



MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD ON 23rd FEBRUARY 2016

PRESENT: Councillor M Gant (Chair), Councillors A Lunn (Vice-Chair), J Chesworth, M Clarke, S Claymore, T Clements, D Cook, A Couchman, M Couchman, S Doyle, J Faulkner, J Goodall, S Goodall, M Greatorex, G Hirons, R Kingstone, A James, T Madge, M McDermid, K Norchi, J Oates, M Oates, S Peale, T Peale, R Pritchard, R Rogers, E Rowe, P Seekings, P Standen and M Thurgood (part of meeting)

The following officers were present: Anthony E Goodwin (Chief Executive), John Wheatley (Executive Director Corporate Services), Andrew Barratt (Director - Assets and Environment), Stefan Garner (Director of Finance), Jane Hackett (Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer), John Gunn (Development Manager), Matthew Fletcher (Economic Development Officer), Richard Stewart (Senior Planning Officer), Karl Bassett (Sustainable Travel Projects Officer), Natalie Missenden (Public Relations Officer) and Janice Cliff (Democratic and Elections Officer)

53 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None

54 TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 December 2015 were approved and signed as a correct record.

(Moved by Councillor D Cook and seconded by Councillor M Thurgood)

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

The Leader of the Council Councillor D Cook made the following announcement:-

Under articles within the Constitution it seems within my gift to appoint a Champion in a particular area under a Portfolio Holder. With that in mind I will be appointing Councillor Simon Goodall to Champion certain aspects of housing repairs working alongside Michelle Thurgood. I will happily brief the Chief Executive and anyone else who wishes with the exact details of that.

57 QUESTION TIME:

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC NO. 1

Under Procedure Rule No 10, Mr Moore will ask the Portfolio Holder for Operations and Assets , Councillor R Pritchard, the following question:-

"I would like to ask Councillor Pritchard why he is campaigning on pot holes when he is fully aware that budgets are being brutally slashed by his own party. I believe he made the same veiled promises during his last campaign 3 years ago, but nothing has come to fruition?"

Councillor R Pritchard gave the following reply:-

Potholes are a menace to all road users. A record £6.1 billion of funding has been made available to local highway authorities in England between 2015 and 2021 to maintain our local roads. This includes an additional £250 million for a dedicated potholes action fund to improve local roads. This is all opposed by is own party.

Mr Moore says funding is being slashed by my party.

Under this Government, total road maintenance spend is equivalent to £160 for every driver in the UK. This builds on the work of the Coalition Government: between 2010 and 2015 it provided £4.7 billion to local highway authorities, including £168 million to tackle potholes across the county. Again this was opposed by Labour.

Between 2010 and 2015, the amount spent on maintenance funding was 27 per cent (or £1 billion) higher than when Labour was in Government. So we are increasing spending on roads to a level far higher than Labour even did.

I have received information from Conservative colleagues at Staffordshire County Council who have informed me that the county around Staffordshire County Council repair 350-400 potholes every week, with approximately 20-30 of these in Tamworth.

I thank Mr Moore for asking the question because it gives me the opportunity to announce that, from my lobbying of the County Council and work by my Conservative Colleagues on Staffordshire County Council, during the next 12 months Tamworth will benefit from a £1.1m programme of surface dressing to tackle potholes and help extending the lifespan of many roads and footways.

Part of the question asked "why do I campaign on potholes?" I do because as a Councillor it's my job to do so. I take the role very seriously. I get them reported

so they can be fixed and in the last few years I have reported hundreds of potholes, all subsequently being fixed by Staffordshire County Council.

I would like to point out that I am campaigning on more than just potholes.

I, and my fellow Conservatives, are campaigning on value for tax for the rate payer, better schools, keeping Tamworth clean, attracting new businesses to Tamworth, more free outdoor events, building more council houses and investment in the Town Centre.

I have noted Mr Moore that you too are campaigning on potholes, according to your Facebook page, so given your parties record on highways investment perhaps you should be asking this question to yourself?

No supplementary question was asked

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL NO. 1

Under Procedure Rule No 11, Councillor A Couchman will ask the Portfolio Holder for Communities and Public Health, Councillor S Doyle, the following question:-

“Due to Staffordshire County Council Sure Start passes no longer being accepted as payment for Tamworth Borough Councils activity sessions and Fit Tots, is there any way we could assist, such as reduced pricing for people who depend on these groups, which helps to reduce isolation. Those on benefits may lack the finances to pay for their attendance?”

Councillor S Doyle gave the following reply:-

First I would like to thank Councillor Couchman for bringing this to my attention. I would also like to point out for future reference that this falls within Community Leisure which is part of the Deputy Leaders Portfolio.

None the less I've looked to provide you with an answer on his behalf. I have requested Officers to look into the situation and at this moment in time it would appear there is a communication problem with Staffordshire County Council after their recent re-organisation.

They have confirmed as of 2pm today that they will continue with their funding and to provide them with an invoice for the current outstanding amount. Either myself or the Deputy Leader will look to advise you of the outcome in the very near future of the discussions to take place in March.

In the mean-time I've also I've requested Officers to identify the average amount of funding this involves per year; I've been advised the funding is equivalent to approximately £300 to £400 per year.

At this point in time I would not like to prejudice the outcome of the forth coming discussion.

As a word of caution though we have recently seen a drop in funding from our partners in a number of areas but we will look to see if an agreeable solution can be found in this instance.

I will of course keep you informed as the matter progresses.

No supplementary question was asked

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL NO. 2

Under Procedure Rule No 11, Councillor T Peuple will ask the Portfolio Holder for Economy and Education, Councillor S Claymore, the following question:-

“Can you please clarify what you meant by your statement in the Tamworth Herald that selling the golf course site will 'allow Tamworth Borough Council to safeguard vital services for the people of Tamworth?’”

Councillor S Claymore gave the following reply:-

The sale of the former Golf Course site will help to safeguard vital services for the people of Tamworth in the following ways

1. It will allow the Authority to make better use of its assets and provide much needed housing to the area with associated infrastructure improvements and schools to the area (through our partners i.e. SCC);
2. The original site had previously been a cost to the Authority and therefore drain on the Medium Term Financial Strategy – costs of delivering service exceeded income received and resulted in Council Tax Payers subsidising activity for the very few. This will allow Members therefore the resource to continue to deliver high front line services in line with Corporate Priorities;
3. The release of the asset will also allow additional resource to provide and continue to deliver key / valued high quality services to the people of Tamworth through
 - a. Use of the Capital Receipt / Disposal income will be invested in longer term Capital Projects providing key income streams and capital growth for the benefit and future prosperity of People of Tamworth;
 - b. Until the Capital Receipt is invested it will generate short term investment income to support the MTFS;
 - c. The external development of the site with the provision of much needed housing for both existing families in Tamworth and attracting new families to the area increasing the workforce base and new business – the new housing will generate new resource both for the economy of Tamworth as well as supporting the MTFS through:-

- * New Homes Bonus
- * Additional Council Tax and

- * Increase in income streams from services we provide such as car parking, etc

Councillor T Peape asked the following supplementary question:-

“On a previous meeting Councillor Cook denied the idea that you would balance the budget by selling off the golf course site. However what you have told me just now suggests that the interest from it will still be used to reserve future economic strategy and therefore the budget. Is it essentially the fact isn't this the case that indirectly this money will essentially balance the budget?”

Councillor S Claymore gave the following reply:-

It won't entirely but obviously as we go through the MTFs later on tonight you will see that some of the money will be included for that. Most certainly the intention of this Council is to invest its money wisely for the benefit of the people of Tamworth.

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL NO. 3

Under Procedure Rule No 11, Councillor M Couchman will ask the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Waste Management, Councillor M Thurgood, the following question:-

“How does the Council monitor the allocation of planned maintenance of bathrooms and kitchens in our council properties?”

Councillor M Thurgood gave the following reply:-

The Council's investment programme of kitchens and bathrooms is monitored by the relevant teams at Tamworth Borough Council

These works are allocated either by:

- 1) using our stock condition data obtained from the 2013 condition survey where we physically inspected approximately 60% of our dwellings.
- 2) The repairs team will also put forward properties for the programme in year. These may be properties that were never surveyed or where there have been premature failures. They also complete partial renewals where urgent works are required.

Councillor M Couchman asked the following supplementary question:-

“Why is it then that a tenant who had a bathroom replaced four years ago under the planned maintenance program was visited a week ago to be told she was on the bathroom replacement program? Now is this a one off mistake or a sign that the left hand doesn't know what the right hand is doing?”

Councillor M Thurgood gave the following reply:-

Obviously Councillor Couchman you are more than able to contact the housing officers at anytime. You do not have to wait for a Full Council to do that. As it is a

specific issue I wouldn't wish to comment without getting the relevant facts. If you want to supply the relevant details I will be more than happy to get back to you.

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL NO. 4

Under Procedure Rule No 11, Councillor M Couchman will ask the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Waste Management, Councillor M Thurgood, the following question:-

“With the introduction of Service Charges for some tenants how will you ensure that all the costs are transparent and fair and that every tenant who is eligible for this additional burden pays?”

Councillor M Thurgood gave the following reply:-

The implementation of service charges has been supported by a clear and comprehensive service charge policy which sets out the approach to charging. The policy complies with legislative requirements and standards of good practice in the establishment of costs which will translate to service charges to tenants. The requirement for tenants to pay service charges is enforced through the tenancy agreement and will be managed in a similar manner to the Council's very successful rent arrears collection approach. In addition the Council will have a dedicated staff member to administer Service charges for Council tenants.

Councillor M Couchman asked the following supplementary question:-

“Does that include tenants that have already signed a five year flexible tenancy agreement?”

Councillor M Thurgood gave the following reply:-

All tenants will be contacted individually with any updates and policies with any service charges that are relevant

Councillor M Thurgood left the meeting at this stage

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL NO. 5

Under Procedure Rule No 11, Councillor S People will ask the Leader of the Council, Councillor D Cook, the following question:-

“Would the Leader of the Council join me in questioning whether there are really only less than 100 pupils who benefit from the facilities for vocational training at Torc at a time when employers are being quoted as saying that the biggest barrier to the recruitment of indigenous workers is a skills shortage?”

Councillor D Cook gave the following reply:-

I would agree with Councillor Dr. People that the situation at TORC is giving cause for concern for local people. Furthermore, the absence of any clarity or

communications on the matter is in turn giving rise to speculation and rumours about attendance, staffing levels and even closure.

As with any such situation, those responsible for the facility's management and operation should be invited to clarify the current position and, in the interests of transparency, inform local people of their future intentions and ambitions for what is an excellent, much needed asset in the field of vocational training.

It is with this in mind that I will ask the Chief Executive to draft a letter to the Principal/Chief Executive of South Staffordshire College requesting a detailed update on the current and future situation relating to the TORC Vocational Training facility.

The response will be shared with all Members either in the form of a report or as a labelled insert to the Members Information Bulletin.

Councillor S Peple asked the following supplementary question:-

"Would he agree therefore that we should send the same letter or at least the same request for information on vocational training opportunities in the town to the head teachers of the local schools who in theory should be sending pupils there to identify if there are any issues and also ask them if there are any other broader issues that they would like the Council to be fully coherent of going forward?"

Councillor D Cook gave the following reply:-

Happy to agree with everything Councillor Peple just said. I will speak to the Chief Executive and we shall let them know exactly what has been requested.

58 CORPORATE VISION, PRIORITIES PLAN, BUDGET & MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2016/17

The Leader of the Council and Cabinet requested the approval of the Vision Statement, Priority Themes, Corporate Priorities and Outcomes and their inclusion in the Corporate Plan and Support Service Plan. He also sought approval of the recommended package of budget proposals and, to comply with the requirement of the Council's Treasury Management Policy in reporting to Council, the proposed strategy for the forthcoming year and the Local Government Act 2003 with the reporting of the Prudential Indicators.

RESOLVED:

- That Council
- 1** approved the Vision Statement, Corporate Priorities and outcomes and their inclusion in the Corporate Plan;
 - 2** approved the proposed revisions to Service Revenue Budgets (Policy Changes);
 - 3** approved the sum of £81,896 be applied from Council Tax Collection Fund surpluses in reducing the Council Tax demand in 2016/17;

- 4** approved the sum of £560,025 be applied to Business Rates Collection Fund deficits in 2016/17;
- 5** approved that on 26th November 2015, the Cabinet calculated the Council Tax Base 2016/17 for the whole Council area as 20,904 [Item T in the formula in Section 31B(3) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended (the “Act”)];
- 6** approved that the Council Tax requirement for the Council’s own purposes for 2016/17 is £3,381,222;
- 7** approved the following amounts as calculated for the year 2016/17 in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Act:
 - a. £55,054,127 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. £51,672,905 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. £3,381,222 being the amount by which the aggregate at 7(a) above exceeds the aggregate at 7(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. £161.75 being the amount at 7(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;
- 8** approved the Council Tax level for the Borough Council 2016/17 of £161.75 (an increase of £3.15 (1.99%) on the 2016/17 level of £158.60) at Band D;
- 9** approved an aggregate Council Tax (comprising the respective demands of the Borough Council, Staffordshire County Council, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority) of £1,498.34 at Band D for 2016/17 be noted;

- 10** approved the Council Tax levels at each band for 2016/17;
- 11** approved the sum of £1,724,806 be transferred from General Fund Revenue Balances in 2016/17;
- 12** approved the Summary General Fund Revenue Budget for 2016/17;
- 13** approved the Provisional Budgets for 2017/18 to 2018/19, summarised at Appendix G, as the basis for future planning;
- 14** approved the acceptance of the proposed 4 year grant settlement;
- 15** approved the minimum level for balances of £500k to be held for each of the General Fund, Housing Revenue Account, General Capital Fund and Housing Capital Fund;
- 16** 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;
- 17** approved the proposed HRA Expenditure level of £14,884,180 for 2016/17;
- 18** approved the rents for Council House Tenants in General Accommodation for 2016/17 be reduced by an average of £0.88 per week (1%) to £87.37 (2015/16 £88.26), over a 48 week rent year;
- 19** approved the rents for Council House Tenants in Supported Accommodation for 2016/17 be frozen at 2015/16 levels;
- 20** approved rents for Council House Tenants due for 52 weeks be collected over 48 weeks;
- 21** approved the HRA deficit of £368,100 be financed through a transfer from Housing Revenue Account Balances in 2016/16;
- 22** approved the proposed 3 year General Fund Capital Programme of £8.014m, as detailed in Appendix I to the report and where it may be more cost effective for purchases to be made before 31st March 2016 – that

the spend be brought forward together with the associated budget;

- 23** approved the 5 year Housing Capital Programme of £52.734m, as detailed in Appendix J to the report;
- 24** approved 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;
- 25** approved the Treasury Management Strategy Statement, the Treasury Management Policy Statement, Minimum Revenue Provision Strategy and Annual Investment Statement 2016/17;
- 26** approved the Prudential and Treasury Indicators and Limits for 2016/17 to 2018/19 contained within;
- 27** approved the adoption of the Treasury Management Practices contained within ANNEX 7; and
- 28** approved the detailed criteria of the Investment Strategy 2016/17 contained in the Treasury Management Strategy within ANNEX 3.

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

59 TAMWORTH LOCAL PLAN

The Report of the Portfolio Holder for Economy and Education sought to gain approval from Council to adopt the Tamworth Local Plan 2006 – 2031 in-line with the Inspector's report and the listed Main Modifications to make the Plan sound and legally compliant. Once adopted the new Local Plan will replace the current Local Plan (2001 – 2011) and become the statutory development plan for Tamworth.

As a result of a named vote it was:-

RESOLVED:

- That Council
- 1** adopted the Tamworth Local Plan 2006 – 2031 and Policies Map through formal resolution of the Council in line with the Inspector's report and Main Modification recommendations to ensure the submitted Plan is sound and legally compliant and in accordance with the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended), the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 and the Localism Act.

- 2 identified the Other Modifications during the examination process are made to the Local Plan and Policies Map.
- 3 endorsed the Sustainability Appraisal Adoption Statement which has been prepared in accordance with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.
- 4 in accordance with the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) and Regulations 26 and 35 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, The Local Plan, Adoption Statement and Sustainability Appraisal are made publicly available and interested parties notified.

(Moved by Councillor S Claymore and seconded by Councillor D Cook)

FOR

Councillor J Chesworth
 Councillor S Claymore
 Councillor T Clements
 Councillor D Cook
 Councillor S Doyle
 Councillor M Gant
 Councillor J Goodall
 Councillor S Goodall
 Councillor M Greatorex
 Councillor A James
 Councillor R Kingstone
 Councillor A Lunn
 Councillor M McDermid
 Councillor J Oates
 Councillor M Oates
 Councillor R Pritchard
 Councillor R Rogers
 Councillor E Rowe

AGAINST

Councillor M Clarke
 Councillor A Couchman
 Councillor M Couchman
 Councillor J Faulkner
 Councillor G Hirons
 Councillor T Madge
 Councillor K Norchi
 Councillor Dr S Peaple
 Councillor T Peaple
 Councillor P Seekings
 Councillor P Standen

ABSENT

Councillor M Thurgood

The Mayor

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