



MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD ON 10th DECEMBER 2019

PRESENT: Councillor R Kingstone (Mayor), Councillors R Claymore, D Box, P Brindley, J Chesworth, R Bilcliff, T Clements, D Cook, M Cook, C Cooke, A Farrell, J Faulkner, R Ford, K Norchi, J Oates, M Oates, S Peuple, Dr S Peuple, B Price, R Pritchard, R Rogers, P Standen, M Summers and P Thurgood

The following officers were present: Andrew Barratt (Chief Executive), Stefan Garner (Executive Director Finance), Lynne Pugh (Assistant Director Finance), Rebecca Neill (Head of Audit & Governance and Monitoring Officer) and Jo Hutchison (Democratic Services, Scrutiny and Elections Officer)

Apologies received from: Councillor(s) M Bailey, S Doyle, S Goodall, M J Greatorex and T Jay

20 TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

20.1 To receive the minutes of the 16th July 2019 Extraordinary Council Meeting

The minutes of the extra-ordinary council meeting held on 16th July 2019 were approved and signed as a correct record.

(Moved by Councillor D Cook and seconded by Councillor Dr S Peuple)

20.2 To receive the Minutes of the 10th September 2019 Council Meeting

The Mayor highlighted that amendments had been proposed to minute 12 of the draft council meeting minutes of 10th September 2019, which were as follows:

12 QUESTION TIME:

The Mayor Councillor R Kingstone

"Before we deal with the first part of question time, which is questions from members of the public, ~~and we actually have two questions.~~ I would just like to make a statement. In my interpretation of - to the effect that the Constitution it is fairly vague ~~in this respect~~ with regards to members of the public who submit questions and are not present. The spirit of the constitution in my persuasion is that if you're a little bit nervous, a little bit scared about reading out questions, or if you're taken ill or incapable of getting to the meeting then yes that's it is fine for the Mayor to read out these your questions ~~s but~~ However, I think we need to be careful about setting an unwritten precedence where by questions can be submitted by members of the public with the expectation that the Mayor will read them out should of not yes it is a reasonable excuse, but for not a reason like the examples I've stated, not be given already explained. ~~We're going to end up basically with and~~ My fear is that we are going to end up with 700 odd questions every meeting from members of the public and no one present to put them. We could potentially will turn into the letters page of the Tamworth Herald rather than a Council meeting. So yes we will take permit these questions this evening but I want us just to be cautious about the reasons why people cannot be present. There are often very valid reasons and that's why we are taking these tonight but let's us be cautious as to why the questioner is not present. not set precedence is what I'm saying"

The Mayor Councillor R Kingstone

"Councillor Chesworth I'm sorry to have to ask you but I want to try and avoid members the constant, well not constant, but very often we seem to be faced with members giving written responses. Do you think it's possible given that as the members of the public are present tonight can we hear thea response that you are likely to give?"

The minutes of the council meeting held on 10th September 2019, as amended above, were approved and signed as a correct record.

(Moved by Councillor D Cook and seconded by Councillor Dr S Peale)

20.3 To receive the minutes of the 19th November 2019 Extraordinary Council Meeting

The minutes of the extra-ordinary council meeting held on 19th November 2019, including the following typographical amendment at minute 17, were approved and signed as a correct record:

Thank you Jeremy. Councillor Cook, Danny:

Thank you Mr. Mayor. To be honest as per usual Jeremy has stolen all my thunder about what an absolutely phenomenal councillor and wonderful human being Mary Oates was. I was only talking to Mick a few weeks ago saying I feel like I took a journey with Mary. We were elected on the same day, we became scrutiny chairmen almost immediately. I remember once going for a scrutiny chairmen's training course in Warwick with Mary with an overnight stay and I managed to ply her with way too much brandy and she was telling me stories from Jeremy's childhood, so I was texting Jeremy these stories as he's texting his mum saying 'shut up' which was a lovely three-way conversation. Jeremy might remember that. But I also sat on Housing Scrutiny when I remember Jeremy said the Deputy Leader of the Council came before the Committee and was given the torrid time, not just by the opposition, but by his own party and I remember him walking out saying you don't know who your friends are, well that was the kind of Committee that Mary ran. If a job's worth doing, it needs doing right. I remember

(Moved by Councillor D Cook and seconded by Councillor Dr S Peale)

21 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest.

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

Announcement from the Mayor

"Councillors, Officers and members of the public.

After every council meeting I reflect on my performance as Mayor. In the past I have even listened to the full audio recording made of meetings to learn and improve. As Mayor one of the primary functions, when chairing a meeting is to show fairness and respect to everyone in equal measure. Hopefully you will also recall that I try and explain proceedings to members of the public so that they can keep up with the way business is conducted.

At the last meeting on 19th November, my performance fell below the standard fellow councillors, which you should expect of me or indeed anyone filling the role of mayor. At one point during the meeting I raised my voice to a member who was speaking in an attempt to get them to stop. Whilst I stand by my reasons for asking the member to stop talking, the manner in which I did so caused offence and distress. Namely by the phrase "stop it" in a loud voice and raising my hand at the same time.

It was the celebrated 18th century English poet and Freemason Alexander Pope who wrote in "An essay on Criticism" the often quoted "To err is human, to forgive is divine." So I humbly apologise for making a mistake and for being human. I can only hope that all of you who were present and Councillor Michelle Cook in particular, can follow a divine like path and forgive me. I must try harder in future. Thank you Councillors."

Councillor Dr S People

“Thank you Mr Mayor, taking note of what you said. Can I just ask that all members remind themselves that the protocol is that if you speak they should take their seats, so once you intervene it’s a bit incumbent upon all of us to sit down for you to make your point, and then carry on, and I think that helps a lot because then you are not having to make a second harder intervention.

And the other thing I would like to say for the benefit of those not in Prayers, it was very interesting when the vicar talked about proverbs and he talked about those in power and he immediately turned to our Chief Executive. If that does not bring the rest of us into perspective, I don’t know what does. Thank you Mr Mayor.”

The Mayor announced

“We have with us tonight a much respected member of our community, Di Wells, who as you know was Mayoress of this Borough back in 2005/6. Di as you know does an awful lot of work with the local history group and has produced an absolutely wonderful book. Di is here tonight because she has got some incredible books for you to have a look at, it’s a book which has been put together not only by Di but by the whole history project team, please do have a look, they’re on the table just outside the Chamber. They pictorially and in the written form go through the whole history of Market Street. Having had a look through the book I can really recommend it even if you just have a look through and all the proceeds go to the history project so please do have a look.”

The Mayor invited Councillor S People to make an announcement.

“Thank you very much. I just wanted to remind everybody, because everybody here is a Borough councillor and you do come into contact with residents who might be lonely or on their own, or in a difficult family situation over Christmas, alternately one of the Churches in Tamworth provides Christmas lunch and this year it is Sacred Heart Church and is being staffed by volunteers from Heart of Tamworth, so if you come across anybody who is going to be on their own at Christmas we are happy to welcome them with open arms. We serve a three course lunch, there’s no charge, it’s a really happy event, it starts at 1pm and if there is anyone you want to refer on you can either direct them to me or you can direct them to the office at Sacred Heart Church.

Very briefly, don’t forget also that the Winter Night Shelter is now open in St John’s Church so if you come across anyone who would benefit from that then again please refer them on. Thank you very much.”

The Mayor responded

“Thank you very much for all the efforts which go on to look after our homeless citizens here within Tamworth. It was a lovely experience I had visiting you the other Saturday morning, what a great bacon sandwich your ladies do in the kitchen.”

23 QUESTION TIME:**QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL NO. 1**

Under Procedure Rule No 11, Councillor J Faulkner will ask the Portfolio Holder for Assets and Finance, Councillor R Pritchard, the following question:-

“I am sure that the Deputy Leader of the Council has seen reports of the suspension of trading in the M&G Property Portfolio. Given the volatility of the market, what does the portfolio holder anticipate to be the possible consequences for our own property fund investments and what consequent action does he propose?”

Councillor R Pritchard gave the following reply:

Thank you Mr Mayor. I will provide a written answer to Councillor Faulkner in the morning.

WRITTEN ANSWER provided by Councillor R Pritchard

Firstly, it is important to note this fund is only marketed to retail customers and not to institutional investors like Councils.

Also, the rationale for the suspension is being put forward as “unusually high and sustained outflows” which it puts down to Brexit worries and a retail downturn – I am informed that this fund has 37.5% exposure to retail property. No council investment exceeds 13% retail.

It needs to be stressed that the news about the suspension of trading does not mean that the fund is not sound - this type of investment is not liquid. It is dependent on sales of property to release funds for redemptions.

Several retail funds did the same thing around the time of the referendum vote in 2016, and this did not impact on those funds that are marketed to institutional investors.

While there is no indication that this will affect the Councils investments in property funds, Officers have already had an update meeting with one fund manager and are planning another meeting to discuss this issue, as well as the fund’s performance and what their outlook is for the sector and their fund.

This comes back to the basis of our investment view, not just about security, liquidity, yield, but first and foremost about appropriateness.

The Council has invested nearly £4m in 2 different property funds to date. Neither council investment property funds exceeds 13% retail.

As the member will appreciate, the council has the view that we will invest for the long term (over 10 years), appreciating that prices can both rise and fall in the short term, and that over that long term, given the cash rate outlook, their performance should outstrip returns from cash deposits.

When the Council went through the selection process, officers looked at things like the current fund structure, asking why it is so and how the manager may adjust this as market situations change etc.

As you will remember, the Council undertook a Property Fund Manager selection exercise during 2017/18, appointing Link Asset Services to provide support and advice in the identification and selection of suitable UK-focussed property funds.

At the outset, the Council was looking to engage with funds that had a broad remit of exposures to different property types, rather than being focussed on one particular area, such as retail.

The result of the process was to look to consider splitting investment across six funds to provide the Council with a range of approaches to property fund investment, diversification across a number of funds, rather than a concentration in only one or two options, as well as the ability to take advantage of entering a number of funds via the secondary market, whereby the Council would be purchasing units from investors looking to exit the particular fund, and may potentially gain access to a fund at a lower level of cost than via the primary route.

Given the uncertainty over Brexit, the Council has deferred further investments while the market settles which arguably has been the right strategy as, with many funds now trading at a discount, now might be the right time to invest further as the outlook is weaker than it has been, and investors may save on entry costs.

This way, there are savings in entry fees, the funds will continue to generate income that is some way in excess of cash rates and over the medium to long term of a full investment time horizon, the capital level should appreciate - improving overall performance & income.

We are receiving in 3% and 4.5% return on either fund so far.

24 MOTION TO MOVE AGENDA ITEMS 6, 7 AND 8 EN BLOCK

RESOLVED that Agenda items 6 (Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2020/21 onwards), 7 (Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy Mid-year Review Report 2019/20) and 8 (Adoption of the Proposed Licensing Policy 2020-2023) be moved to a vote en block.

(Moved by Councillor D Cook and seconded by Councillor Dr S Peaple)

25 LOCAL COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME 2020/21 ONWARDS

The Report of the Portfolio Holder for Assets and Finance advised members that the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme for working age customers for 2020/21

should include continued alignment to Applicable Amounts with those of Housing Benefit.

RESOLVED that

Council considered and endorsed that the base scheme goes forward with the following:

That the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme for working age customers for 2020/21 will continue to be aligned to Applicable Amounts with those of Housing Benefit.

(Moved by Councillor D Cook and seconded by Councillor Dr S Peaple)

26 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT AND ANNUAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY MID-YEAR REVIEW REPORT 2019/20

The Report of the Portfolio Holder for Assets and Finance presented Members with the Mid-year Review of the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy.

RESOLVED that Council approved the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy Mid-year Review Report 2019/20.

(Moved by Councillor D Cook and seconded by Councillor Dr S Peaple)

27 ADOPTION OF THE PROPOSED LICENSING POLICY 2020-2023

The Report of the Portfolio Holder for Regulatory and Community Safety sought Council approval and adoption of Tamworth's Statement of Licensing Policy 2020-2023 and Cumulative Impact Assessment 2020 – 2023 under the Licensing Act 2003.

RESOLVED

1. Council approved and adopted the final amended version of Tamworth's Statement of Licensing Policy 2020 – 2023 and Cumulative Impact Assessment 2020 – 2023
2. To undertake an initial review by Tamworth Borough Council Officers, as soon as possible, of the cumulative impact assessment, within the guidelines of policy.

(Moved by Councillor D Cook and seconded by Councillor Dr S Peaple)

The Mayor

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