



State of Tamworth Debate

9th March 2017

Introduction

The report look at progress made against the new strategic priorities;

- Living a quality life in Tamworth,
- Growing stronger together in Tamworth,
- Delivering quality services in Tamworth.

It highlights achievements and issues backed up by performance information and public opinion gained through our consultation activities, where available.

This approach is intended to encourage debate in the Council Chamber on those things important in Tamworth.

Appendices are attached

Appendix B	Tamworth Listens Question Time Event 2016 Responses
Appendix C	Budget Consultation Report 2017/18
Appendix D	Tamworth Borough Locality Profile 2016
Appendix E	Tamworth Health Profile 2016

Living a quality life in Tamworth

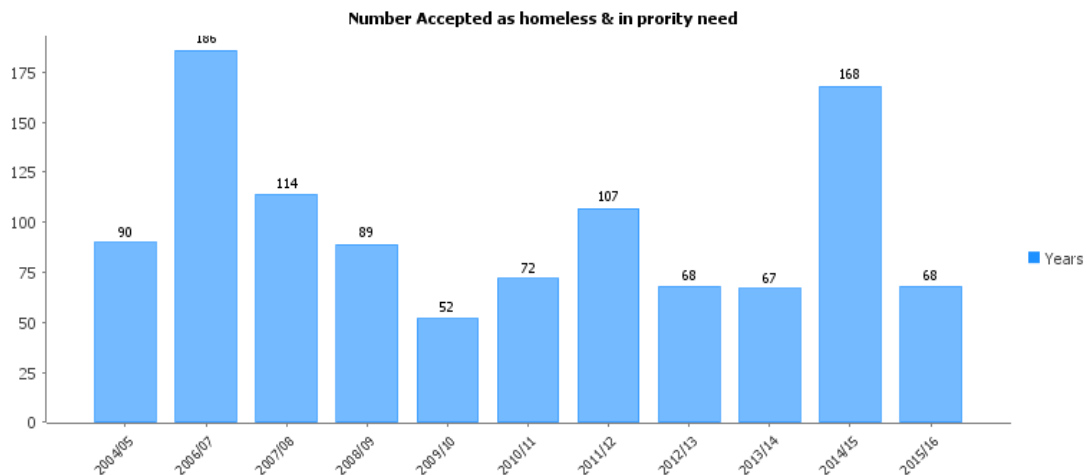
To support this strategic priority, Tamworth Borough Council works towards these objectives;

- Support and protect individuals and communities that are or may become vulnerable,
- Enable residents to improve their health and quality of life,
- Work together with partners and residents to tackle the causes of inequality in Tamworth,
- Work together with residents to maintain and improve a safe, clean and green environment,
- Work together to improve housing quality in Tamworth.

Support and protect individuals and communities that are or may become vulnerable

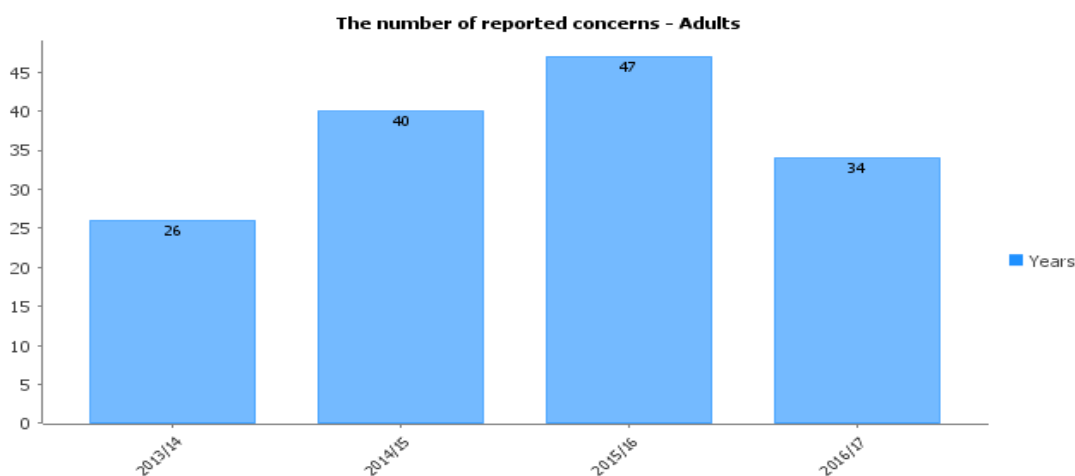
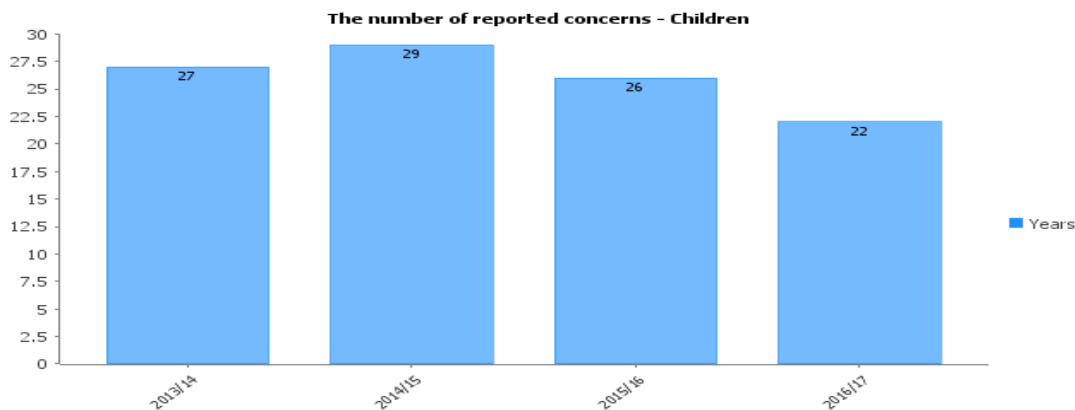
This objective was seen as important by 69% of respondents in the 2017/18 budget consultation exercise.

The number accepted as homeless and in priority need saw a rise in 2014/15 but this settled back to its normal level in 2015/16.



As an organisation, Tamworth Borough Council has a statutory duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and adults at risk. The figures recorded provides evidence that staff understand this responsibility and recognise what neglect and abuse is and know how to appropriately respond to concerns they have.

The number of concerns raised in relation to children has remained consistent whilst the number of concerns raised in relation to adults at risk has increased steadily over the past four years evidencing the increased demand on the service over this period.



Enable residents to improve their health and quality of life

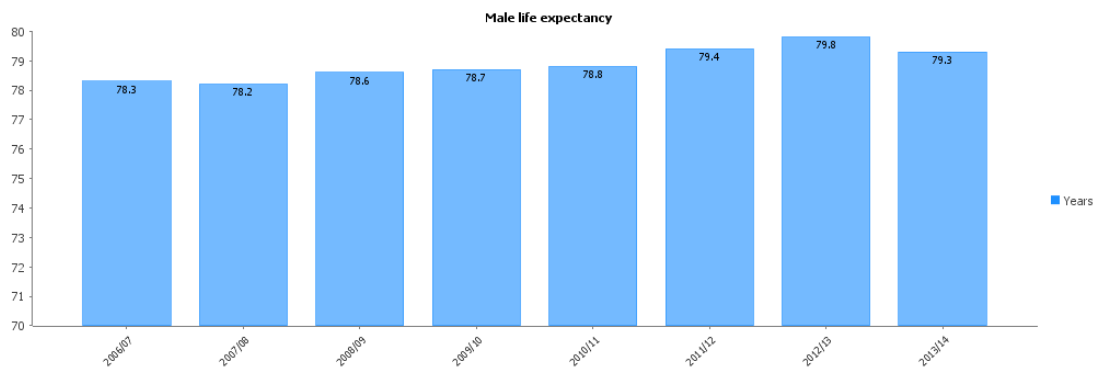
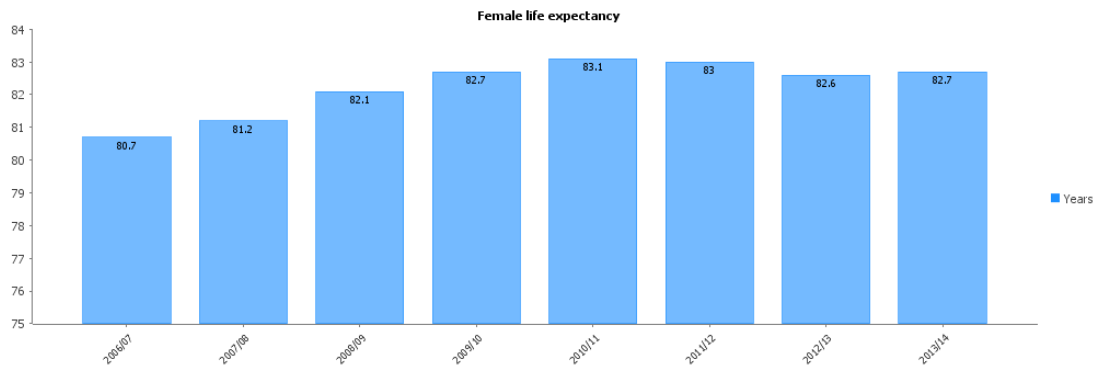
This objective was seen as important by 72% of respondents in the 2017/18 budget consultation exercise; the joint highest under this priority.

When asked to select five things that make somewhere a good place to live, good health services was seen as important by 78% of respondents in the 2017/18 budget consultation exercise; the second highest. With 69% of respondents believing the health service needed to improve to make Tamworth a better place to live.

Comments made reinforced people's strength of feeling in this area;

- *'Better health care for the elderly'*,
- *'Easier access to healthcare in general for the growing population'*,
- *'Tamworth is a growing population and we have less hospital availability than ever before, but you still want to build houses'*
- *'access to a doctor is difficult'*

The overall health of people has improved over the last few years; people's life expectancy is improving. Life expectancy for a female is 82.7 (compared to 83.2 nationally) and for a male is 79.3 (compared to 79.5 nationally).

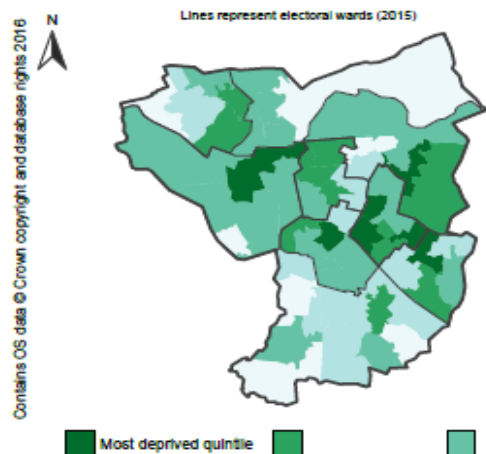


Work together with partners and residents to tackle the causes of inequality in Tamworth

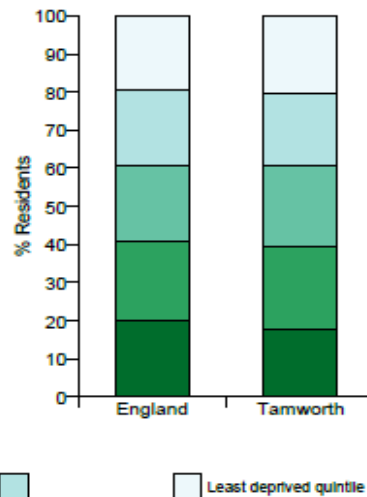
This objective was seen as important by 53% of respondents in the 2017/18 budget consultation exercise; the lowest under this priority.

When compared to the deprivation quintiles in England, 17.5% of Tamworth’s population are in the most deprived quintile and 20.3% are in the least deprived quintile.

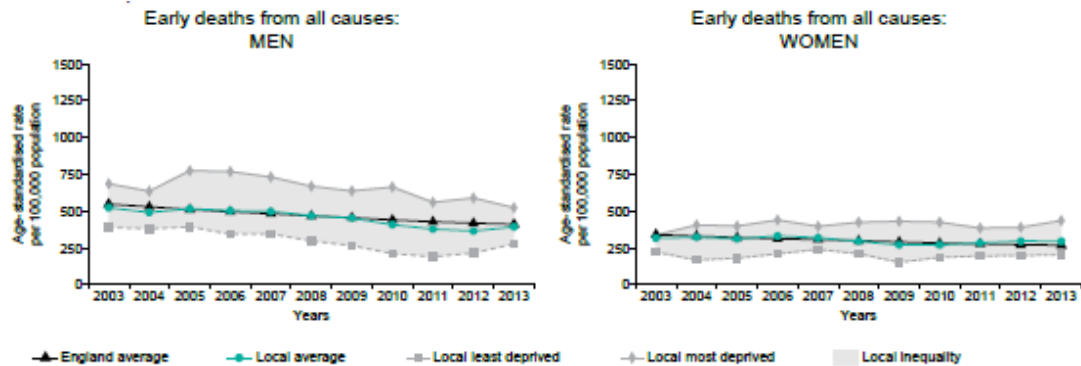
The map shows differences in deprivation in this area based on national comparisons, using quintiles (fifths) of the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2015 (IMD2015), shown by lower super output area. The darkest coloured areas are some of the most deprived neighbourhoods in England.



This chart shows the percentage of the population who live in areas at each level of deprivation.



When considering health inequality, the difference in the incidences of premature death is more prevalent in those living in the most deprived quintiles for both men and women.



Work together with residents to maintain and improve a safe, clean and green environment

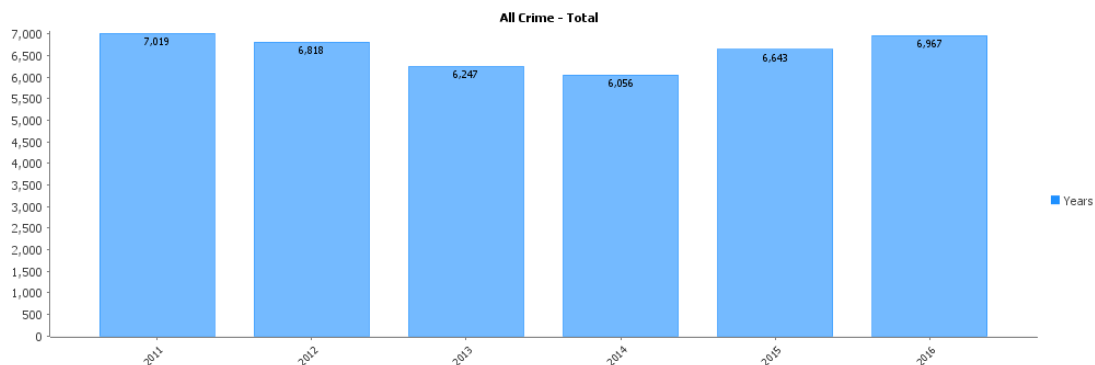
This objective was seen as important by 72% of respondents in the 2017/18 budget consultation exercise; the joint highest under this priority.

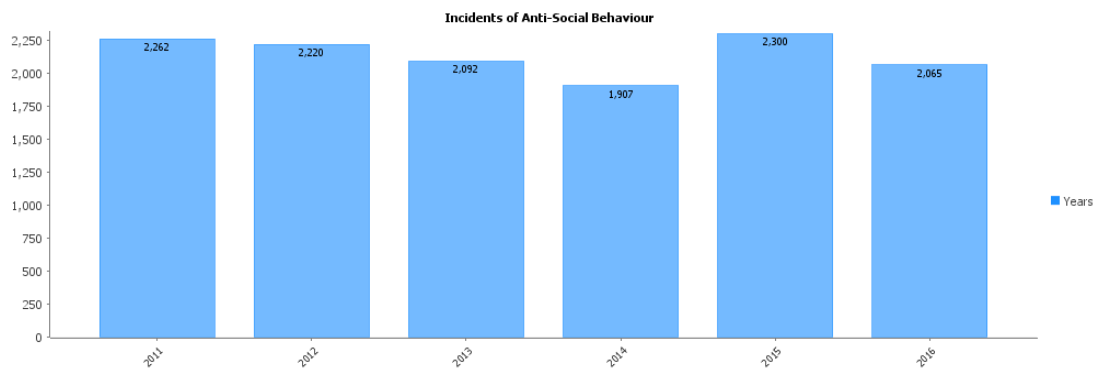
Safe Environment

When asked to select five things that make somewhere a good place to live, low levels of crime was seen as important by 90% of respondents in the 2017/18 budget consultation exercise; the highest. With 64% of respondents believing the level of crime needed to improve to make Tamworth a better place to live. More than half of respondents felt that more should be spent on tackling anti-social behaviour. Comments made included:

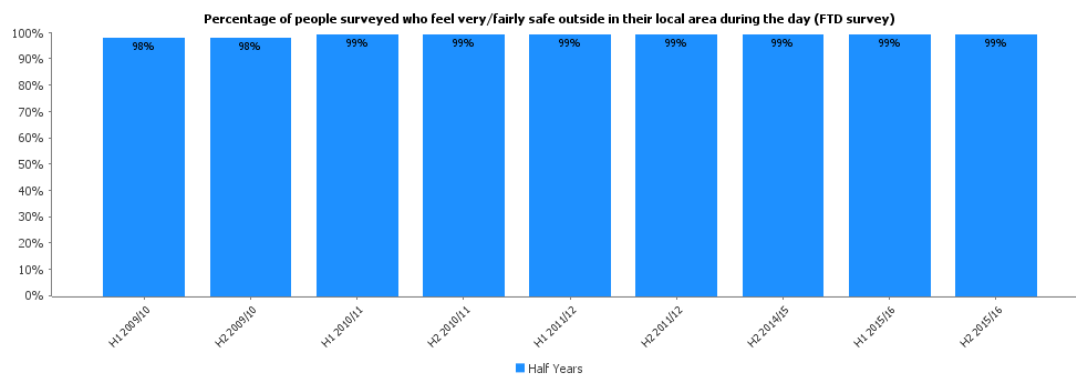
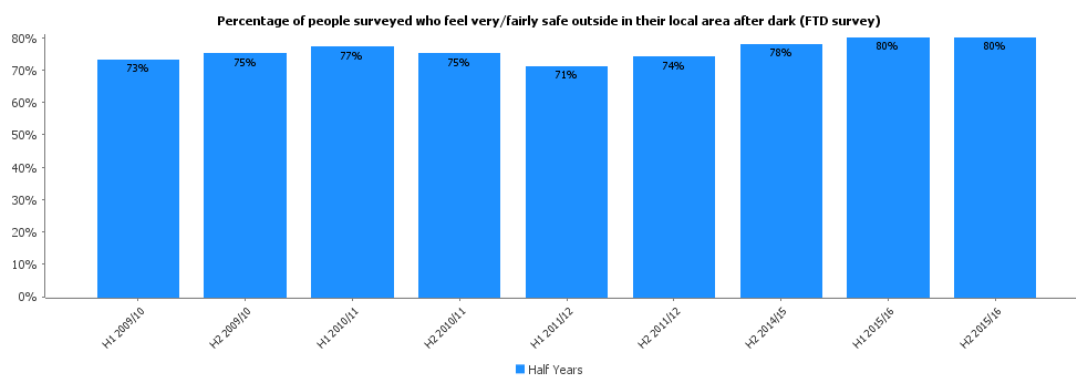
- To see 'more police officers on the streets'
- 'anti-social behaviour being dealt with in a firm way'

The number of all crimes recorded increased over the last two years but after a spike in 2015, the number of anti-social behaviour cases has decreased slightly.





People's perception of crime has remained largely the same over the same period.



Clean environment

When asked to select five things that make somewhere a good place to live, clean streets were seen as important by 54% of respondents in the 2017/18 budget consultation exercise; with 64% of respondents believing the cleanliness of streets needed to improve to make Tamworth a better place to live. Comments made reinforced this

- *‘less litter, especially in the Castle Grounds’,*
- *‘if Tamworth were really clean, surely business, people and providers would be encouraged to come here’,*

- People should be encouraged to *'take pride in the area'* and schools and colleges should *'educate people to be proud of their town'*

Green environment

When asked to select five things that make somewhere a good place to live, open spaces were seen as important by 48% of respondents in the 2017/18 budget consultation exercise; with 41% of respondents being of the opinion that open spaces needed to improve to make Tamworth a better place to live. 39% of respondents felt that more should be spent on parks, open spaces and street cleaning.

Comments made on this area included:

- *"Tamworth is lovely for its countryside and open spaces (at the moment!)"*,
- *"Sadly the main open space has been sold off" and "unfortunately the decision to sell off the golf course has already begun to contribute to a deteriorating quality of life in Tamworth" and "loss of one of the things Tamworth needs - open green spaces"*,
- *"Tamworth needs to review and complete its cycle path network. When I moved into my current house I was told the estates cycle path would be connected to the town's network 'soon'. 16 years later still waiting. I rarely cycle due to the dangerous roads"*.
- *"I think you should cut back less of the grass verges in the summer, so that the wild grasses seed and feed butterflies and insects"*.

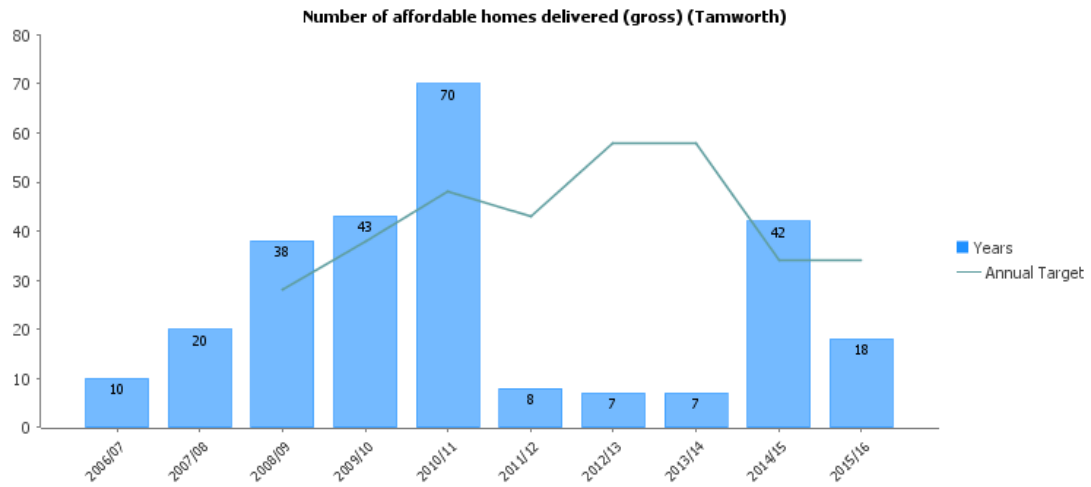
Work together to improve housing quality in Tamworth

This objective was seen as important by 63% of respondents in the 2017/18 budget consultation exercise. Having affordable decent housing was felt to be important by 47% of respondents with 52% being of the opinion that this needed to improve to make Tamworth a better place to live. Comments made reinforced this:

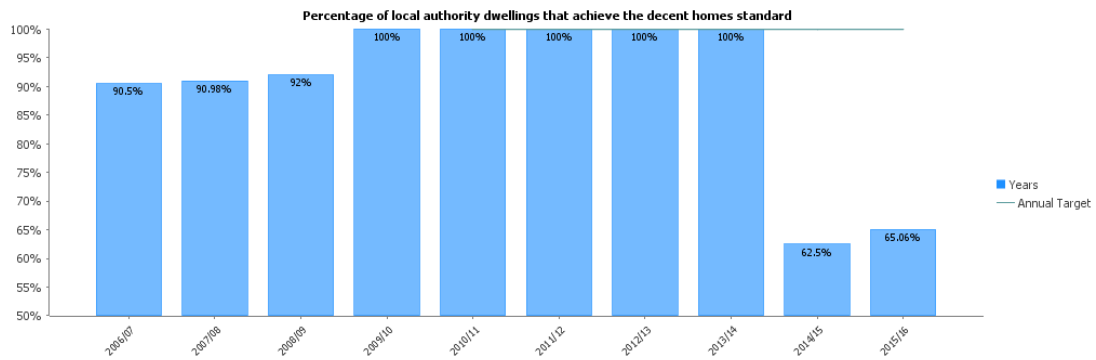
- *"Enabling Tamworth residents to access more affordable decent housing must be the priority"*,
- *"My Daughter would love to buy her own house but I can't see any hope even though there are 1000's of houses about to be built in/around Tamworth over the next few years - not in the Council's control as profit driven developers are in charge"*,
- *"Stop squashing houses in gaps around other buildings"*,
- *"Put pressure on the appropriate highways authorities to improve and create a road system to cope with the increased housing development due and taking place"*,
- *"Tamworth is a growing area and we have less hospital availability than ever before, but you still want to build houses"*.

The provisional return for affordable homes completions for the year 2015/16 was eighteen units. The Council's role in providing new homes is setting the right environment for house building by producing an up to date and sound Local Plan and the approval of planning applications for sustainable

development. Whilst the figure was below target, a number of schemes are currently under construction which should lead to higher figures next year.



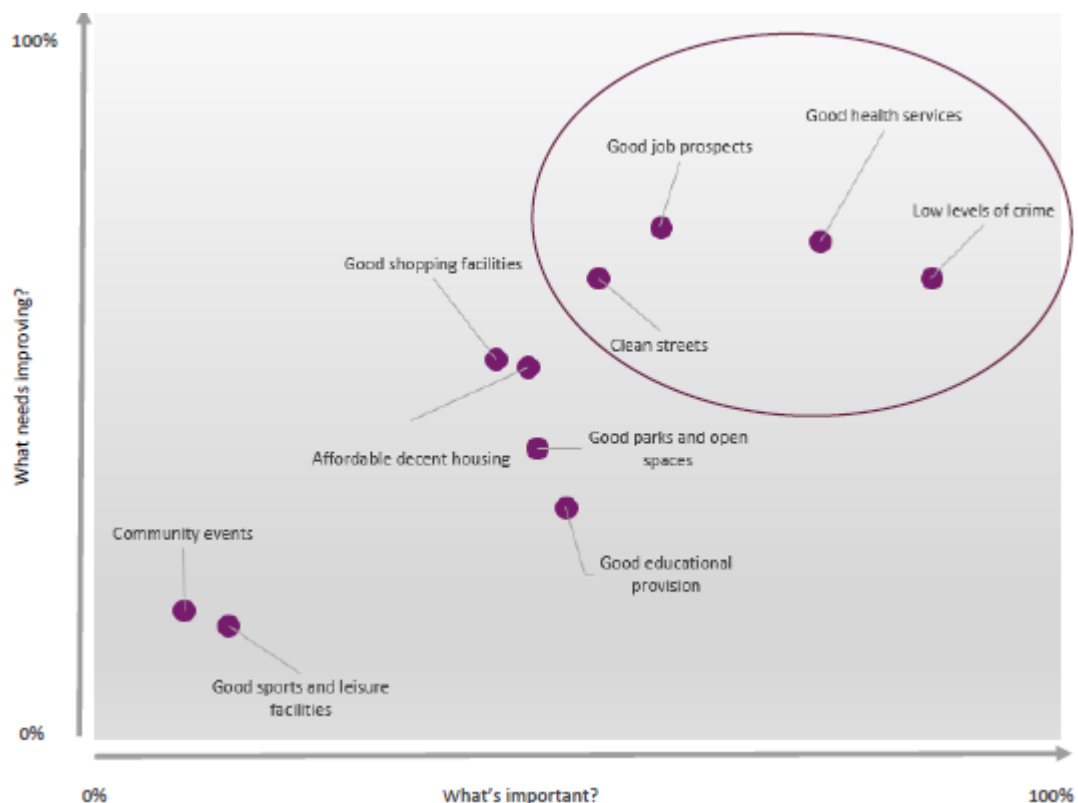
The low decent homes standard figure is due to revised stock condition data and the start of a new five year cycle commencing 2015/15.



What makes somewhere a good place to live and what needs improving in Tamworth?

From the results of the Budget Consultation 2016/17, this graph shows both what respondents feel is important and what needs improving to make Tamworth a better place to live.

Low levels of crime, good health services, good job prospects and clean streets were seen as both of higher importance in making somewhere a good place to live and also higher in needs of improvement in Tamworth.



At the Tamworth Listens Question Time Event in January 2017, a number of questions were asked on living a quality life in Tamworth. These are listed below and the responses are contained at Appendix B

Why has Tamworth Borough Council gone against the policy of not redeveloping garage sites if they are more than 50% occupied? Why then do those sites remain empty, losing the Council close to £400 per month in revenue? Why has the Council stated that the garages are under-used, but for the past six years, the policy has been not to re let empty garages? Why do TBC Council officials give misleading information when challenged about their policies concerning the garage sites?

Please outline what safeguards the Council will put in place to ensure that the future growth of the town will not be at the expense of the quality of life for

current residents or the level of services they have a right to expect from the Council.

What more is going to be done regarding the potholes on damaged roads in Tamworth considering Staffordshire County Council has received almost £1.6million from the Government?

What proposals are being put in place for cleaning out drains out more frequently to stop the outcome of Flooding?

Why is the A5 Bypass always covered in litter on both sides?

With the budget restraints imposed on emergency services, I would like to ask representatives whether the Police are able to cope with the increase in crime that we are currently experiencing across the town and whether our police managers are requesting more officers to deal with them or are they patching up holes to gain the next promotion? I understand that the police officers on duty are only able to deal with response with no full time police resources being given to prevention based activity and volunteers having to be used. Are members of the panel pushing for more police officers? The town is growing in population yet our services appear to being eroded without our leaders doing anything about it.

With the proposed building of 1200 homes in Amington, what is the Council doing to improve the road network in Amington?

Dog fouling is horrendous, what is being done about it?

Speeding and 'boy racers' are a problem; speed bumps are required.

Pelican crossing needed in Cottage Farm Road and Tamworth Road.

What is being done about cyclists on streets with no lights or helmets?

Growing stronger together in Tamworth

To support this strategic priority, Tamworth Borough Council works towards these objectives;

- Develop and support the local economy, together with local businesses and partners through our regional influence,
- Work with businesses and developers to create a vibrant and sustainable town centre,
- Work together to strengthen the relationships between schools/FE & HE/Employers,
- Champion higher skilled and better paid jobs in Tamworth,
- Use our regional influence to support an environment where business and enterprise can flourish and grow,
- Work together to strengthen the connections between schools/FE & HE/Employment to create opportunities for higher skilled and better paid jobs,
- Adopt a commercial approach to managing Council assets in order to enhance the viability of the Borough Council,
- Work together to preserve and promote Tamworth's heritage, leisure and natural environment,
- Work together to preserve our culture; preserve our heritage and sustain our natural environment.

Develop and support the local economy, together with local businesses and partners through our regional influence

The health of the local economy is vital, as it impacts on different aspects of people's lives. A thriving economy provides a basis for improving the quality of life of the people who live in, work in and visit Tamworth.

This objective was seen as important by 60% of respondents in the 2017/18 budget consultation exercise.

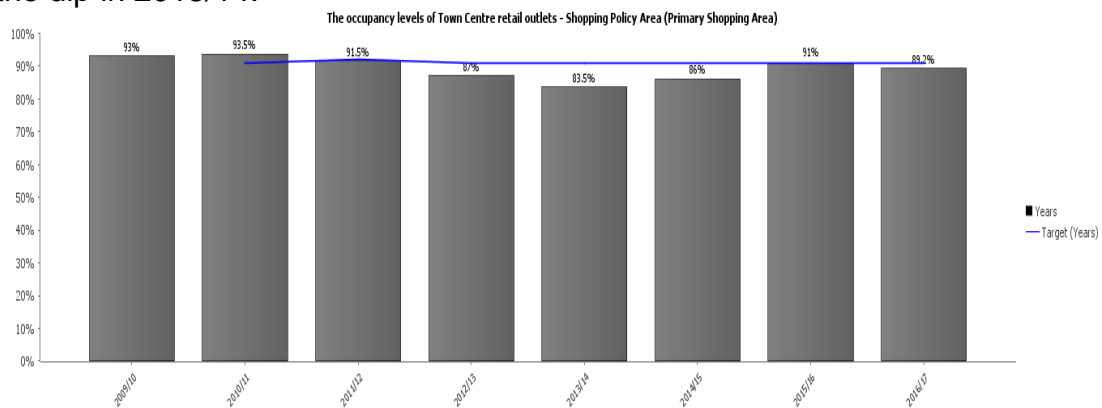
When asked to select priorities to assist business and the economy, those respondents to the business budget consultation exercise 2017/18 chose the following two as the top priorities above all others;

- Reducing business rates and other charges (89%)
- Reducing the number of empty business premises (63%).
- Providing opportunities for business growth also featured highly (39%)

Work with businesses and developers to create a vibrant and sustainable town centre

This objective was seen as important by 70% of respondents in the 2017/18 budget consultation exercise. Good shopping facilities were seen as important in making somewhere a good place to live by 43% of respondents with 53% feeling these needed to improve.

The occupancy level of town centre retail units is beginning to improve from the dip in 2013/14.



Comments made around this objective were:

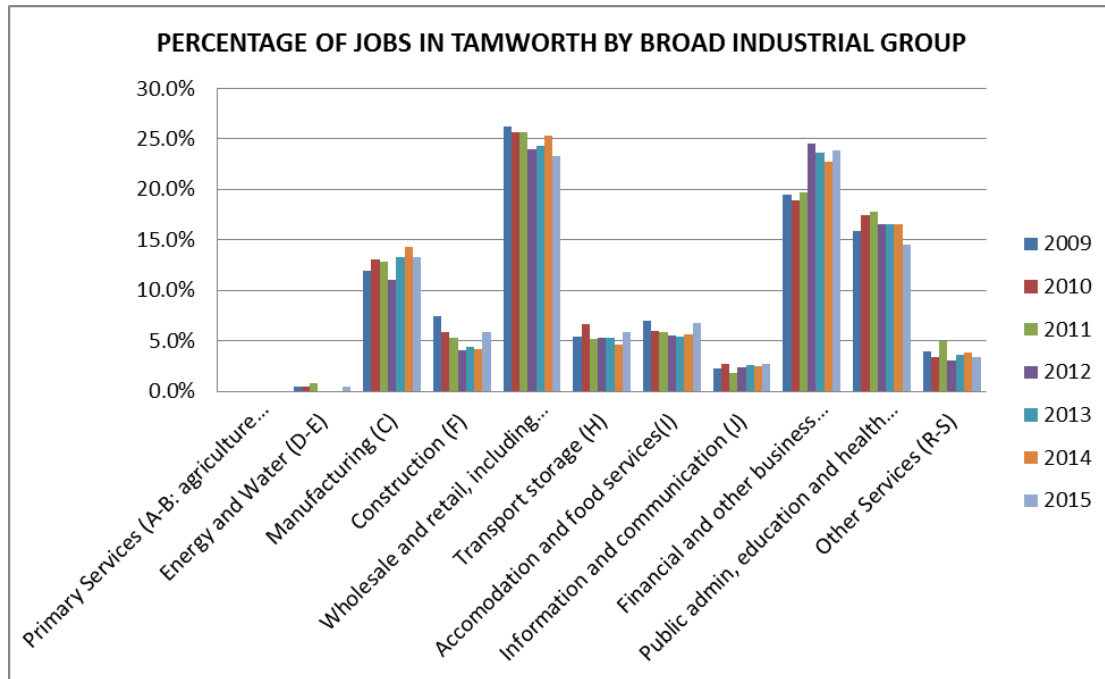
- *“Encourage more specialised shops, pop up shops and upmarket food outlets” and “encourage more local stores who are allowed to compete with big businesses”,*
- *“Improve transport links to Ventura for out of town shopping”,*
- *“Consider reducing the rents on commercial premises to encourage businesses to open in the town centre”*
- *“There aren’t enough big enough premises in town and out of town locations are primarily aimed at big business (Ventura Park) or are not promoted by the local authority as retail destinations. More signage to out of town retail areas is required”,*
- *“Improve quality business meeting locations, cafes, bars in the town centre”.*

On the issue of town centre car park charges, 76% of respondents indicated that they would like to see these reduced. Comments on this issue included

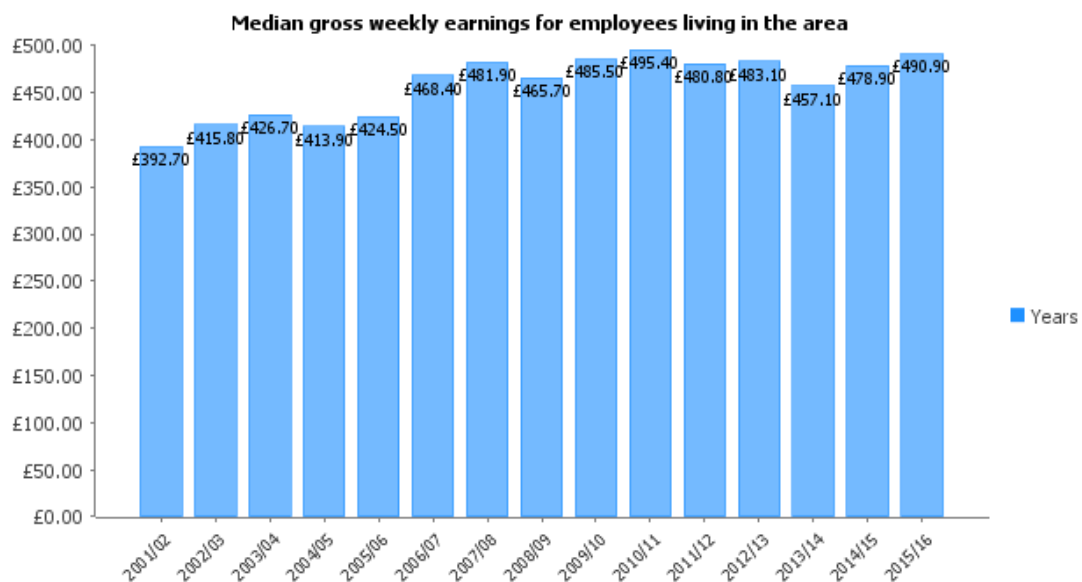
- That reducing car parking charges would *“Encourage more visitors to the town, more people to shop/eat/visit the town, therefore increasing economic growth to retailers”,*
- *“Parking is already very high and dramatically affecting footfall in the town centre with a knock-on effect on shops”*
- *“Car parking charges are making Tamworth a ghost town”.*

Champion higher skilled and better paid jobs in Tamworth

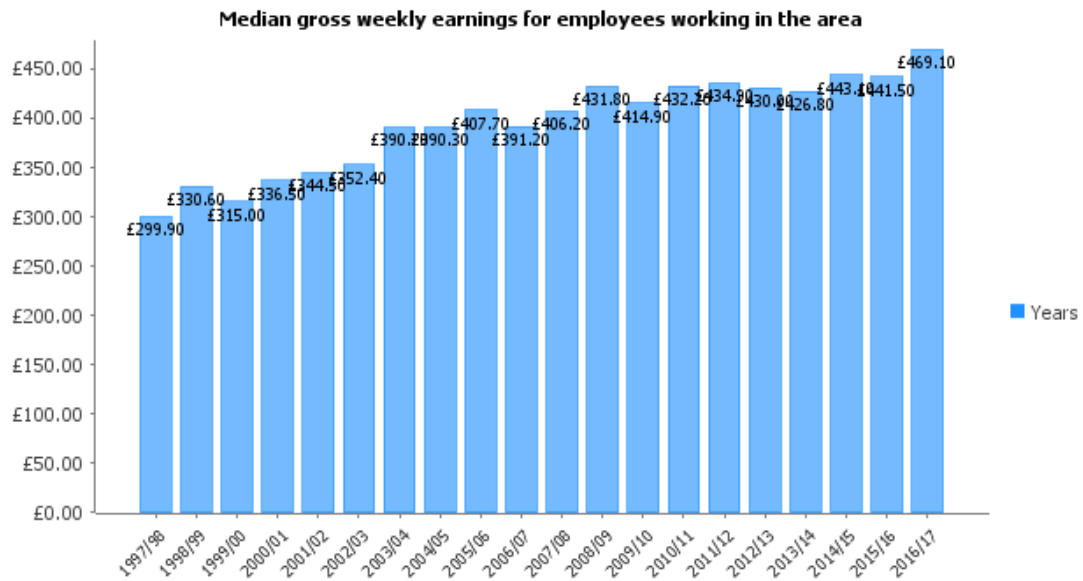
There are 30,000 employee jobs in Tamworth. In 2015, the categories of 'wholesale & retail' and 'financial & insurance services' accounted for over 47% of these jobs.



The average weekly pay for employees living in the area is £490.90; lower than the West Midlands at £507.80 and Staffordshire at £530.90.

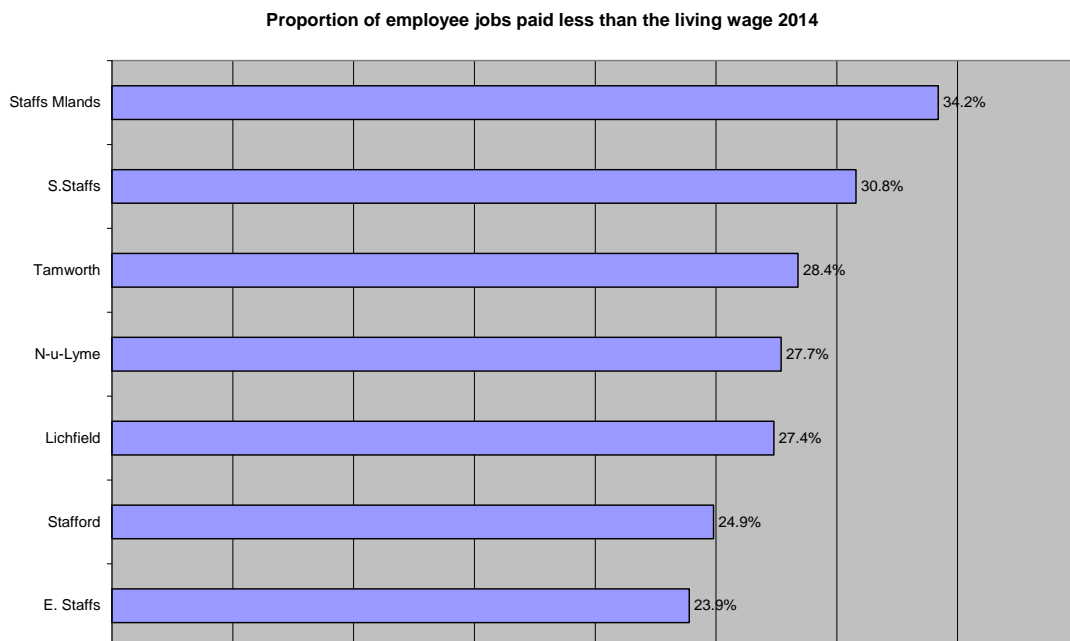


The average weekly pay for employees working in the area is £469.10; lower than the West Midlands at £510.20 and Staffordshire at £496.40.



Figures from the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) show that in 2014 an estimated 5.9 million jobs were paid below the Living Wage.

The proportion of jobs paid below the Living Wage in Tamworth is 28.4% compared to 23% for the UK, excluding London. Comparison to the other Staffordshire authorities is shown below.



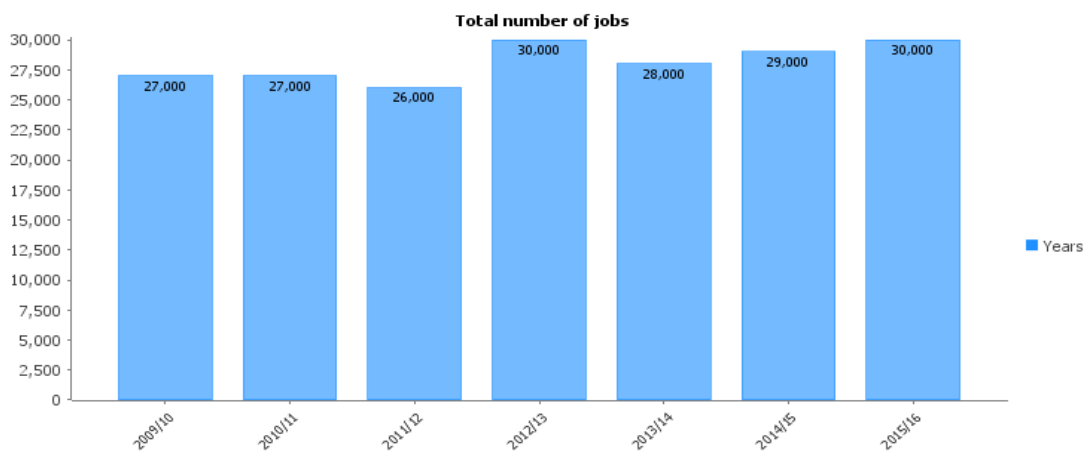
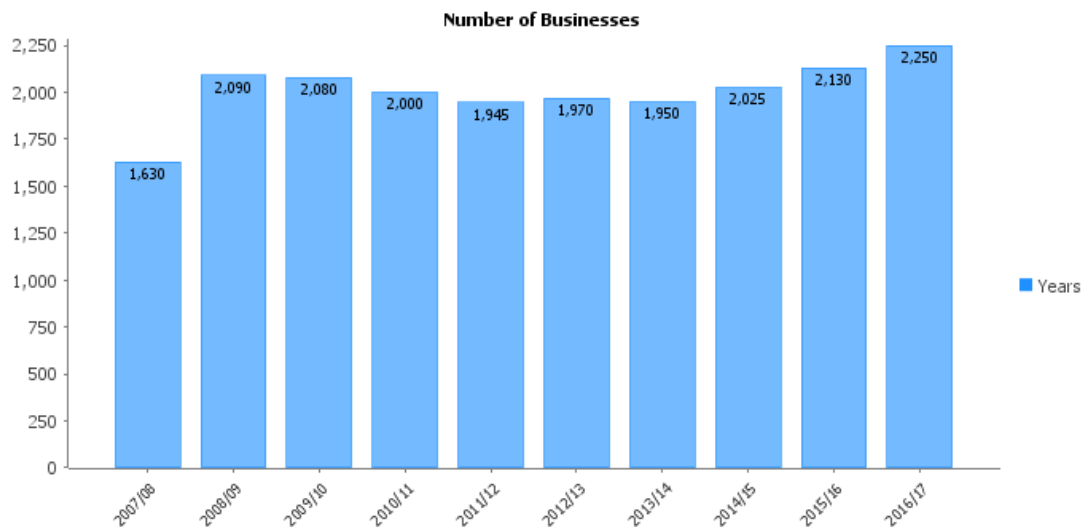
Claimant count is a key measure of unemployment and measures those people claiming Jobseeker's Allowance benefit (JSA).

In May 2016 there were 290 people claiming JSA in Tamworth, 0.6% of the working age population. This is equivalent to the county rate and lower than the regional (1.7%) and national (1.3%) rates.

Use our regional influence to support an environment where business and enterprise can flourish and grow

The Council is keen for local businesses to grow and therefore needs to be aware of what barriers need to be broken down in order for this to happen. Businesses were asked to identify what they felt were the main barriers to business expansion. The 'cost of business rates' were viewed as the main barrier to expansion. 'Affordability of premises' was the second most common barrier to expansion.

After remaining stable for a few years, the numbers of businesses in Tamworth increased in the last three years and the total number of jobs has shown a corresponding increase.



Work together to strengthen the connections between schools/FE & HE/Employment to create opportunities for higher skilled and better paid jobs and Work together to strengthen the relationships between schools/FE & HE/Employers

These objectives were regarded as important by 60% of respondents to the 2017/18 budget consultation exercise.

Good education provision was seen by 51% of respondents as making somewhere an important place to live with only 33% of respondents feeling that it needed to improve.

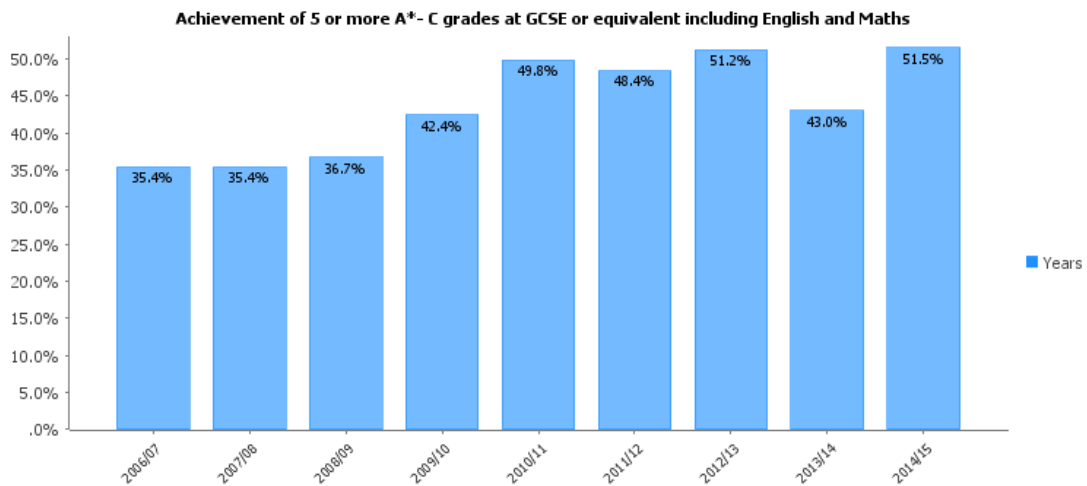
Comments made around this were

“We need the ability to study for degree level education within Tamworth. This will improve the prospects and aspirations of many residents”

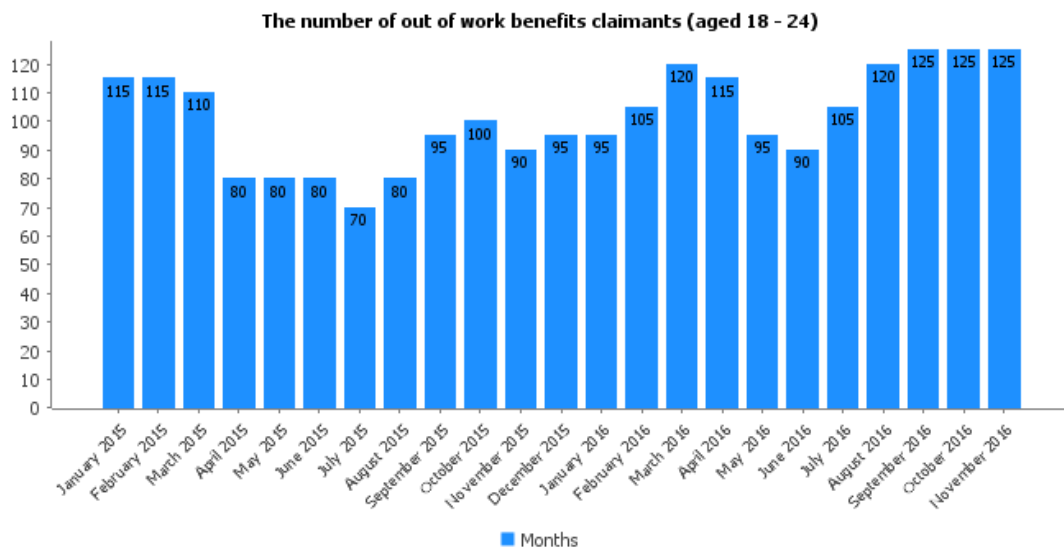
“It’s important that businesses offer youngsters the chance to develop new skills but there should be support from the council to help businesses which provide opportunities to young people to grow”.

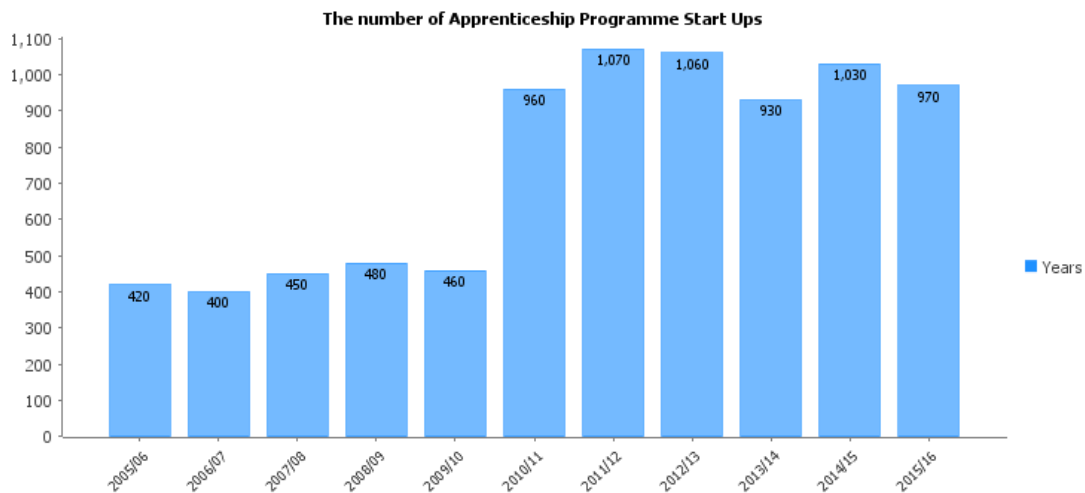
“Working together to strengthen the relationships between schools/Further Education & Higher Education/Employers is an important sector, but if you consider the lifetime period after formal education is considerably longer than that within it, ‘community education’ needs a higher profile”.

After a dip in 2014, the percentage of children attaining 5 or more A* - C GCSE’s improved in 2015. By way of comparison the figures for Staffordshire and England were 56.1% and 53.8% respectively.



The number of young people claiming out of work benefits rose during the second quarter of 2016/17 whilst the number of apprenticeship start-ups remains at a consistent level.





Adopt a commercial approach to managing Council assets in order to enhance the viability of the Borough Council

This objective was regarded as important by 52% of respondents to the 2017/18 budget consultation exercise.

Work together to preserve and promote Tamworth’s heritage, leisure and natural environment and Work together to preserve our culture; preserve our heritage and sustain our natural environment

These objectives were regarded as important by 66% and 62% of respondents to the 2017/18 budget consultation exercise.

Community events and good sports and leisure facilities ranked as the lowest priorities for improvement in making Tamworth a better place to live.

At the Tamworth Listens Question Time Event in January 2017, a number of questions were asked on growing stronger together in Tamworth. These are listed below and the responses are contained at Appendix B

Why not make the shops in Tamworth town centre cheaper to rent and more of a tourist attraction like Chester or York? Little craft shops, local bakeries, gift shops, etc. not card shops or phone shops. We have enough of the big shops to visit at Ventura, so make the town into a town centre again. Maybe more people will visit it then?

I would love to ask for the panel’s views on ways to regenerate the ever declining town centre. I don’t see how it can compete head to head with the new Ventura Park development. But reports are that "High Streets" around the country are recovering. From what I see ours is not, and it must.

The town centre has seen a decline over many years by various councils led by both main parties. We have seen the reports over the years that meeting after meeting has been held but still the town centre is dying. Ventura is

thriving and it's a great way of bringing people into Tamworth but rather than blaming previous councils for not achieving can we please have a simple plan to regenerate the town centre and actually have action to help businesses thrive and bring people back into our wonderful town centre. Let's not have a panel led by councillors to plan or a team from both Ventura and the town centre but let's have people on the panel from the public with passion and vision and local business owners who actually know what people want. The councillors come into it to give support and make things happen rather than thinking of furthering their own careers.

There used to be several public toilets in the town. Friends of mine who have travelled to Tamworth by bus find it difficult to get to the toilet; the nearest one is in Ankerside which is quite a way from the bus station and not well sign posted. With several pubs in the town centre now closed, there are no toilets available which is very bad for a town of this size. What can be done about this?

We hold meetings at St Editha's Church Hall in College Lane in the town centre for our monthly meetings. However, access has proved difficult due to the bollards in Colehill which we were informed would be lowered on request. Access has only been allowed with a great deal of inconvenience and difficulty.

What is the Council doing to support local businesses and the residents in those businesses?

What is the expected increase in footfall once the works are finished at the Tamworth Enterprise Centre?

Delivering quality services in Tamworth

To support this strategic priority, Tamworth Borough Council works towards these objectives;

- Provide accurate information via a fully integrated Customer Services Centre,
- Work with customers to improve their access to council services,
- Enable and support Tamworth residents and businesses using our statutory and regulatory powers,
- Enabling greater public engagement in local decision making,
- Demonstrate value for money.

Provide accurate information via a fully integrated Customer Services Centre

This objective was regarded as important by 63% of respondents to the 2017/18 budget consultation exercise.

In order to make efficiencies, respondents felt *“making savings in customer service and back office functions”* was a way to creating efficiencies.

Work with customers to improve their access to council services,

This objective was regarded as important by 73% of respondents to the 2017/18 budget consultation exercise. In the same consultation, 42% of respondents indicated that this is an area where they would like to see costs reduced; the most popular choice for cost reduction.

Enable and support Tamworth residents and businesses using our statutory and regulatory powers,

This objective was regarded as important by 66% of respondents to the 2017/18 budget consultation exercise.

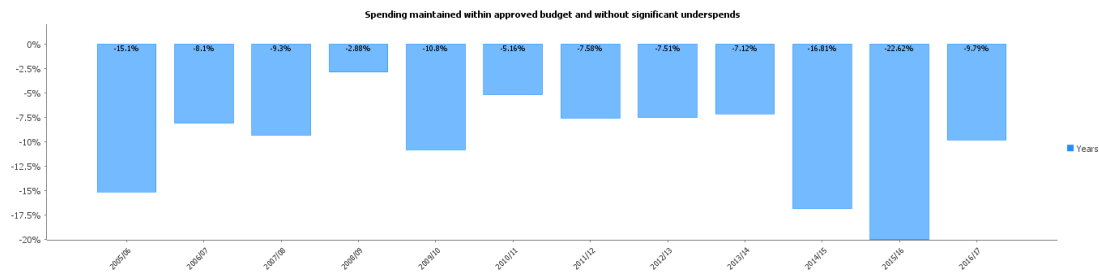
Enabling greater public engagement in local decision making,

This objective was regarded as important by 76% of respondents to the 2017/18 budget consultation exercise. When asked the question “Would you like to be more involved in the decisions which affect your local area?” 44% said “yes” and 49% said “they would, depending on the issue”. In the same consultation, 36% of respondents felt they could influence decisions which affect their local area.

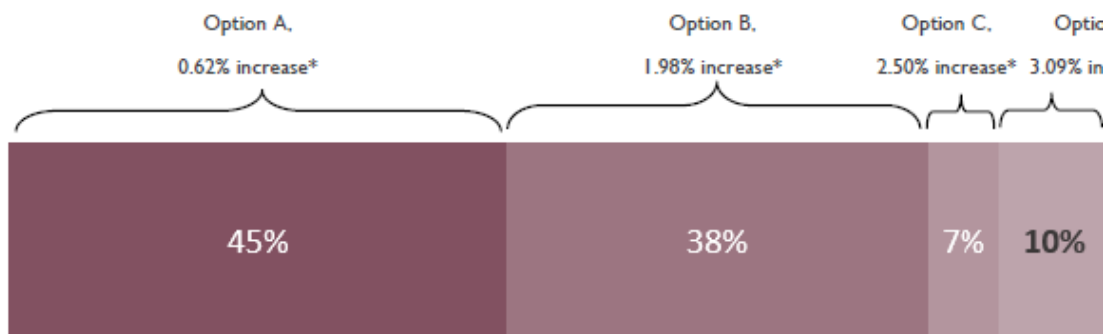
Demonstrate value for money.

This objective was regarded as important by 82% of respondents to the 2017/18 budget consultation exercise; the highest under this priority.

The projected full year position identifies a projected favourable variance against budget of £828k or 9.79%. The underspend achieved in previous years is shown below.



The most favourable increase in Council Tax amongst respondents to the 2017/18 budget was 0.62%, the lowest increase.



The general consensus amongst respondents was the Council had “*managed its budgets fairly well over the last 10 years*”. This was “*during times of austerity*” and respondents acknowledged the “*challenges*” and “*difficulties*” this had placed upon the Council. Respondents did feel that Tamworth could make some improvements to its spend. These included making efficiencies, focusing on core service provision and supporting the development of volunteering

At the Tamworth Listens Question Time Event in January 2017, a number of questions were asked on delivering quality services in Tamworth. These are listed below and the responses are contained at Appendix B.

Recently the Conservative led Surrey council said, it was left with no choice but to increase council tax by 15% because of cuts in funding by central government. Just how far off is Tamworth Borough council from being forced to do this?

We have a council dwelling Rental Income of £21 Million, but set against this we have an item "Supervision and Management" of £6 Million (nearly 30%). It would seem that, as a proportion of rents collected, the top eleven employees are not alone in doing well out of us taxpayers.

For each house where planning permission is granted on an application for 4 or more houses, about £12,000 from the Applicant and £9,000 by the Government is paid to Tamworth Borough Council: that makes roughly £21 Million per 1,000 houses. Can the Panel advise which part of subsequent years' accounts specifically, we will be able to keep a close eye on in respect of what happens to all of this massive influx of planning applications cash? I hope that because these sums are so large, they will be kept in detailed focus by both taxpayers and auditors – and perhaps even generate the dismissal of suggestions that Council Tax need be increased, at all, for some significant period?

Although I give credit to the hard work done by the volunteers at the community radio would the thousands of pounds spent by Tamworth Council on giving TCRFM free transmitter location & electricity each year be better spent on front line services?

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