sites throughout the Borough for housing, which involves a technical and sustainability appraisal of each site and these sites have been sent to some 34 separate bodies for technical appraisal, including the Environment agency, Staffordshire County Council, the coal authority, Severn Trent and Natural England. Over 60 sites were assessed throughout the Borough.

In order to inform the long list of options for the future of the golf course and as agreed by cabinet at its meeting on the 30th May last year, we included the golf course in the proposed sites for assessments. In order to include development within any of the subsequent options for the golf course, we had to assess the site for suitability for allocation.

It is considered that the site is suitable and now the Cabinet have taken the decision to close the course, the site could be included in the draft Local plan for further public consultation.

Therefore the assessments that have been informed the options appraisal and now the Local Plan have been taking place since May 2013.

For info:

Following a decision by cabinet scheduled for the 13th of March, we expect the draft local plan consultation will start on the 31st March and will run for 6 weeks. At that consultation you can make your comments on specific policies or sites. The next consultation will then take place during the summer when the plan will be available for comments on its legal compliance and tests of soundness.

Following that the plan will go to full council for approval and then be submitted to the SOS for examination by the planning inspectorate which will allow for further testing of the plan.

**Supplementary Question:**

If Cabinet based decision on misleading and inaccurate information would they review the decision again?

**Councillor S Claymore gave the following reply:**

Yes of course.

**QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL NO.1**  
**Under Procedure Rule No 11, Councillor C Cooke will ask the Leader of the Council, Councillor D Cook, the following question:-**

"We are told the decision to close Tamworth's Golf Course was based on a forecast on-going loss to the Council of £140,000 per year. Please can you itemise in detail the incomes and expenditures forecast to show exactly what is expected to be spent on what items and what each of the sources of income are expected to be?"

**Councillor D Cook gave the following response:**

Since re-opening the course in March 2013 the Council has focused on providing good quality affordable golf. This has been achieved in the most cost effective way possible. The Councils annual budget pages show clearly the budgeted expenditure by type and also the expected income. So far this year the golf Course budget has under recovered on some income targets. The overall net effect this financial year is that the course will require a net revenue subsidy of circa £100k. This is in addition to the £100k capital spent in re-opening the course. We simply do not have the required finance at present to re-open the very, very dated club house.

The budget for the next financial year shows

The total costs of running the course as follows

Wages and Salaries	Staff	£ 94,720
Premises Related Expenses	Electric, water, repairs etc	£ 67,600
Supplies and Services	Golf Cart hire, Catering, Telephones etc	£ 31,110
Charges for Services	Refuse collection, bank charges etc	£

		3,510
Re-charge for Marmion House Staff	ie CE, Director and accounts etc	£ 42,390
Golf Course Grounds Maintenance	Grass cutting, vehicle insurance, S Scene wages etc	£ 131,050
	<b>TOTAL COSTS</b>	<b>£ 370,380</b>

#### Projected income if membership is maintained

Green Fees	18 holes	£ 65,260
Green Fees	9 holes	£ 80,230
Green Fees	5 day Season	£ 26,230
Green Fees	7 day Season	£ 35,040
Catering Target		£ 10,690
Sales	ie golf balls etc	£ 1,000
Buggy hire		£ 9,000
	<b>TOTAL projected income</b>	<b>£ 227,450</b>

So projected income is £227,450, less projected costs of £370,380 means the tax-payer will subsidise the course in 2014/15 to the tune of £142,930.

I have the full breakdown that will appear in the 2014/15 budget book here with me now, you can have it with pleasure. You were also given this year's budget book which carries similar costs for the golf course.

I have stated there is nothing to hide, nothing will be confidential and I have stuck to this.

Cllr Cooke, I have read a few things on the Herald web-site about these costs being artificial or creative accounting, if you have concerns please raise them as this would be a crime.

#### **Supplementary Question:**

It was a regrettable decision to give the lease to Jack Barker Limited. Has the Council considered pursuing any legal actions against Jack Barker Limited in order to recover some of the loss?

#### **Councillor D Cook gave the following reply:**

Unable to chase as it's a Limited Company that's gone into liquidation.

**QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL NO.2**

**Under Procedure Rule No 11, Councillor C Cooke will ask the Leader of the Opposition, Councillor J Faulkner, the following question:-**

"You will be aware of the recent Council decision to close Tamworth Golf Course. In the event of your group gaining control of Tamworth Council in the May elections what would be your plans for the Golf Course. Would your group alter that decision in any way, perhaps to keep it open as a golf course or other public open space recreational amenity? Or would you, as with the Conservative group, want to sell it on to the highest bidder?"

**Councillor J Faulkner gave the following reply:**

In 2005, the Conservative administration of Tamworth Borough Council brought forward proposals to offload the Borough's heritage and leisure facilities including Tamworth Castle, the Assembly Rooms, the Peaks Leisure Centre and Tamworth Golf Course. At the time lavish statements were made regarding the benefits of these proposals.

As regards the Golf Course, the then cabinet member for regeneration and community, told the Tamworth Herald:

"What we're looking to do is enter into a partnership for the golf course, I think we will retain ownership of the land but we'll be looking for an external management partner to come in with some investment, to put money into increasing the facilities available at the venue – like perhaps a nice restaurant, perhaps a gymnasium or even a pool. We have this vision for the golf course and we want to bring it back up to being an attractive golfing venue."

In 2007, a 50 year lease was signed for the Golf Course and Ron Maydon, managing director of the Jack Barker Group said:

"We are very pleased to finally add Tamworth Golf Centre to the group. We tried to acquire it four years ago so we are delighted finally to be successful.

"Tamworth fits perfectly geographically between other existing Jack Barker sites in Northampton and Staffordshire.

"We will shortly be submitting planning applications for a new two-tier driving range, restaurant and golf store."

However, it soon became evident that the business model was dependent upon the dumping of large volumes of rubble on the site thus evading the landfill tax. Despite this an Amington Conservative councillor on the Planning Committee was quoted as saying:

"The end result really will be one of the best and most impressive local authority courses in the country."

I leave it to you to judge whether that has happened.

As regards the present view of the Labour Group, we oppose the sale of the golf course for developments other than leisure.

**Supplementary Question:**

Can you assure me that any decision your group comes to will be consistent with the wider interests of the whole community and not just the interest of commerciality?

**Councillor J Faulkner gave the following response:**

Can safely give you that assurance.

**58 CORPORATE VISION, PRIORITIES PLAN, BUDGET & MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2014/15**

The Report of the Leader of the Council and Cabinet seeking approval for the Single Corporate Vision and Strategic Priorities for 2014/15 was considered.

A named vote was taken in accordance with the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, paragraph 11.

<b>For</b>	<b>Against</b>	<b>Abstained</b>
S Claymore		M Clarke
T Clements		C Cooke
D Cook		J Faulkner
S Doyle		D Foster
K Gant		G Hirons
M Gant		J Jenkins
J Garner		M McDermid
M Greateorex		R McDermid
A James		K Norchi
R Kingstone		S Peuple
R Pritchard		P Seekings
S Pritchard		P Standen
E Rowe		
M Thurgood		

**RESOLVED:**

- That Council approved:
- 1 The Single Corporate Vision and Strategic Priorities for 2014/15;
  - 2 The proposed revisions to Service Revenue Budgets;
  - 3 The sum of £53,509 be applied from Collection Fund surpluses in reducing the Council tax demand in 2014/15;



- 4 It be noted that on 28 November 2013, the Council calculated the Council Tax Base 2014/15 for the whole Council area as 20,389 [Item T in the formula in Section 31B(3) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended (the "Act")];
- 5 Calculate that the Council Tax requirement for the Council's own purposes for 2014/15 is £3,170,490;
- 6 The following amounts as calculated for the year 2014/15 in accordance with Section 31 to 36 of the Act:
  - a. £55,380,738 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) of the Act (Outgoings excluding internal GF Recharges);
  - b. £52,210,248 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) of the Act (Income excluding internal GF Recharges);
  - c. £3,170,490 being the amount by which the aggregate at 6(a) above exceeds the aggregate at 6(b) above, calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act as its Council Tax requirement for the year (Item R in the formula in Section 31A(4) of the Act);
  - d. £155.50 being the amount at 6(c) above (Item R), all divided by Item T (at 4 above), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B(1) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year;
- 7 The Council Tax level for Tamworth Borough Council for 2013/14 of £155.50 (an increase of £3.00 (1.97%) on the 2013/14 level of £152.50) at Band D;
- 8 An aggregate Council Tax (comprising the respective demands of Tamworth Borough Council, Staffordshire County Council, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority) of £1,428.00 at Band D for 2014/15 be noted;
- 9 The Council Tax levels at each band for 2014/15;
- 10 The sum of £1,195,653 be transferred from General Fund Revenue Balances in 2014/15;
- 11 The Summary General Fund Revenue Budget for 2014/15;
- 12 The Provisional Budgets for 2015/16 to 2016/17 as the basis for future planning;
- 13 The minimum level for balances of £500,000 to be held for each of the General Fund, Housing Revenue Account, General Capital Fund and Housing Capital Fund;
- 14 Cabinet be authorised to release funding from the General Contingency budget and that the release of funding for Specific Contingency items be delegated to

- the Corporate Management Team in consultation with the Leader of the Council;
- 15 The creation of a new Transformation Reserve (revenue) of £300k (up to a maximum of £500k) to support the 'Planning for a Sustainable Future' strategy, financed from the current earmarked capital reserve;
  - 16 The proposed HRA Expenditure level of £14,429,640 for 2014/15;
  - 17 Rents for Council House Tenants in 2014/15 be increased by an average of £3.78 per week (4.6%) to £86.60, in line with the Government's Rent Restructuring rules;
  - 18 Rents for Council House Tenants due for 52 weeks in 2014/15 be collected over 48 weeks;
  - 19 The HRA deficit of £984,240 be financed through a transfer from Housing Revenue Account Balances in 2014/15;
  - 20 The proposed 3 year General Fund Capital Programme of £4m, as detailed in Appendix I to the report;
  - 21 The proposed 5 year Housing Capital Programme of £52.5m, as detailed in Appendix J to the report;
  - 22 To delegate authority to Cabinet to approve/add new capital schemes to the capital programme where grant funding is received or there is no net additional cost to the Council;
  - 23 The Treasury Management Strategy Statement, the Treasury Management Policy Statement, Minimum Revenue Provision Strategy and Annual Investment Statement 2014/15 (as detailed in Appendix N);
  - 24 The Prudential and Treasury Indicators and Limits for 2014/15 to 2016/17 contained within Appendix N;
  - 25 The adoption of the Treasury Management Practices contained within Annex 7, and;
  - 26 The detailed criteria of the Investment Strategy 2014/15 contained in the Treasury Management Strategy within Annex 3.

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

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The Mayor