

Tamworth Listens Question Time Event

This year's Tamworth Listens initiative was a question time event held at the Assembly Rooms on the evening of 3rd November 2014. This gave residents of Tamworth the opportunity to ask a panel of public sector representatives questions about Tamworth.

The event was chaired by Gary Phelps, the editor of The Tamworth Herald, and the panel was made up of

- Tony Goodwin, Chief Executive, Tamworth Borough Council,
- Cllr Daniel Cook, Leader, Tamworth Borough Council,
- Aliko Ahmed, Director of Public Health, Staffordshire County Council,
- Matthew Ellis, Staffordshire Police & Crime Commissioner
- Andrew Donaldson, Senior Policy Manager, Staffordshire County Council

The event was split into 3 themes;

- Regeneration and growth,
- Safer communities,
- Healthier Communities.

The event was attended by almost 100 residents and a number of questions were posed by them. Copies of the responses are shown below in order of the appropriate theme.

REGENERATION & GROWTH



QUESTION

Why is Tamworth so dirty and rubbish strewn? It's a disgrace when compared with other towns.

RESPONSE

Tamworth Borough Council has a statutory duty to cleanse our streets and public open spaces and operates various forms of cleansing across the borough. The cleansing and maintenance of the town has resulted in Gold Awards year on year from the Heart of England in Bloom.

- Manual litter picking of publicly owned land is carried out on a 5-8 week cycle. High priority areas and local centres are cleansed 3 times per week and in some cases on a daily basis.
- Carriageway and precinct sweeping is carried out on a 6-10 week cycle depending on the workload at any given time, for example during the Autumn leaf fall operations obviously take longer to complete.
- All verges and open spaces are litter picked prior to mowing during the growing season (approx April-October)
- The castle grounds and town centre are de-littered 7 days per week.
- The Authority provides in excess of 750 litter bins across the borough; these are emptied at a frequency dictated by the level of use they receive.
- These bins are emptied by Street Scene staff 2,282 times per week
- Street Scene staff collects on average 200 bags of litter per week
- This is roughly 215 tonnes per year – the equivalent of 50 African elephants, 430 Minis or 215,000,000 drinks cans
- It costs approximately £1 million per year to manually clean litter in Tamworth, which the Council does not drop
- The A5 bypass is cleansed in those areas where it is safe for our staff to do so. It is recognised that some areas are beyond our ability to provide the service as we would like.

Tamworth also uses the Keep Britain Tidy Local Environmental Quality

monitoring system which evaluates litter, detritus, dog fouling and graffiti across the borough and produces figures that are comparable against other towns and cities.

All of Tamworth results are well above the national averages showing that we are one of the cleanest towns in the area.

Our Street Wardens regularly visit primary schools to educate and inform children about litter concerns and animal safety. Currently nine primary schools have confirmed bookings for these presentations during the next school year.

Using the mascot, Saxon Hound, the Wardens also promote responsible pet ownership and undertake Mucky Pup Clean it Up campaigns which has recently been commended by national Britain in Bloom judges when Tamworth were awarded Silver Gilt.

They are authorised to issue fixed penalties for littering and dog fouling and will act on anything witnessed whilst patrolling. A Mucky Pup hotline 01827 709427 email muckypup@tamworth.gov.uk is available for people to report irresponsible owners. We will also accept witness statements from the public who witness flytipping and littering from vehicles.

Since April 2013 to date:-

- 12 FPNs issued and paid – littering from Cars
- 28 FPNs issued and paid – littering in street
- 5 Prosecutions for littering/waste offences after non-payment of FPN
- 26 litter picks – juveniles (in lieu of FPN)

QUESTION	
Is Tamworth creating more jobs	

RESPONSE

It is difficult to know exactly if Tamworth, as a place, has created more jobs, through locally based businesses. Historically this is also hard to compare as the economic profile of the borough has changed significantly over the past 30 years. There is no specific way of calculating or recording jobs created, but there are a number of sources from which a fair judgement can be made.

Statistical data from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) show that in 2013 there was a small drop in the number of employee jobs in Tamworth, however this figure has increased since 2009 by 2000 jobs. It is worth noting that this information is based on average figures, taken from a Business Survey. No figures on job levels can ever be exact. With significant recent investment from businesses in 2014, it is expected that this figure should increase.

**Total employee jobs
Tamworth**

Year	Tamworth (employee jobs)	West Midlands (employee jobs)	Great Britain (employee jobs)
2009	26,700	2,302,300	26,642,600
2010	26,900	2,311,700	26,581,300
2011	26,200	2,301,500	26,593,500
2012	29,900	2,322,900	26,752,900
2013	28,700	2,341,100	27,176,500

Source: ONS Business Register and Employment Survey
Note: Data excludes farm-based agriculture

Tamworth Borough Council is working with the Stoke and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and the Greater Birmingham LEP to create the conditions for growth. This has resulted in a number of grant funds being created for businesses that are based on the number of new jobs created.

Businesses in Tamworth have directly benefitted from the following grants and have created jobs, this is a condition of the funds:

- Greenbridge
- Business Development Programme
- Business Innovation Programme
- Innovative Growth in Stoke and Staffordshire
- Jobs and Growth Fund
- Business Enterprise Fund

Tamworth Borough Council directly administers the Business Development Programme (BDP), which so far has directly created 9 jobs in 9 Small to

medium companies (SME), with grants approved of £133,950.69. More jobs are expected to be created as part of this scheme as time progresses.

Analysis of our commercial buildings usage through business rates data can also act as a good indicator of local business activity and hence employment opportunities. We are therefore constantly monitoring the percentage of total rateable value of commercial floorspace that is unoccupied, this has been steadily falling since we started monitoring it in April 2012, from 10.5% to its current level of just 5.15% This demonstrates that almost all of the commercial property in the Borough is now being put to productive economic use and is symptomatic of a strong local economic recovery.

With regards unemployment figures, the figures are at a significant low of 0.9% of the working age population, in real terms 448 individuals are claiming job seekers allowance. This is the lowest figure Tamworth has seen since 1992.

Tamworth has also seen a significant rise per annum in the number of limited company registrations at Companies House, a growth of over 300% since 2006. It is difficult to record the number of self employed non incorporated businesses that have been formed in the same period, but from anecdotal experience we feel that this has also increased significantly.

All of the above information leads us to surmise that job creation in Tamworth and the surrounding geography, outside of the local authority boundaries has increased.

The Borough Council is also seeing levels of increased investment in the area and increased enquiries. This has been evidence by the following investment:

- Aldi - warehouse and grade A office space at Centurion Point
- Hermes and Euro Car Parts – taking space at Tamworth 594
- Midlands Fertility – taking office and research space at Cardinal point
- Approval of BMW and Mini car showrooms on Cardinal point
- Opening of Nando's, Pizza Express and Costa at Jolly Sailor Retail Park.
- Opening of Pound Stretcher, H&M and JD sports on Ventura Retail Park.
- Relocation of A&S compaction and Bowden Dolphin from Walsall and Birmingham respectively to Lichfield Road Industrial estate.
- Expansion of Suncream Dairies at Tame Valley Industrial estate.
- Relocation and expansion of Baldwin Accountants to grade A office space on Cardinal point.

These are just a few examples of the businesses locally that the Borough Council is aware of that have invested and have or will create jobs. It is also important to note that there has been a significant increase in investment in neighbouring areas, particularly at Birch Coppice in North Warwickshire, which although not creating jobs directly in Tamworth, have had a significant impact on local residents. These include Ocado, UPS, Bristan, Euro Car parts

and CEVA logistics. . It is important to also consider what happens outside of our borders as Tamworth is not an economic island, with many of our residents relying on jobs outside of our area for their employment, and particularly in the Greater Birmingham conurbation and over in North Warwickshire.

QUESTION

What is the medium term plan for outdoor leisure facilities in Tamworth given that we have a closed golf course, little or no tennis facilities, a football club on it's knees, an under funded rugby club and public pitches that have seen better days? Are we to assume the Tamworth Borough Council is relying on an expensive private club/sector to provide these facilities meaning that we all pay more for facilities that should be provided by our council?

I am attending the event and would like to ask this question in the light of the closures recently and the "plan" to grow the population by many thousands over the coming years. There seems to be a rush to win some sort of "win bonus" for house building so is this going to pay for other "problems" in the budget or be re-invested in the health and wellbeing of Tamworth residents?

RESPONSE

The Council has recently completed a review of sports facilities in Tamworth and this will be developed into an action plan. It is important to note that providing sports facilities is not a requirement of local authorities and in most towns there is a mix of provision based on the Local Authority operating or subsidising facilities and private and voluntary sector facilities. As part of our commitment to support healthy lifestyles we invest significantly in leisure facilities and services. Up and down the country Councils are reviewing their investment into leisure facilities and seeking to make savings as we have done. It's also important to note that the funding for new or to upgrade facilities is often via Sport England and the National Bodies and we work with clubs to help them secure funds. Therefore our approach to leisure facilities is based on facilitating and enabling the private and community sectors to delivery more rather than direct Council run leisure provision. This currently includes subsidies to the SnowDome and Wilnecote Sports Centre for swimming, cheap rental costs to numerous sports clubs, advice and support for funding bids, Council grant funding to clubs and leisure activities through our Sports Development Team.

As part of the Local Plan process the Council has recently updated its assessment of sports facilities against the projected population and is identifying policies in the plan to protect sports facilities and priorities for future investment. Given that the Council cannot possibly afford the required investment we will be seeking developer contributions to sports facilities. For example the Council has received circa £400k from the Anker Valley

Development specifically to support sports and leisure provision.

In regards to tennis, there is a requirement for more courts in the south of the Borough and access is limited to many courts on schools grounds. Sports pitch provision is mixed and further assessment of quality is needed on some although many of them are not in Council control. We will also be looking at the provision of additional 3G pitches in line with our findings and national policy. In regards to the rugby and football club, we regularly discuss opportunities for development with them and, given our resources, the importance of working with clubs and the private sector is increasing.

Money is available from three funds held by the Police and Crime Commissioner; Proceeds of Crime Fund, Safer Communities Fund and Commissioner's People Power Fund where a definitive connection can be made that spending money on sporting facilities will lead to a reduction in anti-social behaviour and crime.

QUESTION

Who is responsible or the appalling condition of the streets in the town centre? Staffordshire Highways or you? It is supposed to be a pedestrian area but, with all the traffic, walking is a nightmare. Why aren't the rules reinforced regarding cars using the streets?

RESPONSE

Maintenance of the highways through the town centre and pedestrian zone is the responsibility of Staffordshire County Council.

Sweeping and litter collection is carried out by Tamworth Borough Council Street Scene.

The on-street Staffordshire County Council traffic order allows for vehicular access for deliveries in the town centre up to 11am each morning and after 3pm each day - with the exception of Tuesday and Saturday when market vehicles only are allowed to set up and take down. Parking is not allowed at any time and is enforced by the civil parking contractor.

After 11am and before 3pm Mon, Wed, Thurs, Fri and Sunday, the traffic order does allow for emergency, postal and bullion vehicles to access the area. Access control to the bollards is operated by Tamworth Borough Council CCTV and owned and maintained by Staffordshire County Council. .

On occasion during the last year the bollards have not been in operation which allowed free vehicular access for those who chose to ignore the traffic regulation orders in place. Driving through the pedestrian zone at these times is a moving traffic offence which can only be enforced by Police officers.

Staffordshire County Council is aware of these concerns.

THEME	REGENERATION & GROWTH
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QUESTION	
<p>How can we trust that the Leader and the council of Tamworth of being capable of getting the best deal for Tamworth and making decisions for the Town around the sale of land for housing?</p> <p>After the recent fiascos with the closure of the golf course and the previous issues with the swimming baths and Icelandic bank, when they said this was the best deal for Tamworth at the time, yet through a few checks could have found out that their decisions were later flawed and do they believe that there ability to make the so called tough decisions is creditable and do they apologise for the closure and demise of one of this countries best leisure facilities in Tamworth?</p>	

RESPONSE
<p>Ultimately, people will judge the Leader upon <u>all</u> the decisions and <u>all</u> of the actions he has undertaken and not just two or three high profile ones. That said, the question does relate to specific issues all of which have three things in common:</p> <p>First, they represented significant challenges; secondly, they required strong leadership and decision making and third, all three occurred against a backdrop of government reforms, significant funding reductions and a global recession.</p> <p>Clearly, people are entitled to their view on the handling of the golf course closure. There will be others that agree and many who do not. The fact remains that the appointment of the golf course contractor saved the local tax payer several hundred thousand pounds by converting and operational deficit into a rental income. Furthermore, the course remained open longer than it would have should the Council retained control.</p> <p>Now, as a consequence of a complaint received last week, officers are looking in to a number of issues and the Leader does not wish to compromise or jeopardise the process. However, the Leader undertakes to publish the outcome on the Council's website on completion.</p> <p>With regards to Peaks Leisure Centre, the Council was required to go out to tender for the management of the facilities. The consequence was that it successfully awarded the contract to a well established Asset Management company. They in turn, appointed a Leisure Operating company to oversee</p>

the day to day operation. It was this company that failed to meet the specification that ultimately led to the termination of the agreement and the subsequent renegotiation with Snowdome (Tamworth) Ltd.

The outcome being that the annual subsidy of between £611k and £637k per year was saved; the £1m asset liability converted into a £2.5m capital receipt and now the town enjoys higher quality services and facilities at public sector prices.

The only subsidy remaining supports public swimming – a key life skill given that we have two rivers, a canal and several lakes.

Finally, the Icelandic Banking defaults of 2008. Like 150 other local authorities including top performers like Kent County Council, and the very body that oversees financial ethics and procedures, the Audit Commission, the Council held deposits with a number of Icelandic Banking Institutions.

In 2008, a number of these and other banks defaulted which resulted in a Global Economic crisis. There were no signs that the banking industry would experience such a major failure – even the rating agencies and the UK Government Financial Services Authority (FSA) had not recognised the risk and as such the banks were still highly rated until the day of the failure!

This Council had £7.5m deposited with 3 Icelandic banking institutions (2 of which were UK based) in line with the investment strategy approved by all Members of the Council – in fact both Internal and external auditors reviewed the processes and found that all appropriate procedures had been complied with.

Members of the Council authorised Officers to work closely with the Local Government Association to recover as much of the 'at risk' deposits as possible – even sharing legal costs between all Councils involved to save money. To date £7.2m has been recovered with an expectation that the final recovery will total £7.3m (over 97%).

QUESTION

Will the council be writing into the contract with the builders the green spaces they promised the residents of Amington on the golf course land?

RESPONSE

The redevelopment of the golf course for much needed new homes and parkland will provide much greater access to the remaining open space than was previously available when it was a golf course.

The draft master plan for the site identifies a large amount of green space roughly 40% in what will be a very green and sustainable development. The proposed new woodland park is roughly the size of the castle grounds and will be open to all residents alongside a 7 hectare extension to the Hodge Lane nature reserve which will create new wetland habitat also open for people to enjoy.

The Council is proposing that these and some of the green corridors especially those that provide screening for existing houses will be excluded from the sale and or protected through the sale and planning process. Cabinet will be considering these issues later this year as the project moves forward.

QUESTION	
<p>1. Will the council use an alternative “construction access point” instead of Eagle Drive to lessen the impact of the construction on the local community?</p> <p>The residents and the workforce from the commercial units backing onto this road / neighbouring this road, have already endured 5 years of high levels of noise, dirt and disruption throughout daylight hours, during the council-sanctioned tipping on the golf course.</p> <p>A suitable, alternative access point already exists next to the Council Depot off Sandy Way, which will disrupt very few units and then, only during working hours.</p>	<p>2. Will the council consider revising the “Masterplan” to provide open, level (to facilitate walking) green recreational space for the health and well-being of the community near Eagle Drive?</p> <p>Woodland is NOT parkland and will rapidly become overgrown and inaccessible to walkers without regular trimming/maintenance.</p> <p>A large percentage of the land designated as “Community Woodland” / recreational is so severely inclined, as a result of the “Landscaping”, that it will be impossible to utilize and shouldn’t be factored as part of the community allocation.</p>

RESPONSE
<p>1. Construction traffic related to house building is not of the same order of magnitude as a land-raising exercise.</p> <p>There may well be more than one housing developer on site and their Site Offices will move over time as phases of the development are completed. Tamworth Borough Council should not restrict the developers’ freedom to locate their site offices to the most practical location at the time. This could include using the Amington Depot access and the proposed new access off Mercian Way but could also include using the Eagle Drive access.</p> <p>2. The development includes 2.6 miles of new cycleway / footpath; much of which is adjacent to existing woodland. In addition, the new community woodland will include open woodland “rides” along the routes of the existing fairways so will be accessible to walkers. We expect that the design of the new woodland could incorporate input from local residents and include opportunities for community planting events to help create the woodland.</p>

QUESTION

I understand you intend to build houses on Ashby Road along with Lichfield District Council. How many and should they be occupied by Tamworth residents

RESPONSE

1) Housing Numbers

Development to the North of Tamworth (within Tamworth at Anker Valley and also in Lichfield at Browns Lane/ Arkall Farm) has a long history.

Last September, a specific piece of Transport Assessment work that planners at Tamworth and transport officers at County Council have been working on was completed (Lichfield Council have also been involved with this). The work shows that if the improvements to Ashby Road and the Gungate Corridor are put in place, they are doing this now, and additional funding is pumped into the public transport network, then that would allow for a maximum of 700 new homes to be built. The money for the road improvements is part funded by Government and part funded by developers; the public transport funding is funded by County Council and Government.

Our view is that anything above 700 will be a detriment to the local road network – in terms of congestion and travel times and this is unacceptable. Staffordshire County Council shares this view and also has concerns over highway safety if numbers exceed 700, particularly because of the school and college site.

Tamworth

This Transport work has influenced Tamworth’s emerging Local Plan, which allocates Anker Valley for 500 new homes and a new primary school. The Anker Valley Link Road has been deleted – as it is not required for this sized development or even 700.

Because of the work on the Local Plan and the Transport work, the developers at Anker Valley submitted a planning application for 535 new homes and school to Tamworth Council. This was approved (subject to S106) in September 2014.

Lichfield

Lichfield’s Local Plan was already being examined by their Inspector before the transport work was completed. In Lichfield’s Local Plan it set out that

1,000 new homes would be built in the Arkall Farm / Browns Lane area, north of Tamworth. However, because of various reasons their Local Plan examination was delayed for almost twelve months.

As mentioned before, Lichfield was also involved in the preparation of this Transport work. However, they chose not to act on it in the twelve month period and leave the 1,000 homes in their Local Plan.

Since March 2014 and, during Lichfield's 2nd set of examination sessions in mid October, Tamworth has opposed the 1,000 homes and has requested that the allocation is removed from their Local Plan. Staffordshire County Council share Tamworth's view on this and have also been requesting to the Inspector for it to be removed.

The outcome of Lichfield's examination will be known in the next month or so.

Whilst the Local Plan for Lichfield is being examined, they have had two planning applications in the area North of Tamworth. One for 165 new homes at Browns Lane and another for up to 1,000 new homes at Arkall Farm.

Tamworth have opposed and objected to both of these planning applications. Staffordshire County Council has recommended that the application for 1,000 should be refused. However, they did support the 165 as this, with the 535 planning application at Anker Valley would get to 700 new homes in the area north of Tamworth.

The application for 165 has been approved by Lichfield (but because the access road is in Tamworth, the application is also with us)
The application for 1,000 is expected to go to Lichfield's planning committee in November.

Housing Numbers Summary

There is currently planning permission for 700 new homes. Anything above this is opposed by both Tamworth Borough Council and Staffordshire County Council. Lichfield would be going against Staffordshire County Council and the work they did with Tamworth Borough Council if they approve the application for 1,000 new homes.

2) Who will live in them

The Local Plan sets out how many houses are needed in Tamworth until 2031 and we have to make sure that enough land is available. Planning's role is to make sure the right environment exists for the houses to be built. Houses are bought and sold privately there is nothing we can do in planning terms to make sure they are sold to people 'from Tamworth'. However, affordable housing is different. About 20% of the houses at Anker Valley will be affordable and the people who live in those houses will mostly already live in Tamworth as they will be on the housing register.

N.B.

Negotiations are taking place that would give Tamworth Borough Council nomination rights for 50% of the affordable housing on this site but no formal decision has been made. So whether this will find its way into the final legal agreement is still to be confirmed. In the event that Lichfield approves the Barwoods development, against our wishes, we may seek a similar arrangement regarding affordable housing on this site and other matters.

QUESTION

I understand you are closing the youth clubs in Tamworth, do you intend to close the libraries and the Police Station

RESPONSE

There is no plan to close the police station at Tamworth but the Police are constantly reviewing the opportunities to ensure that the premises that they have best serve the community. The force is reviewing all of the buildings it works from to help them plan for the future but a building to house the operational police is essential for Tamworth and will remain.

Staffordshire County Council are making changes to the Youth and Community Service as three quarters of young people do not use the service currently provided. Whilst some traditional youth clubs in Tamworth will close, funding is being provided for community groups to set up new activities for young people, and both the County Council and the Staffordshire Council of Voluntary Youth Services (SCVYS) are working with young people across Tamworth to support them in using the wide range of facilities that currently exist.

Clubs in Tamworth are;

Tamworth Youth Centre (Town Centre location) – SCVYS will work with young people and groups as stated above,
 Glascote Youth Centre (Attached to Library) – as above,
 Wilnecote (former youth centre but no delivery for last 18 months)

With regards to libraries, it is important to be clear that this is not a closure programme. Libraries need to change to be sustainable and respond to changes in demands in the future, so this is about starting a conversation so that the County Council can make sure that this happens. Right now, we are in a relative position of strength relative to other authorities who are closing libraries – we are talking about ways to make them more sustainable. The main change to libraries in Tamworth set out in the proposals in the recent county-wide consultation '*Let's Talk Libraries*' concerns Wilnecote Library. It is proposed that this library will become a 'Library Local', giving communities and community organisations the opportunity to lead, manage and deliver the local library service and to maintain or introduce services to meet local need.

The mobile libraries service is not part of the current review and will not be a part of the proposals going to Cabinet in February. However, following the findings of the consultation, we will consider mobile library routes in the

context of the wider libraries remodelling to ensure that they take into account the changing needs of our communities.

The consultation closed on the 7th October and the findings are being analysed and demand looked at. No final decisions will be made until after the meeting of Staffordshire County Council Cabinet on 4th February 2015.



QUESTION	
<p>On October 20th 1989 The Herald said “a glossy brochure is being produced to woo private companies into investing in Tamworth’s latest £3.3million tourist attraction. The borough council hopes its proposed Saxon Centre will attract more than 250,000 visitors a year by the end of the mid 1990’s”</p> <p>What’s happened?</p> <p>Is the Council pursuing the project determinedly?</p>	
RESPONSE	
<p>Unfortunately, no one serves on the Council now that did in 1989.</p> <p>This proposal was one put forward when the Conservatives were the controlling group. The Labour group took control in late 1989 and it would not appear to have been pursued after that.</p> <p>The issue at the time was probably as it would be today in that there were no funds available to pursue the scheme.</p>	

THEME	REGENERATION & GROWTH
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QUESTION	
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In the report to the Tamworth Borough Council Planning Committee on the 9th September 2014 in respect of the Anker Valley Planning Application 0105/2014, a section headed Staffordshire County Council-The Highways Authority 8.7 on page 16 referring to Capital Funding states that a further £1m local authority revenue support in the period to 2021. May I ask if Tamworth Borough Council is one of these local authorities, and if so, how much of the £1M will Tamworth Borough Council have to contribute

RESPONSE

The reference to the £1m local authority revenue support within the Anker Valley committee report (9th September 2014), was part of a wider explanation provided by Staffordshire County Council about what funds have been secured for transport improvements within the area to the north of Tamworth:

'Having accepted the BWB recommendations in 2014, the County Council submitted a successful bid to the DfT (Access to Jobs Training and Services in Tamworth) for £985,000 of Local Sustainable Transport Revenue Funding (for 15/16) supporting capital interventions of around £2m and a further £1m Local Authority revenue support in the period to 2021. It is expected that LGF capital funding will be available from 16/17.'

However, it is understood that the local authority revenue support is financial support provided by Staffordshire County Council for local authorities and not vice versa. Therefore there would be no financial implications for Tamworth Borough Council.

QUESTION

Regarding the number of shop closures in Ankerside and the town centre; when is something positive going to be done about this appalling situation? We used to have a camera shop and a bookshop in the town, now there seems to be more card, mobile phone, hock shops, two artificial fag shops and charity shops now. Please councillors, drop your party politics for a while, work for the people who voted you into your influential positions and give us a town to be proud of.

RESPONSE

Some context is required before responding to the specific question:

Two unprecedented events have impacted upon town centres of similar size and retail offers such as ours – the first was a global recession which saw the collapse of the highest number of retail companies, including major high street names, for decades – this left a ‘void’ that will never be filled on a ‘like for like’ basis..... and sadly, it’s not over yet.

The second has been a fundamental shift in public purchasing habits. On-line shopping has seen massive growth in the last 18 months and is forecast to grow further – the need for high street outlets, overheads, staff costs e.t.c. and no longer necessary – a good website, distribution network and reliable delivery service have taken the place of many outlets.

All that said, the nature of the town centre is changing as consumer habits and businesses strategies change. We are working closely with large and small businesses within the town centre to manage this difficult period of change and to position Tamworth town centre for the future. We are pursuing a vision for the town centre that includes a prosperous mix of businesses, services, retailers and homes. The town centre remains the physical, administrative, historic and cultural centre of town and is still a key part of our local economy and we are supporting it now and in the future.

Things we have done

- Established partnerships with local businesses to understand the issues and work collectively to solve them,
- Invested £100k pa in outdoor events to support town centre footfall and contribute over £1m pa in economic benefit,
- Invested £1.2 m in the Castle in partnership with the Heritage Lottery Fund to improve visitor numbers and support the wider visitor

economy,

- Secured a display of the Staffordshire Hoard at Tamworth Castle,
- Reinvigorated Tamworth market with a new external provider,
- Provide a Tourist Information Centre service promoting Tamworth and supporting visitors,
- Support the Castle Grounds and the floral displays,
- Managed our commercial properties leniently offering good terms and conditions,
- Promoted similar approaches from other landlords,
- Established Created In Tamworth as a creative industry incubation centre,
- Provided grants to heritage buildings for repairs including many shops,
- In partnership with Destination Tamworth we have;
 - Set up a web site and social media platforms promoting the town centre,
 - Run training for town centre shops and businesses,
 - Established a loyalty card,
 - Carried out seasonal promotions
- Maintained low car parking charges and reviewed tariffs to encourage usage,
- Supported inward investment and advice for business wishing to grow and worked with landlords to promote take up of empty units,
- Funded business advice services and connected businesses to advice and grant schemes provided through the Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP),
- Invested in our regeneration capacity and appointed an officer to help progress schemes,
- Secured County Council and LEP support for Tamworth schemes enabling them to be developed to a point where we can bid for funds,
- Lobbied the MP to ensure our case is heard in Westminster.

Things we are doing:

- Delivering the Gateways project with £1m revenue funding for sustainable transport and circa £1m capital for works to connect the town centre with Ventura park via Lady bridge with future phases looking to connect the train station,
- Bidding for funding to deliver the Creative Quarter project,
- Working with Staffordshire County Council on exciting plans to redevelop the Spinning School lane site,
- Bidding for £400k for a new Staffordshire Hoard gallery on the top floor of the castle,
- Pushing Henry Boots to implement a revised scheme based on homes, leisure and retail,
- Exploring the feasibility of a Business Improvement District covering the town centre and Ventura Park.

The Council is only part of the solution and businesses and consumers need to play their part as well.

QUESTION

Are the Council quietly presiding over another overspill which will change the face of Tamworth as the previous overspill agreement with Birmingham did in the past. I ask this question because I do not believe anyone in the Council is taking the whole picture into account with regard to decisions which are made?

RESPONSE

Whilst the concerns of the questioner are understood, particularly given the national profile being given to promoting house building and an unprecedented though coincidental number of local development proposals, the Council is not presiding over an overspill process. The housing in our Local Plan is to meet our local need that is unless you mean the overspill we are asking our neighbours in Lichfield and North Warwickshire to take?

As a Council we have met the national requirements to “objectively assess” our housing need. To do this we have considered births and deaths, new household formation, household size and migration. Local changes are driving our growth not inwards migration. Migration is roughly balanced although slightly more people are leaving Tamworth than are moving here with a net migration figure of -50 people per annum. This detailed and robust assessment shows that Tamworth needs 6,250 new homes between 2006 and 2031 or 250 homes per year. As part of the Local Plan process we have considered where these homes can be located and have consulted with other bodies on health, education, highways, drainage, utilities before allocating land in our draft plan and setting our policies. Due to these constraints we have only identified 4,250 homes in Tamworth and asked our neighbours to accommodate 2000 homes for Tamworth as part of their Local Plan process. Within our Local Plan we have identified a set of infrastructure requirements and how these can be provided. The Local Plan is currently out for consultation residents are encouraged to take the opportunity to engage in this final set of consultation prior to submitting the Local Plan for examination.

Background information

Housing need in Tamworth

At the heart of national planning policy is sustainable development; Tamworth Borough Council must prepare a Local Plan that 'meets the full, objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing'. Tamworth's housing needs assessment looks at the number of new homes needed to meet the projected population growth and demographic change. Between 2006 to 2031 there is an overall need of 6,250 dwellings, or 250 per year.

This is to meet the needs of Tamworth, not of any other local authority, including Birmingham. In calculating the household projections we do have to take into account:

- Migration
- Births and deaths
- New Households forming
- Household size

Migration

This means people coming in and people coming out. In Tamworth, this is quite balanced and we don't have a large inward migration. Latest estimates it shows a net outward migration of around 50 people each year.

Births and Deaths

We have approx 430 more births than deaths each year in Tamworth

New Households

This is when people (single or couples) will leave their family home and start their own household. There are about 230 new households formed every year in Tamworth.

Household Size

The size of households in Tamworth is getting and is projected to get smaller year on year. People live on their own for many reasons – separation, living well into older age, choosing to live on their own (formation of single person households).

In addition to these factors, we also need to take into account:

- That there are enough people of working age living in Tamworth (so that the economy can grow and prosper)
- By artificially constraining the number of new houses – this would increase price
- Address issues of over crowding
- Ensure enough houses can be built in the time period (limiting the market, will only put a throttle on development)

All this gets us to the 6,250 by 2031.

Why Tamworth cannot build 6,250 houses

Due to significant constraints on land within Tamworth such as flood risk, environmental designations, infrastructure constraints and Green Belt, there are few areas suitable to bring forward new housing development. These constraints mean that of the 6,250 homes needed within Tamworth, 2,000 will need to be built beyond the borough boundaries in neighbouring local authorities; this leaves 4,250 to be built in Tamworth.

So in needing to build 4,250 by 2031, 1435 have already been built, 53 are currently being built and we have granted permission for a further 410 (at 31st March 2014) yet to be built. Also required to be taken into account is losses and demolitions of which we expect 125 (2006 – 2031), which is based on historic trends in Tamworth.

The Local Plan allocates 2,950 (Some of these now have permissions such as Anker Valley 535).

In total, this is 4,721 (just under 500 over the requirement). But government policy is to ensure there is flexibility in the supply – for example if several large sites never get built, we need to make sure there are other sites that can take up that slack. This means we have to over supply by about 10%.

Infrastructure and Services

We work with Staffordshire County Council and other statutory bodies and utilities providers to project what is needed, where the infrastructure needs and can go, how much it will cost and who is going to pay for it all.

For example;

Schools – we know we need three new ones (Anker Valley, Golf Course, Dunstall Lane), we know when they are needed, and that the developers will have to pay for them,

Water – we know where the network can't take any more building – so we are not planning to build there (south Tamworth – Green Belt area),

Roads – we know what the limits are (i.e. Ashby Road/Gungate) so we are putting a limit on the number of houses. We also know where improvements can be made to allow for more – Dunstall Lane, Golf Course,

Environment – we are working with Natural England, Environment Agency, SCC ecologist, Staffordshire and Warwickshire Wildlife Trusts; looking at what impacts could be and making sure that planning policy for those new places takes the environment into account E.G. Golf Course – buffer zones, places for recreation, water drainage e.t.c.

What is happening to Birmingham's overspill?

The question is right – Birmingham does have an overspill – and so does Tamworth!

All local authorities in the Greater Birmingham and Solihull area (GBSLEP) plus the Black Country are working together, to look at different options to

address the overspill from Birmingham. From the outset, officers and Members have made it clear to Birmingham that Tamworth cannot take any further overspill from Birmingham. We have a signed agreement between senior officers acknowledging that and this is also written into Tamworth's Local Plan. The work looking at where the overspill will go is still going on, but it could go to places such as: North Warwickshire, Lichfield, Cannock, Bromsgrove, parts of the Black Country, Telford, but this is still to be decided and agreed by all parties.

Why build the houses?

The Housing Strategy for England is clear that without '*...urgent action to build new homes, children will grow up without the same opportunities to live near their families, young people will struggle to get a place to call their own and older people will not have the choice and support they need*'. Under provision of housing leads to rapidly increasing housing prices, insufficient affordable housing, increased skills shortages as potential employees move away, rising levels of homelessness and inadequately housed over-crowded households, greater social inequality and exclusion leading to demographically and socially less well balanced and unsustainable communities.

With regard to the bigger picture the Council's strategic planning team consider the long term needs of all key infrastructure functions – housing, retail, leisure, employment and where it can be located. They also consider their impact upon roads, schools, health services (GPs; Chemists etc). Each local authority does likewise and shares data etc with others thereby creating a sub-regional and regional "bigger picture".

QUESTION	
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Where will the surface water from the proposed Anker Valley housing development go; the River Anker?

RESPONSE

The planners have worked correctly to ensure that Tamworth does not flood. Houses in the borough are not flooded like they do in other parts of the country where two rivers meet.

Prior to any development there are a number of assessments that are carried out; an environmental assessment being one of these. The water authorities and others are involved in this.

QUESTION	
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What impact will HS2 have on the M42 roundabout?

RESPONSE

The HS2 Phase 2 scheme is currently going through its design development phase. The maps released as part of the public consultation on HS2 Phase 2 show the route (termed the initial preferred route) going underneath the M42 roundabout, however it provides no further information at this stage.

Clearly the plans may have potential impacts on the roundabout and businesses in the vicinity, but at this stage we have no further information on what these may be.

We expect the Government to make further announcements on HS2 Phase 2 in early 2015

QUESTION	
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What is the County Council's maintenance programme for gullies in Tamworth?
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RESPONSE

We do not currently have available any specific information regarding gullies in Tamworth, however we do have information regarding the wider Staffordshire programme.

There are approximately 190,000 gullies across the whole of Staffordshire's highway network and the County Council is currently collecting asset data for these, including those in Tamworth. This figure will increase as new highways are adopted and road changes are introduced.

We currently have electronic data regarding the location and condition of 120,000 of these gullies including information which will direct how often the gully should be emptied as part of a cyclic programme.

With regards to emptying frequency, the County Council has moved towards a risk/needs based approach based on the data collected for each specific gully, such as the silt level on arrival of the gully emptier, the condition of the gully, whether it is running/not running and the previous emptying history. This will lead to an intelligence-based programme of work which will target those gullies that need more regular maintenance to reduce incidences of ponding and flooding that presents a hazard to the travelling public, e.g. gullies in small side roads are unlikely to require an annual cleanse, whereas gullies in a rural area with greater volumes of traffic and exposure to more detritus will need to be cleansed more often.

The County Council currently has a fleet of seven gully emptying vehicles. Generally, five of these vehicles undertake cyclical cleansing, where they have a defined programme to work through on a road by road and gully by gully basis, in order to keep these vehicles working as efficiently as possible. The other two vehicles in the fleet are reactive crews that work across the county undertaking works that have been generated from enquiries/inspections and are of a more urgent/reactive nature.

SAFER COMMUNITIES



QUESTION	
What is being done to stop vehicles parking on footways especially near/at school entrances?	

RESPONSE
<p>Parking offences were decriminalised eight years ago and current legislation is a mess. Parking outside of schools is a problem that's been raised with the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) at most public meetings he's attended.</p> <p>A recent public consultation from the PCC's office generated almost 500 responses about school parking issues. This is feeding into a wider piece of work to review PCSO powers with the possibility of repatriating parking enforcement powers back to PCSOs.</p> <p>The PCC has been looking at this for around six months and a proposal for change will be ready in the early/middle part of 2015. The PCC is also reviewing the Safer Roads Partnership as it's not working as well as it should do.</p> <p>Safer Neighbourhood Panels will soon be held in Tamworth and other areas where people can hold their local policing commander to account and help set police priorities, which could include this issue.</p> <p>Civil Enforcement Officers patrol all schools in Tamworth where there are appropriate Staffordshire County Council on-street traffic regulation in force – usually denoted by double/single yellow lines and timeplates and/or at a dropped crossing point (denoted by tactile paving)</p> <p>Street Wardens, working with Tamworth Police, also visit schools to educate children on safety outside schools and provide information for parents.</p> <p>The schools with relevant restrictions are visited on regular beat patterns and the only time an officer can issue a penalty for pavement parking is when a vehicle has crossed a double yellow line or a single yellow line during restricted times.</p> <p>Parking on a pavement (where no infringement of a traffic order has taken place) is not a 'parking' offence and the Police may chose to take action if they feel that there is undue obstruction to pedestrians and/or motorists.</p> <p>Many streets in Tamworth are narrow and often parking with part of a vehicle</p>

on a pavement is the only way for emergency and waste lorries to access those streets.

Residents may also opt to have their dropped kerb driveway access enforced on planned visits by Civil Enforcement officers by contacting Tamworth Borough Council for full details. This is not, however a call out service.

Residents with ongoing concerns regarding pavement parking where no traffic regulations are in place or for any other enquiries about Traffic Regulation Orders may wish to make representation to Staffordshire County Council for consideration as to the benefit of further restrictions.

QUESTION	
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Can cameras be installed in play areas to check for crime?

RESPONSE

While cameras can be used this needs to be proportionate to any risks posed and is not the most cost effective approach.

Highly visible overt CCTV, with appropriate signage can be installed in these locations. The questions that need to be considered by the landowners (usually the Local Authority but not exclusively), is the use of CCTV, proportionate, appropriate, cost effective, effective method of solving the problem, in the public interest, viable and what is the issue that requires resolution.

Recent guidance from the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) has also placed great responsibility on public authorities to ensure that the positioning of surveillance cameras do not represent excessive privacy intrusion and ensure that other alternatives are considered in the first instance to resolve any perceived community safety or Anti Social behaviour issues.

A permanently installed effective overt CCTV would be an expensive option for one site but to install on all Tamworth play area sites (there are 30 Local Authority sites), along with ongoing maintenance and monitoring would be exorbitant.

Currently all Tamworth Borough Council play areas are fully inspected weekly and Tamworth Borough Council has a ROSPA Gold award for the maintenance and safety of our play areas and there are very few major concerns. If the circumstances warranted, after due consideration to other resolutions and completion of privacy impact assessments, we would consider the use of a overt mobile (temporary) CCTV system with appropriate signage at a particular play area as a short term solution to resolve the identified issues.

The use of covert CCTV is strictly regulated by the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) and where directed covert surveillance is requested by a Local Authority it requires the authority of a Magistrates Court. The use of covert CCTV would not be proportionate in these circumstances.

Reports of anti-social behaviour and crime are falling in Tamworth, but the public need to have confidence to report local problems to police. The Police and Crime Commissioner will soon be setting up Safer Neighbourhood Panels in Tamworth and other areas where people can hold their local policing

commander to account and help set police priorities.

Also, the new Community Remedy programme gives fresh powers to victims of low-level crime and anti-social behaviour to make sure they have a say in how offenders are punished. This could include repairing damage caused to a victim/community, signing an Acceptable Behaviour Contract or meeting with local people to make clear the consequences of their behaviour.

HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES



QUESTION	
<p>When are we, in Tamworth going to get our long awaited hospital? It would seem that our councillors are more interested in increasing the population by building more houses than providing a much needed service to the town which has a population approaching 80,000. What happens to the occupants if they get sick? Go to Burton 15 miles away? Go to Good Hope, which is probably going to lose some of its valuable services to another hospital or hospitals even further away? If, as has been stated, Sir Robert Peel hospital is underused, who is responsible for that, certainly not the people of Tamworth? Make that hospital useable by allowing it to offer day surgery!!!</p>	

RESPONSE
<p>Keeping the population well is not just about hospitals. We are trying to improve people's health with services like the Exercise on Prescription service. If people are ill, unless it is an emergency, the first point of contact should be the family doctor. We know from local consultation that local people want services closer to home. Of course, sometimes people need to go to hospital to receive care and we need to ensure this is timely and convenient. There are changes at Good Hope hospital being consulted on, but there are no plans to downgrade Good Hope and indeed the proposals may well improve the overall offer to people in Tamworth. Day surgery is a very small part of what the NHS offers and whilst important, shouldn't be looked at in isolation</p>

QUESTION

In view of the expected rise in population in Tamworth over the next Local Plan period, what provisions are to be made to improve hospital facilities for the local population. In particular A & E facilities? Currently access during evening and night-time is difficult in the extreme.
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RESPONSE

<p>The Clinical Commissioning Group has surveyed people about their use of urgent care services. They have an urgent care strategy which looks at the whole range of issues from urgent access to GPs, how people with long term conditions are supported to avoid the need to go to A&E and how 'Out of Hours' services can be better used . Of course, local people in Tamworth need access to high quality A&E in some cases. The strategy is to boost services in local communities and around GP practices, with better community and social care teams to help keep people well and in control of their lives.</p>
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QUESTION

Is the proposed reduction in public toilets a health risk to those using the town centre?

RESPONSE

The revised opening hours reflect what we believe are the periods of greatest demand and as such the toilets will be available during those high demand periods.

We know from a variety of information obtained from both staff comments and monitoring the use of materials such as toilet paper, that the toilets have limited use on weekdays during the winter months; usage increases slightly over the weekends in the winter months but this too can be weather dependant. The main periods of use are weekends in the spring and summer with significant use during the school holidays, although this can again be weather dependant.

The toilets have never been open during the evenings so there will no impact on the night-time users of the town centre.

There are other toilet provisions in both the Ankerside shopping centre and at Ventura Park and many of the bars, coffee shops and restaurants have a toilet provision for their customers.

The revised opening hours have been designed to have minimal impact on the public although it has to be acknowledged that there will be a very small number of people who are disadvantaged by the changes. This should not pose a health risk to the public and is limited only to the town centre.

QUESTION

With further pressures on social care budgets expected next year, how does the Panel intend to address the growing problem in the care sector of attracting a professional, fully trained and motivated workforce when wages are barely at the minimum wage level?

RESPONSE

This question addresses two parts, Adult Social Care and Children's Services:-

ADULT SOCIAL CARE

Staffordshire County Council (SCC) invests in the social care sector through the Care Market Development team, which focuses on working with the social care sector to develop a robust social care workforce. SCC has contact with over 600 providers and so it is clearly a challenging environment, particularly in light of the pressures on finances. However, below is a summary of some of the initiatives that are currently in place.

Recruitment initiatives to attract a dedicated workforce

Development of a website called **CareMatch** where employers advertise vacancies and candidates register and upload CVs. During its 6 years in existence over 1000 employers and social care staff has registered on the website. Its original purpose has also developed to include training opportunities, local events, activity co-ordinator networks and forums for conversation and sharing of best practise. It will continue to be developed to become a tool to support 'market shaping' to ensure that there is adequate quality provision of care across the county.

I Care Ambassadors SCC facilitate an I Care Ambassadors service which uses enthusiastic people working in social care to promote careers to those who had not previously considered working in the sector. Being able to hear from those already working in social care and ask questions helps to provide a real-life understanding about working in social care for those who are new to the sector

Young Peoples Conference and work with schools. SCC work with the emerging workforce to develop their skills to enter the social care sector. This includes a conference where they watch a drama performance relating to the sector and problem-solve how they would react.

Recruitment events are held across the county to support employers to

recruit staff in partnership with Job Centre plus. SCC also attends other organisations events to promote the sector and CareMatch. SCC have organised events to support specific problems, e.g. a large scale financial impact to a community such as Npower redundancies this year – SCC introduced social care as a change of career. SCC have also organised smaller events and facilitated recruitment for services which have had to close. SCC has also supported national initiatives such as employment for over 50s.

Apprenticeships SCC promote the uptake of apprenticeships to engage a younger workforce, ensure that the workforce has robust professional development and to upskill existing staff as mentors and supervisors.

Workforce development:

Workforce development fund – SCC hold this on behalf of Skills for Care (sector skills council) to encourage social care providers to upskills staff with QCF accredited qualifications of level 2 and above (including level 5 for managers).

SCC work closely with employers to encourage them to complete **NMDS** (National Minimum data set) which allows them to:

- Provide statutory **training** in safeguarding (2000 places annually). Additional professional training provided, e.g. medication and first aid. Undertaken training needs analysis to focus on the development required, e.g. for domiciliary care and then commissioned integrated training with health professionals to meet the identified skills gap. Facilitation of Training Providers network across Staffordshire to promote quality training opportunities and cost effective qualifications.
- Promote **common induction standards**, as a minimum level of attainment for all social care staff. It will become Care Certificate in 2015, a recognised basic qualification in response to the Cavendish report.
- Provide **development opportunities for managers/owners** of social care establishments through twice yearly conferences. As well as specific support around employment law and managing performance. Liaise with National Skills Academy and encouraged formation of registered managers networks.

SCC also support **direct employers** (i.e. in receipt of a direct budget) to recruit personal assistants and to apply for development funds to access specific individualised training pathways.

Dignity – SCC developed a level 1 award for young people which acquired additional funding for this year to develop into an award for social care staff. SCC designed an E learning package and developed a Dignity Champions network. SCC also has the Dignity awards to recognise and reward those

carers who are the most motivated and professional.

Quality and development work

SCC also funds a quality monitoring team and a safeguarding team who ensure that standards are met in the sector and that provision is safe. Part of the continued development planned in the coming year is to work with providers to ensure that staff has fair contracts, including an hourly rate above national minimum wage and travel time.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

The question appears to be directed at the adult social care sector rather than the children's social care workforce. In general terms it is the adult care sector that has the lowest paid and professionally unrecognised workforce whereas nationally the children's social care workforce has a professional, well-motivated and well-paid workforce receiving salaries somewhat higher than the national minimum wage. For example, unlike the adult care sector a children's residential care worker must have a minimum level 3 Diploma in health and social care (or equivalent) or must achieve that qualification within two years from the date of their employment. This statutory requirement consequently means that employers offer salaries that are somewhat higher than the national minimum wage to ensure they are able to attract and retain the right calibre of person.

Families First is committed to ensuring that it employs, and continues to attract, professional well-motivated personnel and achieves this through monitoring and responding to trends in recruitment and retention using a wide range of techniques, including:

- Employee surveys that monitor and respond to general trends in employee engagement and satisfaction.
- Provision of clear and comprehensive professional capability frameworks for all employees, coupled with supervision and performance management against which they, supported by their line managers, can assess their individual professional development needs and achievements during their first years in the job role and throughout their career development.
- Promoting the use of sustainable professional development opportunities such as peer to peer learning and practise experts/mentors alongside more traditional classroom, E-learning and other learning delivery methods ensuring a well-trained, highly skilled and well-led workforce.
- Market positioning of national and localised recruitment drives marketing Staffordshire as THE place to relocate and live; attracting the best candidates at all levels within the organisation.
- Developing and nurturing a flexible, professionally agile workforce that

helps Staffordshire's children and young people, their families, carers and communities to feel safer, happier and healthier and to be more independent in achieving economic wellbeing.

Families First has several multidisciplinary teams working on current and future programmes which will ensure it is a fit-for-purpose, cost efficient and progressive business for years to come.