



MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD ON 21st JULY 2020

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

The following officers were present: Andrew Barratt (Chief Executive), Stefan Garner (Executive Director Finance), Anna Miller (Assistant Director – Growth & Regeneration), Paul Weston (Assistant Director Assets), Rebecca Neill (Head of Audit & Governance and Monitoring Officer), Matthew Fletcher (Head of Economic Development and Regeneration), Jodie Small (Legal, Democratic and Corporate Support Assistant) and Adam Deakin (Technical Infrastructure Engineer)

Apologies received from: Councillor(s) D Cook, M Cook, T Jay, S Pritchard and P Thurgood

8 TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 16th June 2020 were approved and signed as a correct record.

(Moved by Councillor R Pritchard and seconded by Councillor Dr S Peuple)

9 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Dr S Peuple and Councillor S Peuple declared a pecuniary interest in agenda item 9 which is in the private session of the meeting and indicated that they would disclose the full nature of their interests at that point and will then leave the meeting when this item is discussed. Councillor P Standen and Councillor J Faulkner also declared non pecuniary interests in the same item, which they would disclose in full at that point, but stated that these interests will not impede them from voting on this item.

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

The following announcements were made;

Madam Mayor Councillor R Claymore

“I have just a couple of announcements, first and foremost at the last full Council meeting there was a particular mention of the extraordinary work that has been carried out by Tamworth Borough Council Officers throughout this pandemic and I just wanted to reiterate that this is continuing, the staff are doing amazing work, this is something we have never experienced before. The staff are having to work under difficult and very new circumstances, I just wanted it on record how much the members appreciate everything that they are doing and going forward hoping that things will get to some sort of normal at some point soon.

The other thing I wanted to mention is just on a personal note from me as the Mayor.

I have a couple of initiatives that I want to get off the ground, As you can appreciate it's very difficult at the moment to get out and about to see people but what I would like to do first and foremost is try and meet as many of the volunteers that have stepped up to the mark. Over the next few months I would like to hold small intimate afternoon tea parties. I would like to hold these in the Town Hall and possibly in the Bandstand if I am allowed. I would also like to invite some of the businesses throughout the town so that we can see how well these businesses are doing whilst we are celebrating the wonderful work the volunteers are doing.

So my plea to you is I do have a list of volunteers, but if anybody knows anyone who has stepped up to the mark or gone that little bit further, then can they contact me through Democratic Services. I would like to invite as many of those people along over the next few months to have a nice little afternoon tea as a thank you.”

Councillor R Kingstone

“Thank you Madam Mayor. I'm not going to make a speech or anything but just to state for the meeting and for all Councillors present that it is my intention to resign with immediate effect from the controlling group and I will be sending an email outlining my reasons to all Councillors and the Chief Executive in a few minutes time. Thank you Madam Mayor.”

Councillor R Prichard Deputy Leader

“Thank you Madam Mayor in the absence of the Leader of the Council who is away today I would just like to announce some slight changes to the Cabinet structure, with no change to membership those details have been circulated to the Chief Executive, Democratic Services and the Opposition Leaders and also a slight change to reflect the announcement of the Conservative committee places and that has been distributed through Democratic Services, the Opposition group leaders and the Chief Executive, and finally I would like to announce the champions, the champion role is something this Council has been doing for many years now and I would just like to confirm the champions the Leader is appointing

are Councillor Ben Price for Town Centre champion, Councillor Paul Brindley for heritage champion, Councillor Marie Bailey for community safety champion, Councillor Alex Farrell for digital champion and Councillor Tina Clements for dementia champion. Thank you Madam Mayor.”

Councillor D S Peaple announcement

“Thank you Madam Mayor and thank you to the Deputy Leader for sending out the list of Committee places it appears to allocate Councillor Kingstone as part of the controlling group and therefore I look forward to that being clarified. Can I also please ask the question of the Deputy Leader why the Conservative group after the events of the last week still feel that it's appropriate to have the Chair of Planning and the Chair of Licensing allocated to people who have business in that field and should they now not consider some sort of reallocation of roles in order to clarify the interests that clash through people being in charge of those Committees in areas that they work in. I look forward to a future discussion on that point with the Deputy Leader thank you Madam Mayor.”

11 QUESTION TIME:

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL NO.1

Under Procedure Rule No 11, Councillor T Clements will ask the Portfolio Holder for Heritage and Growth, Councillor J Oates, the following question:-

“Can the Cabinet member give the people of Tamworth some reassurance that we understand the challenges of the high street? COVID 19 has changed many ways of working and we need to ensure that we future proof our plans and particularly the High Street business plan that this council will consider submitting to the government this evening.”

Councillor J Oates gave the following reply:-

“Thank you for allowing me to answer this question I will answer in two parts if I may. The Covid pandemic has provided the Council with an opportunity to really understand the challenges that the pandemic has created around the High Street. The opportunity has been brought about by the distribution of the business grants and the provision of business advice and the reopening of the High Street project itself.

It must be remembered although the recovery is still in a very early phase, Officers will still continue to engage with the business community to both shape and respond to the challenges as they emerge.

Madam Mayor, re-opening the High Street project and the wider regeneration works that the Council is currently undertaking, it's given us the following, given us the strong and collaborative two-way relationship with landowners and a better understanding of what's going on in terms of tenancies and units, something that we've not had before and also allowed us to improve and develop stronger relationship intelligence and engagement within the business community.

In the past it's been difficult to get into some of those and the business community have found it difficult to get into the Council so we are now in a better situation to understand that. It's also given us the opportunity to renew and drive forward positive relationships with stakeholders in the Town Centre and I will mention Ankerside as an example.

Second part of my answer relates to the second part of the question that Councillor Clements has raised, later on this evening the Council will consider the final business plan submission to Government under the Future High Street fund initiative, this is an opportunity to intervene in a current trajectory of the Town Centre and make it fit for purpose for the people of Tamworth. As Part of the submission to Government the Council has completed a detailed COVID-19 agendum highlighting mitigating specific risks of the pandemic to the project; these are very much public realm works and mitigations to allow for social distancing, whatever that becomes, and that flexibility. Whilst the full implications of COVID-19 on the economy of the High Street cannot be fully understood as we sit here this evening we are confident that our plans to improve and change the Town Centre will be future proofed, the reason we are confident includes that they are in line with the Government spending agenda around skills, education and change of use and updated infrastructure. Our project is not heavily private sector focused, our project focuses on bringing significant footfall and day time use back into the town centre to support the wider economy, our project encourages wider social use and more flexible commercial spaces so that can cater for small businesses, start-ups, like as we have seen in the Enterprise Centre.

We are also removing a large vacant retail floor space, redundant buildings and replacing them with attractive, active use of buildings. The Town Centre will become a mix economy of leisure, education, retail, office space, food, drink and other activities aimed at increasing the volume in the Town Centre.

Madam Mayor I hope this brief summary has given members some reassurance that the team are working extremely hard to understand the High Street not just with the COVID-19 pandemic but also going forward. Thank you Madam Mayor."

Councillor T Clements asked the following supplementary question-

"Thank you Madam Mayor, Would the Portfolio Holder agree we cannot just look at the now, we need to look at the next Ten, Twenty years and even further to safeguard our town and its businesses?"

Councillor J Oates gave the following reply -

"Thank you Madam Mayor. We can all look at the past and learn from it so we don't make the same mistakes in the future, and this is something we are very keen to make sure this is something we don't do. Tamworth was changed significantly in the sixties and seventies, before my time and since then as a Council and as a Community we have regretted the direction the Town Centre has gone in. I am adamant we need to build a Town Centre fit for purpose and as Councillor Clements has said not just for the next few years but going forward for the next Ten years and the next Twenty years we need to build back into the

Town Centre our identity and I don't want to go into too much detail about the report as the confidential nature of it, but this gives us a broad mix of all the things that are the entity of Tamworth whether its spending time together or celebrating our heritage, or working and shopping in the town centre. It's about bringing the essence of Tamworth back. Thank you."

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL NO.2

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

"At the recent LGA Conference, held virtually, the Leader of the Conservative Group reaffirmed the Conservative manifesto commitment to re-organise local government. There is an emerging consensus that new unitary authorities with a minimum population of around 400,000 are to be created. In the case of Staffordshire, this would mean two authorities, with Tamworth being part of a new "South Staffordshire". What steps does the Leader believe the Council should take to protect Tamworth's interests going forward?"

Councillor Dr S People was provided with the following written answer from Councillor D Cook.

"To confirm there has been a figure of 350,000 – 400,000 populous given to form a unitary, no detail given but logically this could mean a northern/southern split across Staffordshire.

There is no detail available at present however a white paper is likely to be published in the autumn around the time of the Conservative Party conference.

Whatever is contained within this paper it is vital that the council does everything it can for the benefit of Tamworth and its residents, to ensure its continued success as a thriving town.

I look forward to working cross party when we have sufficient detail to debate this matter at council. We need to approach this together and ensure the continued protection and enhancement of our assets and public services. This really will be the time to park politics in Tamworth for a while".

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL NO.3

Under Procedure Rule No 11, Councillor Dr S People will ask the Portfolio Holder for Heritage and Growth, Councillor J Oates, the following question:-

"Following the government's decision to exclude Tamworth and the other shire districts from receiving any of the £66M capital funding awarded to the GBSLEP, what steps is he taking to ensure that all the projects put forward by Tamworth are being considered for the much smaller amount of £22m awarded to the Stoke & Staffordshire LEP?"

Councillor J Oates gave the following reply:-

“Thank you Madam Mayor, Councillor People rightly raises the issue of the greater Birmingham Solihull LEP and the other Two LEPS in the West Midlands combined authority area have been informed that there is £66 million capital funding allocated following the call for projects that the Government announced last month and has to be spent within the constituent member areas and not in the Shire districts, now Tamworth sits geographically within the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent LEP area and the Borough Council has representation on the boards of both the GBSLEP and the SSLEP.

We have responded to the call for projects by submitting Two different projects to each LEP, whilst we know from the information the project submitted to the GBSLEP is unlikely to receive any funding we are still waiting to hear any news on the outcome of the Staffordshire and Stoke LEP on the project we have submitted. In direct response to Councillor Peoples question I have pushed and promoted the locality subgroup panel of the Staffordshire and Stoke LEP and also at full board meetings at the Staffordshire and Stoke LEP and I will continue to push for our share of the £22 million awarded, I believe it's at the stage now where submissions have been made by the LEPS and are awaiting Government sign off. I do not have the details of those Madam Mayor.”

Councillor Dr S People asked the following supplementary question -

“Thank you Madam Mayor can I ask the Portfolio Holder informs all members of the Council as soon as there is a decision reached rather than waiting for the next Council meeting, assuming it comes before then, given that we've got the normal sort of gap in meetings over August. So if I can ask him to assure us that we will be informed as soon as possible thank you Madam Mayor.”

Councillor J Oates gave the following reply -

“Thank you Madam Mayor I have no problem in doing that, I'm quite disappointed I am not in a position to give you a straight answer in terms of the outcome of that this evening as soon as I get the decision I will forward it to all members thank you Madam Mayor.”

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL NO.4

Under Procedure Rule No 11, Councillor P Standen will ask the Portfolio Holder for Regulatory and Community Safety, Councillor S Doyle, the following question:-

“Does the Cabinet member believe the planning policies set out in the local plan adopted by the council on 23rd February 2016 are still fit for purpose?”

Councillor S Doyle gave the following reply:-

“Thank you Madam Mayor / Councillor Standen, to answer Councillor Standen’s Question, yes the plan requires updating.

In context, the plan is frequently reviewed and updated, last report regarding the review was 19th March 2020 and previous to that was 5th July 2018.

Also a review has been called for by the Local Plan Working Group which I believe myself and Councillor Standen are part of? And is documented in the minutes from the Local Plan Working Group meeting on the 20th February 2019 in which the Leaders of both the Opposition and Ruling Group were present.

The Cabinet report for March 2020 also states the following:

“Since the current plan was adopted, a number of national policy changes have been implemented, particularly in relation to biodiversity and climate change.

Having reviewed the plan, it is clear that to varying degrees some of the policies contained therein are out of date.”

***(Cabinet Report March 2020)**

Part of the Recommendations from that Cabinet meeting was that work commence on a New Local Plan.

Appendix 1 of the Cabinet report from March contains details on the changes to the relevant policies and procedures within the Local Plan.

There were three options in the report considered by Cabinet that point to the current plan as approaching the end of its life cycle and will be replaced in due course, for reference Cabinet chose option 3.

I’m happy to forward a copy of the Cabinet report to Cabinet to Councillor Standen after the meeting? Although the Cabinet report is freely available to anyone via the Tamworth Borough Council Forward Plan Portal.

I hope this answers your question in enough detail.”

Councillor P Standen asked the following supplementary question -

“Thank you Councillor Doyle for your response I’m glad you modified it to a straightforward yes I think I’m actually going to agree with him that there are many policies that need amending I must admit as a member of the Planning committee at the last meeting I felt like somebody who had been sent out to bat for England and had been given a toothpick instead of a cricket bat due to the lack of the policies that were suitable for some of applications. Would the Cabinet member agree with me that the best members of this Council to actually advise on what needs changing or updating on the Local Plan are the members of the Planning committee itself who have had issues actually dealing with these policies that we currently have at the moment thank you Madam Mayor.”

Councillor S Doyle gave the following reply:-

“Thank you Madam Mayor and Councillor Standen there is always an opportunity for not just members of the Planning Committee but other members of the Council to feed in their input to any of the policies and procedures that we produce. Officers have been challenged with going away and looking at current legislation and seeing how that reflects on the Local Plan and identifying what needs updating. If there is instances were in planning something is identified or needs review or is questionable, this is why you have the committee to forward it on and say “look this needs to be addressed can somebody look at it” Thank you Madam Mayor.”

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL NO.5

Under Procedure Rule No 11, Councillor P Standen will ask the Chair of Planning, Councillor P Thurgood, the following question:-

“Does the Chair of the Planning committee believe that all Councillors when speaking on an application placed before the Planning committee for consideration either as committee members or speaking as a ward Councillor should have a clear understanding of the planning policies upon which the committee is required to make its decision?”

Councillor P Standen was provided with the following written answer from Councillor P Thurgood

“Thank you Madam Mayor and I thank Councillor Standen for his question.

Yes I totally agree with Councillor Standen that all Councillors when speaking on an application placed before the Planning committee for consideration either as committee members or speaking as a ward Councillor should have a clear understanding of the planning policies upon which the committee is required to make its decision along with an appreciation of the Planning process from start to finish and of course having read thoroughly before the meeting the Planning report submitted by the Planning officer. Thank you, Madam Mayor.”

12 THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES (EXECUTIVE ARRANGEMENTS) (MEETINGS AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION) REGULATIONS 2012

The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) Regulations 2012 specify and require *inter alia* under Regulation 19 that the executive leader must submit a report on a regular basis to Council containing details of particulars of each urgent executive decision and a summary of the matters in respect of which the decision was made. The report was presented to Council by the Deputy Leader.

RESOLVED That Council;

Endorsed the Annual Executive Arrangements Report

(Moved by Councillor R Pritchard and seconded by Councillor Dr S Peuple)

13 RE-PROFILING OF HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT CAPITAL BUDGETS TO ALLOW FOR THE ACQUISITION OF HOUSING PROPERTY.

The report of the Portfolio Holder for Assets and Finance sets out proposals and seeks approval to re-profile the Housing Revenue Account Capital Budgets, provisionally approved by Council on 25th February 2020, by bringing monies forward from with the current five-year programme to allow for the funding of property acquisitions and to take advantage of opportunities relating to the purchase of new-build property or other property that may be of interest to the Council under the current housing acquisitions policy.

In particular there is an opportunity to work with a Community Interest Company (Cornerstone) to acquire some newly refurbished and new build properties in the former Wilnecote Youth Club property.

The report further seeks to vire monies from the Housing Revenue Account Capital programme to fund the updating of the Council's Asset Management Strategy

RESOLVED

That Council approved;

- 1 The re-profiling of a total of £6,000,000 from years 2,3,4 & 5 of the five-year Housing Revenue Account capital budget into 2020/21 to allow for the acquisition of housing property [£1,500,000 from each year from CR7005 Regeneration & Affordable Housing].
- 2 The Freehold acquisition of the newly refurbished and new-build units from Cornerstone at the former Wilnecote Youth Club site for the sum of £5,000,000 [inclusive of 10% contingency] subject to the appropriate planning consents. The remaining £1,000,000 will be used for general acquisitions and growth of the housing property portfolio. Subject to planning consent being granted it is anticipated that works will commence in 2020/21 and be completed in 2021/22.
- 3 Authority be delegated to the Assistant Director of Assets in consultation with the Assistant Directors of Finance, Neighbourhoods, & Partnerships and Portfolio for Assets and Finance to acquire other housing properties in accordance with the current housing acquisitions policy
- 4 The virement of £54,000 from CR2001 Structural Works & £54,000 from CR2007 Neighbourhood Regeneration to fund the Housing Revenue Account element of the Asset Management Strategy Review with a reduction in the General Fund budget CH2858 Asset Management Database of £102,000.

(Moved by Councillor R Pritchard and seconded by Councillor Dr S Peale)

14 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

In accordance with the provisions of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meeting and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012, and Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Press and Public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act and the public interest in withholding the information outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information to the public.

(Moved by Councillor R Bilcliff and seconded by Councillor R Pritchard)

15 4.13 MOTION WITHOUT NOTICE

RESOLVED That;

The meeting will continue beyond 8.30pm as per rule 4.9.1 of the Constitution.

(Moved by Councillor P Standen and seconded by Councillor R Pritchard)

16 FUTURE HIGH STREETS FUND - FINAL FULL BUSINESS CASE

Councillor S Peale declared that she had a disclosable pecuniary interest in this agenda item as Director of the building in question and left the meeting. Councillor Dr S Peale declared that he also had a disclosable pecuniary interest as Councillor S Peale's partner and he left the meeting.

Councillor P Standen and Councillor J Faulkner declared that they had non disclosable pecuniary interest in the meeting but did not feel that this interest would impede their vote.

The Portfolio Holder for Heritage and Growth provided an update to Council for approval, on the Final Full Business Case for the Future High Streets Fund, outlining the projects that will be submitted and the requirements of implementing these projects, should a successful award be made.

RESOLVED That,

Council endorsed approved the recommendations contained within the report

(Moved by Councillor J Oates and seconded by Councillor B Price)

There was also a vote of thanks to Anna Miller and team for all of their hard work in producing this final business case.

(Moved by Councillor C Cooke and seconded by Councillor B Price)

The Mayor

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