

**REPORT TO THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER
FOR HERITAGE & GROWTH**

**TAMWORTH CASTLE,
MUSEUM COLLECTION &
ARCHIVE REVIEW 2020:
CONSULTATION RESPONSES**

INTRODUCTION

Elected Member, Council Management Team, Employees of Tamworth Castle and the Friends of Tamworth Castle were engaged via email and invited to help shape the Castle's 'Purpose' by being asked;



- 1. Is the Castle important to Tamworth Borough Council? If so why?**
- 2. What is your view on the current Castle offer (visitor / museum / collection)?**
- 3. Do you think the Castle or its current offer should change? If so what would you like to see at the Castle that is different and why?**
- 4. What opportunities exist across the authority to support the ongoing activities at the Castle and how?**

8 Elected Members, 6 Council Management Team, 11 Employees of Tamworth Castle, 2 Friends of Tamworth Castle responded and the verbatim comments with names removed are grouped and set out below.

Councillor Verbatim:

Is the Castle important to Tamworth Borough Council?

- It is deemed of political and historical value by the Council and more so by a number of its Members.
- I think many times the castle is looked upon as a drain on resources and often as a noose around TBC's neck.
- Do we have a choice? English Heritage doesn't want it. Can we just let it fall down, no? We lose hundreds of thousands a year in subsidy. Yet as councillors we barely bat an eye lid. So yes it's important.
- In answer to your email, I believe the Castle is important to Tamworth.
- Yes it's the backdrop of the town.
- The Castle represents a major drain on the Council's resources and has not been developed as effectively as it could have been. Therefore there is a big catch up needed.
- Definitely, it should be one of, if not our biggest, tourist attractions. We should ensure that we constantly review the offer and market it accordingly.
- Yes, but more importantly should be to the UK but I'm not sure how that importance is measured, evidenced or even demonstrated. The Castle is the most important historical building in Tamworth and the significance of that regards the Capital of Mercia etc. is very clear.

“Yes it's the backdrop of the town.”

If so why?

- To be honest I think it's something they like to feel proud of and argue over, I'm not so attached.
- I think it's critical that we treat the Castle resource as a business and really sweat its assets. It has much to offer as a venue. It has its accessibility issues but nothing that can't be overcome.
- Understood as political suicide to stop looking after it. Therefore it's important to our residents.
- As it adds to the historic story of the town and is part of the reasons for inbound tourism.
- It attracts people out of town into Tamworth; it's also important to local residents.

- The Scrutiny Committee received a report about three years ago, which was just about the worst one we had ever seen. It was clear that the then Cabinet Member responsible had not mastered their brief. There were 13 options presented to the committee and the spreadsheet included numerous contradictions which members from all sides picked up on. It was agreed that the report would be looked at again. We then had the ridiculous situation of the committee chair being asked to chase up the report. We eventually received a report that was huge in length and was no better constructed albeit with fewer options. Most damningly it stated that the Council had no commitment to the Castle or any strategy. Again, the report went back. The committee then did a site visit which highlighted that even basic things like the IT link to the tills had not been put in place securely.
- We need to maximise its revenue, to go some way towards covering costs.
- Essentially it's our prime historical asset and is pivotal to any leisure and tourism offer.

“Essentially it's our prime historical asset and is pivotal to any leisure and tourism offer.”

What is your view on the current Castle offer (visitor / museum / collection)?

- My family haven't visited it in ages, last time I was there was to look at the repairs being done and before that I took my son, about 7 or more years ago. The "Castle" is the remnants from about four different time periods, if you've been once or twice there isn't much point in going back.
- I believe it has lost all identity. It is a freestanding Norman castle with a Saxon museum inside. Before that a freestanding Norman castle with a Viking museum. Etc.....
- I do believe it needs to be part of a wider set of attractions, or strategy for wider tourism, rather than simply a standalone feature.
- It's dated, it lacks branding, and the staff doesn't appear to be brand ambassadors.
- My view is that the Council's philosophy was highly ideological in that they wanted to outsource services and were very disappointed when the attempt to set up a trust, c.2011, did not work. There was then a policy vacuum and the Castle suffered from the strong silo culture. The castle was run by a specialist, and no-one to whom they reported had any drive to do anything other than pare the budget back. In my view, the subsequent review process exposed this all too clearly. The Castle could be developed as part of an overall Heritage strategy but as the failure of the recent Heritage bid shows, this is not an easy process. I have mentioned the silo issue.
- I have to be honest; I haven't been in since I was mayor, so I don't feel that I can comment on the current offer.
- I think this question is part of a much bigger question as opportunities to develop these aspects need to be components of a much bigger meaningful strategy as above.
- Locally I'm not sure the residents embrace it as there are no real opportunities to do so; to a national and international leisure tourist the offer is not strong enough to entice.
- The educational offer presents a monetisation opportunity of creating more revenue.

Do you think the Castle or its current offer should change?

- Definitely, it tends to be used as a back drop to events rather than centre piece for things like St Georges Day.
- I could write more, but in summary, my opinion is that we need change to keep the Castle offer current.
- Let's take it back to a Norman castle. But the Council has nowhere else for the exhibition bits. It's complicated. Let's stop using historically inaccurate statements just because it sells. For example Tamworth was not the ancient capital of Mercia. Saxon society didn't function with capitals. Yet again this goes against the financial needs of the Council and tourism economy.
- Yes, it costs the council a substantial amount each year; it needs to generate more income.
- It became clear that in order to run the Castle at less overall cost, there needed to be more events. However, it was difficult for this to happen as it seemed that a wedding meant the Castle staff being on site. Equally, no cleaning was provided so the Castle staff was left to make sure all the toilets were ready for a school group. No one minds dealing with the odd emergency but given the way Marmion House is operated it would have been easy for the Castle staff to feel neglected. My own view is that the manager was employed to run the castle as a Curator and that therefore the marketing and other inputs need to come from other quarters. She seems to me to be very good at her job as it was envisaged at the time of her appointment.
- More use of technology to compliment the displays, e.g. AR. Make it a more interactive experience.
- Yes absolutely, roots and branches.

If so what would you like to see at the Castle that is different and why?

- I've heard mention of creating "Escape Rooms" to bring the public in? Not sure if period dining would work as well? Use of virtual technology, either augmented or immersive, it's relatively cost effective now. Generally open to ideas.
- We should also look at the Castle and its integration with the buildings around it, like the gatehouse and understand how these can work together.
- The castle lacks any genuine national history. We need to review what message / story it does have.
- A tourism pass to visit the castle, the snow dome and XX. Potentially discounted residents entrance (if that doesn't still exist) and events that are incorporated into the larger town events such as St Georges Day.
- Different ticket options that link Tamworth venues, more technology (solutions not barriers), closer working with events team to offer more events that include the castle and grounds (like National Trust do). Need to increase spend per visitor, can we promote offers to include tea and cake for example.
- More events, functions, private hire, weddings, the Castle needs life breathed into it and it needs to stand proud and to be used and loved by people locally and much further afield.



What opportunities exist across the authority to support the ongoing activities at the Castle and how?

- Well the entire Council should be ready to support, although I'm under the impression anything that involves change encounters resistance.
- From a history point of view, I think Tamworth's place as Capital of Mercia is often played down. My view is that we need to take some artistic license and play to our strengths, even if it's not fully technically accurate – who cares!
- The castle needs its own kitchen and used for events. Lose the shop and cafe to the lodge and put a kitchen in. Demolish two shops at the bottom and create a better entrance court yard.
- The new events manager for the Assembly Rooms seems to have begun the process of using the castle to run events on the understanding that events require alternative appropriate staff. I was very frustrated at the apparent reluctance of the Castle to engage with commercial operators but the more I saw how one-way the expectations were, the more I felt that change had to come across the Council. Even now, I am not satisfied that this is fully the case. We recently signed off on a unified cleaning service for the Council but when I enquired, without mentioning the new policy, how things were going, I was told there was no change. The reasons were not clear other than the delay in opening the Assembly Rooms which should not be relevant. It was also clear in that the first version of the High streets fund bid did not include the area next to the Castle but did include a proposal to spend £2M on moving the Nationwide. Detailed ideas put forward at Scrutiny regarding the semi-derelict properties owned by the Council had been ignored but a scheme favoured by officers had been included. The evidence of contempt for members was alleviated by a subsequent revision to the plan. It is obviously very frustrating for everyone that just as some key initiatives were put in place C-19 has got in the way.
- Need to hear more about what we can do rather than what we can't do. Need to be able to articulate what the castle is here to do vs what it isn't here to do. How do we spark more enthusiasm in residents to visit the castle, even if it's to shop or enjoy the café?
- Integrate the castle with our outdoor events more than currently, e.g. We Love Tamworth; maybe bring the castle out to the public on those days, rather than relying on them to pay to go in. Give people a 'taster' of what is on offer in there to encourage paying visits.

Friends of Tamworth Castle Verbatim:

- I am aware the Castle Museum keeps a catalogue of the items it holds. I am also aware that this catalogue is not available to general viewing or reviewing. As with all museums ninety percent of the items held are not on display. Thus, with no access to the catalogue, only a handful of people can possibly know what is there. Every science and history programme, magazine, podcast, etc., feature stories of items held in museums - sometimes for decades - which have suddenly been identified as an item of great importance. As new eyes, new ideas, new methods and new researchers become available, these all offer a fresh perspective on items held below stairs, artefact which would do nothing more than gather dust. To raise the profile of the castle and its museum is simple: publish the catalogue online. It already exists, it will take no work to do so as it is maintained anyway, and it will bring interest from researchers in many areas. Many universities and colleges with a history (and other) department have untold numbers of students wanting to study all manner of items. These universities and colleges are armed with substantial budgets and should something unusual be uncovered it would bring an astonishing number of free publicity to Tamworth. To put the catalogue online is nothing unusual; in fact not having the catalogue available is very unusual indeed. It will certainly raise the profile and, most importantly, will cost absolutely nothing. Good luck in your role. You couldn't have chosen a more difficult time and you have my sympathies in that respect.

I see the role of the friends as helping bridge the gap between TBC and Tamworth Castle's staff. For many Tamworthians, Marmion House will be seen as aloof, divorced from the real world and unapproachable. Of course, I know this is not the case but still see the friends as being a link between the two, giving the people of Tamworth a voice to be heard. The friends also enable the people of Tamworth to play a role and having a say in what happens to 'their' castle. The friends also help with some events to the castle - I think particularly of St George's Day, Halloween and Christmas activities - bringing assistance and helping promote these days. Furthermore, we also raise a significant amount of money each year. All that happens currently does work well, indeed has done so for many years. However, I have certainly seen a decrease in us (FoTC and TBC) working together to promote the castle. This has certainly resulted in less money being raised annually by FoTC, less fund-raising events, poor support from Tamworthians, less general interest from the town. This is down, in part, to the aging membership of FoTC. Indeed, many renew their subscriptions and yet never take advantage of their free entry to the castle. Again age and associated disability does play a part. Our monthly speakers are much better attended during the winter months at the Globe than the summer evenings at the castle. While lunchtime against the evening timing may be a factor, one thing which is continually voiced is their inability to get up and down the motte (speakers sometimes struggle, too). Perhaps TBC could help promote our fundraising events - quiz nights, table top sales, raffles, speakers - promoting membership would also help, and in particular attracting younger members. I know the age problem is common to many groups these days. I've often said we are introduced to history at school, are taken to heritage sites at school and by our families, then forget about history and don't show an interest in history until we become part of it! To attract a younger element we need to find the hook which draws their attention. I refer again to my earlier email; the catalogue of items held is possibly again the key. As a 'carrot' perhaps a video, showing a few items on the list which are not on show may be used as an attraction? I will say again that catalogue really is a license to print money as it will attract interest from researchers and historians with new ideas and viewpoints on items held.

“The catalogue of items held is possibly again the key”

My only other comment would be on accessibility. Getting up there is not easy and impossible for the infirm. We need to make it accessible, be it physically or virtually. Tamworth promotes itself as being fully inclusive in making it open to all. And yet the vanguard of heritage in Tamworth - the first thing which comes to mind when talking about history in Tamworth - is off limits to those who are unable to get up and down the motte. Tamworth Castle should sell itself; it is a marvel which has overlooked the town for centuries. It contains a wealth of items depicting the town's past. If a solution to accessibility, to allow those unable to see the castle first hand a glimpse of what can be found there without having to climb the hill, that would enable the friends to raise more interest, more memberships, and more money for the future of the castle.

- **The castle** - The castle is a major heritage asset of the town but it is very hard to run at a cost that is affordable, especially since austerity has led to a major cut in central government funding to local authorities. To a certain extent, the totemic status of the Castle has shielded it but it is increasingly difficult to fund especially in the modern tourist market. The “Silver Market” would be engaged by the castle but problematic access and the lack of good café facilities makes it much less attractive to visitors. Some towns might look to market the castle on market day but Tamworth’s market is seen as catering for a lower socio-economic profile and, anyway, getting people into town / castle on other days is part of the aim if visitor numbers are to increase.

“I believe the Friends will not be able to raise the sort of sums needed to contribute significantly.”

The collection - There is a large store of physical items stored off-site. Many were donated in the days when the Castle accepted all manner of local items that were old / unwanted and are frankly now redundant to the Castle as a museum. The Archive - I have sat in the archive for a meeting with the curator. It is not accessible for practical purposes as either the person has to be supervised or staff needs to look up the information. The solution is for it to be digitised and put on line but that would require money which we have not got. Richard Sulima did a wonderful job in publishing interesting pictures from the archives in his time but the pressure now is on maintaining the appropriate standards for preservation so there is little time to go forward – it is rare to have an archivist on the staff so we are fortunate.

The Friends - As is the case with numerous societies across the town, the age profile of the membership and, even more so, the committee is rising. I joined the committee two years ago aged 58 and was welcomed as a youngster! The focus of the Friends has been to raise money to buy relevant artefacts and to donate sums of money as part of the match funding etc. to support major bids. In the past, volunteers from the Friends have cleaned the castle but this stopped when they were physically unable to continue. My own view is that the Friends are now struggling to hold events that raise a significant amount of money. The monthly quizzes continue and so do the talks and they continue to generate income. Nearly a quarter of the past year’s income came from back-dated Gift Aid, and half comes from membership; the Treasurer had taken over two years previously and caught everything up. The Pumpkin event was very busy but some Friends were noticing that some parents were reluctant to help the children as they expected the “guaranteed outcome” and as the person handing out pumpkins, I saw how picky some parents were over the choice of pumpkin. In a world of professional entertainment, the amateur efforts are not appreciated as perhaps they once were. Therefore, I believe the Friends will not be able to raise the sort of sums needed to contribute significantly to future renovation projects. Therefore, I think that there is an ideal opportunity for the Friends to become more like the people you meet if you visit an NT property. Friendly, and able to answer your questions without making you feel you will be pinned to the wall for hours being regaled with long forgotten stories, if you dare to ask if the Jacobean period followed the Tudors. This would provide the Friends with a role that befits people who have a genuine pride in their local castle and not require lots of extra big events. The Friends could also help by giving talks to groups outside Tamworth which might encourage visits.

Employees of Tamworth Castle Verbatim:

- I am one of the education and events team. I would say that events need to be properly staffed and properly advertised. Over the summer holidays in particular we only have 3 members of costumed staff on for the events which can feel very sparse, especially when the advertising has used photos of re-enactment groups that have been at the castle in the past. I have brought this up several times as expectations do not meet reality and we are the ones that get moaned at by the public. Also advertising continues to use photos that are over 10 years old when there has been a council appointed photographer round at every event for over a year, plus other photos taken by staff. The little video clips that were used for a time on Facebook really did increase footfall and should be reinstated as a cheap but effective advertising campaign. With regards to the collection I think more of it should be accessible to the public, maybe on a rotating temporary display?

Shop - Building on what you started with remerchandising of the shop, I suggest we have a stall at one of the Outdoor Events in the Castle Grounds to clear the existing non-moving stock, and really think about what we should offer and who we are appealing to. We should look at how English Heritage and the National Trust operate their shops which are much more successful than Castle and treat it as a Commercial opportunity not just an add on! Every product should earn its shelf space, using the retail mantra of £'s per sqft, and we should be able to respond rapidly increase stock of successful product lines. We have visitors from all over the world and they come to the Castle because they are interested in history, but then leave the shop having spent nothing or very little so this is an area where we could really up our game. We should be converting many more opportunities into sales but the current offer just does not appeal! No analysis of stock takes place to the best of my knowledge, we should have someone in the Castle who when asked, could tell you what we sell in quantity, because this does not happen too much shelf space is devoted to dead stock which would not happen in a normal retail environment. That is not a criticism of current management but looking at the shop from a purely commercial angle, as opposes to the Castle as a whole. We also need to look at cataloguing and stockroom management to utilise the very little space we have and be able to manage stock effectively. Children's Pocket Money Toys - We should continue to hold a range but where possible try and have a link to history; we should work on what we know appeals and sells really well. Our range of Swords, Helmets and Shields should be the starting point. There are companies which offer a good range of historical figures, knights, horses etc. Pens pencils rubbers and a larger range of books historical covering the School curriculum the Pitkin books are excellent.

“We should be linking our stock to history and locality.”

Historical Links - We should be linking our stock to history and locality so some of my suggestions would be as follows: - If we sell toy or replica cars we should look at brands made either in Tamworth like the Reliant Robin, or made in the region with its historical links to Land Rover, Jaguar, British Leyland, the Mini, Lancaster, Massy Ferguson Tractors and JCB to name but a few. Heritage pieces such as The William Morris collection of Mugs, Trays, Scarf's etc., we need to think of what people can pack into a case to take home as presents. Again look at the range of books we offer there are many interesting and lightweight history books (although nice coffee table books sell well), but also on local figures and business. We should also look at hobbies and interests Gardeners always spend money and the Castle Stands in stunning Grounds so gardening books would be also worth looking at.

Local Links/ Made in Tamworth / Heart of England - Again locally we have some great local craft producers, the Castle already has a drinks license so we could offer local produce from Tamworth Craft Brewery, Local Wines (Buzzard Valley) and Gins. We should also sell local jams, honey and chutneys which are always popular sales at visitor attractions. We lose so many potential sales with the current stock, most visitors come in and as many leave empty handed, as purchase something.

Cafe Offer - This is a difficult one with no kitchen, and I know in the past repacked sandwiches were tried without success. The problem is that we don't capture the visitors with our stock offer to begin with but often then we might get a food sale, our only offer a small range of cakes (often running out in busy periods) As far as I am aware we do not analyse last year's sales on drinks and food so therefore we cannot predict what we are likely to sell and ensure we have the right level of cakes etc. By analysing sales on the previous events we could have a better understanding of what we are likely to need and not miss those opportunities to increase turnover. There is also now the resource of a kitchen at the Assembly Rooms so it might be possible to use that to support the Castle with a small range sandwiches prepared and sent over from there on Event Days.

Utilising the Shop - Currently in the winter we only open Monday – Friday for Schools, who use the shop infrequently. I would suggest we never open the shop to the schools instead produce a list of products which can be offered to schools to pre-order, (some schools already do this) the list can go from 50p - £3.00 or more and are packed ready to take and included on the invoice. This would free up the shop to be offered up for use for other things. We could use it commercially for meetings, training sessions, talks, or community based offers like book clubs, writing groups, art class or craft demonstrations making Willow Baskets, Hanging Baskets, Christmas Wreaths, Cushions, Upholstery for beginners, Furniture Up-cycling. Most of the latter could be delivered in house with the existing talented team.

Weddings - I understand from other staff that we do less weddings than we used to, and this can only be as a result of marketing so that is an area we need to look at. As we offer the Castle for weddings, doing a couple of Wedding Fairs a year would be worth looking at. In Tamworth and Atherstone there are at least (before lock down) three bridal gown shops,

along with other local wedding suppliers. Wedding fairs would bring in a reasonable income as in my experience when marketing my Real Flower Confetti Business each table cost between £1-200 and then the visitors still paid to get in. We could actually use many of the rooms in the castle not just the great hall and the ramp for wedding cars. We could also extend our offer to include a drinks reception along with the ceremony, and the Castle could also sell the Assembly Rooms as a reception venue. The Assembly Rooms has the facilities to produce a four course meal (I have been told) so once we have sold the Castle as a venue for the ceremony it would be an easy up sell to include the Assembly Rooms for the Reception. I did this myself last year and did forward details on as opening were delayed for a further three months, had I been able to take the couples across I am certain it would have secured a booking! For couples getting married continuity and confidence is everything so I would suggest that as the Castle is where the ceremony takes place it would be better for us to remain the main point of contact.

Guided Tours - Within the Castle we have many talented staff capable of taking groups around the Castle alongside two Guides accredited by the British Institute of Tour Guides, Caroline who is a Tamworth Town Green Badge Guide and me qualified as a Green and Heart of England Blue Badge Guide with a Windsor and Eton Endorsement. As such we spend much of our time talking about things that are no longer there, for instance going into the room currently set up as a dining room is interesting for visitors but when you describe it coming alive with stories of Kings Visits, their entourage and how the walls were lined with gilded leather, a glittering opulent room, you bring the place to life and make it far more exciting. I believe we should be offering Guided Tours on a regular basis perhaps one at 11 and one at 1.30 every weekend. We could also expand that to take in the Town, Church and Assembly Rooms; again we have the talent in-house to do this.

Talks - Another offer would be talks on our heritage and people, we have a rich Anglo Saxon History with Athelstane but also lots of other important people Thomas Guy, Sir Robert Peel, Reverend William McGregor, Colin Grazier etc. We could easily develop a range of 45 minute to one hour talks to utilise the Great Hall late afternoon or evening.

Marketing - Everyone has heard of Warwick Castle but too often people who live relatively locally within 30 minute drive will say I never knew that Tamworth had a Castle which means we are not visible enough to the general public and so how the Castle is marketed is a must. I have many times spoken to people in Coventry and my own visitors when running the Holiday Lets who had no idea there was a Castle in Tamworth, but did know that we had a Snowdome and Thomas Land. When we have Events it is usually local people who attend, and then visitors from the wider area on normal openings. However we do not get anywhere near the visitors we would expect when you compare the numbers with people attending National Trust / English Heritage Properties. Whilst I appreciate that they have a much larger marketing budget and offers across the Country we are not reaching enough people with our marketing or visitor numbers would be higher. We could invite accommodation providers to the Castle for "An introduction to the Castle" so that they talk about it to their visitors and perhaps have a code some sort of incentive that they can give to their visitors. When running the holiday lets I often had people staying from all over the Country including Scotland and Ireland who were visiting for Thomas Land, it should be easy to pick those visitors up so that they do a fun trip combined with an educational one. The Castle unlike Thomas Land is not weather dependant so again more should be made of that in the marketing. There are certain events that we do year on year like the Santa Trails which we do not advertise at all as are always fully booked locally for the weekends that we do. Whilst I appreciate that the over fives are at school Monday to Friday we could perhaps offer toddler sessions, again advertising directly to Nurseries and Playgroups to generate more income, in the same way we do school sessions so that we have the whole nursery attend.

Maintenance/ Cleaning - Whilst the Assembly Rooms have cleaners on a daily basis, we have nothing at the Castle, The Front of House staff combines cleaning with other duties, but it is impossible when we do not have any hours devoted to cleaning. The Castle would benefit from having a regular cleaner but also one who can tackle high areas such as the ceiling in the Great Hall. We have an infestation of pigeons which mean that on a daily basis FOH have to clean the Court Yard, the bin area which is disgusting (Bearing in mind that the same staff then has to continue working FOH). The Intramural Passage and dungeon have been closed as a result of pigeon poo, for more than a year. This is an unacceptable situation and not a FOH staff job, the Council really need to find the funds to ensure that the Castle has specialists who come in and ensure that these areas are cleaned and open to the public. The Tower has been closed due to problems with the slatted wood on the floor of the roof again reducing the offer we can give visitors, so over the past year the following areas have been closed: - Intramural Passage, Dungeon, Tower and what was Tamworth Story, drastically reducing the offer to visitors. We also have to close other areas of the Castle when we have heavy rain due to leaks including the parapet wall. I expect it would be a full time job, but we should have someone applying for every grant possible and also looking at ways we can fund works. I know Louise and Linda had massive amounts of work to do for HLF, so that may already be part of their brief. By leaving small jobs all the time we end up having a much larger bill when money is finally found. The Motte also needs looking at, a few years ago it was planted with wild flowers, but for whatever reason all we have now is weeds, which are cut twice a year and not a great first impression. Can the Motte not be looked after by the Councils Gardening team, we also never get any tubs or baskets until a couple of days before the judges arrive for Britain in Bloom, but other buildings across the town have a fantastic display of plants! The Castle really needs several million pounds spent on it but to continue to ignore the problems is to risk what is the jewel in Tamworth's Crown. We have an intact Castle which is nearly 1000 years old how many other towns have that, it is imperative that we look after it, finding ways of funding the repairs.

“ Whilst the Assembly Rooms have cleaners on a daily basis, we have nothing at the Castle ”

- Opening Hours**, We have summer and winter opening hours, and only open to the public at weekends from October to April, apart from school holidays when the opening hours may be different again! There are a number of issues with this, firstly there is no consistency and hours may be advertised and then changed but the marketing not updated which means the weekend FOH staff in the winter deal with some very angry customers. As a Visitor attraction which is often thought to be National Trust or English Heritage we should align our opening hours to theirs, quite often even the staff get confused as to whether we are opening at 10 or 10.30 closing at 2.30 or 3 or 4 depending on what is happening. For the most part reducing opening hours from 6 hours to 5 hours on the two days we open in winter is a saving of less than £40-£50 a day in wage costs which is a paltry sum. It also means we generate really bad PR as people will put on social media that they went to Tamworth wanted to go to the Castle and it was closed at 2.30! If we opened 10am -4pm all year around we would have consistency, in most NT properties 4pm is last entrance, not doors closed, and opening time is 10am. Most weekends we have visitors waiting from 10 am for the Castle to open, as that is the standard opening for historical properties. At the weekend lots of working people do their chores in the morning and then will have lunch and want to go out in the afternoon by which time the Castle is closing its doors in winter, with summer closing at 3.30 which is still early. Visiting the Castle is not weather dependant and we have almost as many visitors in winter as on many days in the summer and often more, as on nice summer days we have fewer visitors who prefer to spend the time outdoors.

“ As a Visitor attraction which is often thought to be National Trust or English Heritage we should align our opening hours to theirs. ”

Staff, The Castle is unique in that it has highly educated and very talented staff working for very little money, many of the staff are graduates or equivalent and are at the Castle because of their love of History, Artefacts Education and Events, and all of us acknowledge it's a privilege to work in the building . For the most part it is a wonderful place to work with a bunch of lovely caring people, and for most it is not about the money, although they do expect to be treated fairly. Most are on either casual contracts or if contracted , silly winter contracts which mean that they can lose really good people who do actually need the income, or hold onto poor staff who stay because they can drop the Castle shift at a moment's notice to suit their lifestyle as they are Casual. This also means hours are spent changing Rotas and ringing around for cover; time which would be better spent doing other things, having the core workforce on a Casual basis creates a lot of pressure. Key holders working at weekends may be the only key holder and may work for weeks on end in the winter without seeing a member of management they are Duty Managers, but this is not reflected in their pay. FOH Duty managers have a lower hourly rate than TIC Customer Service and a significantly lower rate than Duty Managers at the Assembly Rooms and the Arts and Events Team. In the main the day to day operation of the Castle is undertaken by FOH and CVS but without better definition DM's are just key holders. My understanding from CVS is that they are not management therefore most weekends are worked without a member of management on site including busy event weekends so DM's should be upgraded as part of the management team. If the Council are looking for synergies then one of the first places to begin is with the Staff and wages the Castle has long been the poor relation, also proper contracts and staff being employed as Duty Managers. This would enable a better structure for staffing and accountability. Presently we have few sporadic team meetings and in my two and half years no staff appraisals, so no feedback for what is working well or how well a member of the team is working. Appraisals are also a time for finding more out about staff and identifying training needs. Currently we have staff in both the Education team and the FOH who has needs that need addressing and should be performance managed to improve, in a commercial environment no improvement would mean that they were performance managed out of the business. On paper this may be Linda's role or CVS's role, don't know, but so much time is taken up on admin and paperwork that problems are not addressed and FOH staff know if they are going to have a good day or bad day by the staff that are on the Rota that day. FOH generally are the fall guy and actually work extremely hard, there are certain shifts which are particularly hard work. In the week when we have schools there is only one member of staff to look after the school, that staff member then does the school and everything else which would be done with three members of staff when open to the public. Even Louise acknowledges that schools on your own is a brutal shift with one FOH having to open the whole building, North Side South side shutters and gates. Prepare for the school and then ensure that each workshop runs according to time and the self-led tours are organised. They have to tidy up behind each tour group clean the toilets and prepare the Great Hall for lunch. This can be made harder if the Education team who are quite unaware of how much work and how busy that staff member is, decide to move a workshop into the hall to make their life easier. That causes difficulties in preparing the hall for lunch and clearing up, when 60 odd children have eaten it takes some time to clean up. It would benefit all Education staff to have to shadow FOH so they understand the implications of any change they make. The Education staff leaves as soon as they have finished the workshop, reset the room and changed. It would be helpful to the running of the Castle if all members of staff on duty chipped in to help ensure that the Castle is fully prepared for the next day, but toilet cleaning and all other nasty jobs seem to fall solely on FOH. That member of staff is encouraged to finish at 3pm as no one wants to pay an extra half hours wages so it may be impossible to complete all the jobs and lock up, and if that happens every day, it could be simply because schools are late by the weekend the FOH staff have been left a long list of jobs in the diary and still have to complete mandatory jobs like Fire Alarm Tests, Emergency lighting etc., along with trying to give visitors a good experience. Many mandatory jobs fall to FOH, but even when they have been there some time, they may not do that job for six months or more because of the way the Rotas fall, so they take longer than they should as it's not something done frequently. Jobs like this would be done by the staff member who should be working on Patrol but Patrol is the only chance anyone gets to do any cleaning so through the winter it becomes harder and harder to keep all areas of the Castle dust free let alone clean. Events, When an event is on a great deal of planning goes into it

ensure that staffing levels are correct for the Events team to deliver a good event and cover provided for lunch etc. Volunteers are used to support them and without the Volunteers many Events could not go on. However on the FOH side there is often exactly the same amount of staff, one in Reception one in Shop and one to Patrol, as on a normal day. [Currently an extra staff member is in, to manage using the Haunted Staircase, who cannot be utilized anywhere else] The Castle will average around 100 visitors a day, but for Events like the Dragon Hunt we can have 200 through the doors in the first hour. The person on patrol will go and help on reception but if reception, [which is a huge pinch point] is busy then the shop is too. The shop then has no one to fetch stock, clear plates into the dishwasher get change etc. and if both of those areas are busy there is no one going around the Castle tidying up because they cannot be in three places at once. The Patrol person will also be expected to support the Events Staff so four places at once. CVS may be in with Office work to do on their CVS hours but will have to come and help FOH; this is not efficient use of staff. We have a diary which records Visitor Numbers and Weather on previous Events, so additional staff should be brought in to support FOH team. At the end of an Event if it has gone well the Events team will get praised and recognition but nothing for the FOH who are very often left exhausted and clearing up after everyone else has gone. There is a bit of a them and us culture to the extent that some staff resent it if someone for the Eds team goes across to the FOH team, and developing a one team approach is vital as all the staff are equally important and one cannot function without the other. Tensor, In Marmion House staff arrive and clock on, at the Assembly Rooms when TIC had to clock on via the computer before the Tensor machine was installed it was acknowledged they were losing out on time and were allowed to have tensor installed on their phones. In the Castle FOH key holders arriving will have to unlock and then relock two gates, unlock three doors deal with an alarm and turn lights on which takes 7-10 minutes before they can clock on and on clocking off, do the same in reverse. This means that on any shift a key holder will be working 15-20 minutes unpaid which is unfair. Nowhere else in the Council that would be tolerated and staff should be able to add on the additional time. There is a similar thing regarding First Aiders within the Council with staff at Marmion House getting an allowance as First Aiders but not at the Castle. This has been brought up I believe, and resisted by the Council which for the very small sums involved causes resentment and does nothing for a one Council approach. Newly Formed Arts and Events Team, There has been an Education and Events team at the Castle for many years but no effort has been made to utilise the talented Castle Staff, they would have to apply as an external candidate for the Outdoor Events, Assembly Rooms and Customer Service Roles, where other departments can cross over as a secondment. The Castle staff have really good experience in being able to deliver a programme of Events that appeal to a wide range of people in in line with either the National Curriculum or National Anniversaries. The Castle Staff not only deliver the Education Workshops and Events, but take them from a concept, develop the ideas, write the scripts, research the historical elements, for accuracy, and make costumes and props often on their own time.

The Castle Review has been going on for as long as I have been there which has meant that in many ways opportunities and ideas have not been implemented as it's been a wait and see what happens with the review. All Council staff should have the same opportunities be able to cross from one location to another as Council Employees, the FOH team could easily cross over to TIC and Customer Service Roles particularly once Spectrix and Garda are fully implemented, currently that could not happen as the salary scales are unequal. Volunteers, the Castle has some great volunteers who give their time on the Education and Events side but we have none who work in the rooms. Once again the NT the EH have volunteers in rooms who become experts maybe in that room only. Without Guided Tours which I would really push for, a visit to the Castle is very dry, as no one is in the rooms and Visitors can be around the Castle in twenty minutes having learnt very little about its history or the history of any of the artefacts. Whilst many of the stories you would want to save for an Event or Tour someone having knowledge about the items in rooms to talk to Visitors would enhance the experience, for instance even most of the staff do not realise that in the painting in the Day Parlour on loan from the Tate "The two women are both wives one the new and living and one the dead wife".

“ The FOH team could easily cross over to TIC and Customer Service Roles. ”

Recruiting new volunteers who do not want to be in Costume and providing training might help enhance the visitor experience; this would translate into higher visitor numbers with reviews on social media and trip advisor. Training and Development, Generally training is for new upcoming Events, and online Astute Training sent out from HR, although last year some training was provided by two external companies, which staff enjoyed and was a good team building exercise, but is of limited effect if further training is not provided for the whole team. Most of the staff in the Castle does not have access to a computer whilst working, and those who do are covering Customer Service roles, in either the shop or reception which makes it very difficult to complete. This means staff rush through session's online, skim reading as they try and complete before the next customer comes in. All staff should be given time to complete mandatory training sessions , in the Assembly Rooms Casuals were told to complete at home and claim for two hours per training session they completed, to my knowledge this has never been offered at the Castle. There are several folders of procedures in the Staff room for staff to look at, so regular training sessions on these would not go amiss .In terms of career development there is very little on offer and as there are no synergies with other services offered by the Council, staff have no opportunities for career development. Castle, Museum, Visitor Attraction, Profitable Business, The Castle is performing many roles and therefore needs a range of skill sets within the Management and Team structure. If you asked some staff currently what someone else's job role covers they would not know, only that it wasn't theirs. For instance Sarah Williams what is her job role? What is CVS - what does that actually mean? Head of Castle and Museum Collections? Is that General Manager? Education and Events Officer does that mean getting funding from HLF. Even the job titles do not make any

sense, when you look at the responsibilities given. If you look at what the Castle needs, and how it compares with a commercial business you would have clear roles like General Manager, Finance Manager, Facilities Manager, Operations Manager, Museum Curator, Education and Events Manager, Sales and Marketing Manager, Business Development Manager, Shop/Beverage Manager, Customer Service Manager Duty Manager(s), FOH Staff and Education and Events staff. Obviously the Castle does not generate the income to employ that many people, and some jobs are done at Marmion House but staff should still know who is responsible for what and who to contact. There needs to be more visibility from the staff working at Marmion House to what contribution they make, this could happen with team meetings or training sessions. Within the structure the roles that need to be covered clearly defined and funded in line with similar roles within the Council. Currently we have a situation where admin support may try to assume responsibility in the absence of management on the basis they have been in the office and privy to conversations, but do not have the training or management skills to be effective Head of Castle and Museum Collections should really be General Manager covering Finance, Facilities and Collections with admin support. Operations/ Duty Manager(s) reporting to the GM but responsible for the day to day running of the building as a visitor attraction, supported by Customer Service/FOH staff. A DM or Ops Manager should be on site every day that the Castle is open in any capacity. The Education and Events Manager reporting to the GM with admin support and education and events facilitators. All staff should report to the DM or Ops manager when the GM or EM not in the building.

- I am presently on a zero hour contract working as a facilitator at Tamworth Castle. One of the castles main incomes is from the schools who attend the variety of workshops that we run for them. These are themed sessions that cover topics throughout the castle history. i.e. How the castle was run during Tudor times, or how schooling would have been during the Stuart times, following the Great Fire of London and the Plague the previous year. We also cover things like archaeology, story-telling and historical handling sessions. Other forms of income are generated from Weddings, Guided Tours and Events, these events being held during school holidays and to celebrate certain events during the calendar year. The staff that work at the castle are the beating heart within its walls, each giving whatever they can and often going over and above what should be expected and they do it for the love they hold for the place and certainly not for the financial reward they receive, however, they have always felt as though they are the 'poor relations' with the council and are looked upon as a very last resort. We have brought these feeling to various directors on numerous occasions who all promise to make things change, but they never do. The Castle is an iconic structure within the town and should be treated as such. More local advertising and making the place exciting to visit for adults and not just children. It needs a regular team of cleaners to look after the place, over the past 12 months whilst taking parties on guided tours I have had customers comment to me that the building is looking dirty, grubby and not loved and to be honest, when I look at the place 'through a visitors eyes' I can see exactly what the mean. In my opinion the castle needs the love and attention to make it the jewel in the Tamworth's crown that it surely can be and not just a forgotten blot on the landscape. That together with correct targeted marketing can make the castle a wonderful and memorable place for visitors and staff alike and a 'gold mine' for the council. However, I do understand that these measures come at a cost, but as you know there is such thing as standing still in business you are either investing to move forward or you are failing. My thoughts on staffing, as you are aware there are three members of management within the castle, all of which I hold in high regard and look at them not only as managers but also as a friends, so I feel that I have to careful what I say and that you will be discrete in what you in what you pass on. One of things I've noticed on more than one occasion when there are 3 managers they don't always pull in the same direction, which can cause a dip in motivation for the team. I fully understand that these differences can at times be through a clash of personalities, difference of opinion, ideas and even the stresses of the job.



My choice of management structure for the castle would be to have one manager who is, dynamic, forward thinking, and a slight risk taker and fully focused on doing whatever is needed to drive the castle forward with in the community and further afield. I would then have three team leaders, one to cover the education and events, taking school and event bookings, one to cover the physical needs of the building i.e. replacement of sundries, repair checks and overseeing cleaning and the third would be responsible for sales and marketing.

Most non-management staff on a zero hours contract and I think that suits them (myself included). However, each month we are asked to put down our availability for the following month, then your shifts are posted for the days you are required, maybe for facilitating workshops or covering 'front of house' etc. It could be beneficial to the castle if staff were given addition duties to cover any other aspects of the castle's needs on days they have stated they're available. I realise that making changes like this may result in people being moved or let go, which isn't a nice thing, I have had to make people redundant in the past and it isn't pleasant. However, in business sometimes you have to bite the bullet.

- I think the castle is very important to Tamworth council or at least it should be. It's such a unique place in our town and if marketed properly is essential to our town's heritage and tourism. I think currently the castle is seen as an issue within the Council due to the actual cost of upkeep, but if there was investment in advertising and putting on more events it could definitely bring in more income. I think our current offer on the castle admission is fine, but I don't think the museum / collections are even known to the general public. I know originally they were planning to do tours of the collections in Amington industrial estate and I think if that was a possibility that would be great. I really enjoy the events we have put on and I think the visitors that regularly come enjoy them. But I do think they are not advertised enough. There are still people in Tamworth that don't know we have a castle, or think it's in ruins inside, despite the fact it is in the town centre. Our events are fantastic and if we had a better social media presence I think they would be a lot more popular. Especially specialising in people's skills already at the castle. Olivia being Aethelfled is great and her lockdown video was brilliant, but we could use Anna and Clara's re-enacting experience to do weekly online videos or challenges on social media to engage kids and get them involved. Facebook events are good, but with better management of twitter, Instagram, Snapchat and tiktok the castle could have a bigger reach to a younger audience. I also think that the general public don't know that we do weddings. People expect to take pictures in castle grounds and have their weddings in the castle hotel but generally our weddings are not advertised or promoted. As someone who has been married relatively recently I know that a wedding location can be really expensive, and people would definitely pay to get married in an actual 1000 year old castle. We need more of a presence at wedding fairs locally or have a dedicated FB/Instagram for weddings at the castle. I think advertising our banquets as work Christmas party venues would be much more popular than just as Tudor banquets. Making sure it is fully booked early on and then having the possibility of extra dates would be better than waiting until closer to December. People are happy to travel to Birmingham or further for Christmas parties so having a town centre venue should be more popular than it currently is. I think our Santa trails offering is fantastic and is our best event by a long way. We need to try and have an equivalent event in the summer holidays that is as popular. I think the Enchanted Castle event could be just as popular with the same younger age group if it was advertised more. I also think the issue with the castle is it is not seen as a full day out; it's a morning or afternoon trip but not an entire day. That would put people off travelling further to come to us, and we cannot be reliant on just local visitors. I think if we did some combination tickets with local events or venues that would encourage people to come for the day. So we could do a combi ticket with say the bowling alley/Castle mini golf. Or a discounted ticket at the new assembly rooms if you've been to the castle. Could even get different local businesses involved, with a discount at say Corey's or the Tamworth Tap if you show your castle admission ticket. I think when we finish the HLF build we need to make sure we do a big relaunch, capitalising on the popularity of the Staffordshire hoard and its importance locally. A proper Saxon event with hands on activities and even potentially extending further into the castle grounds, our St Georges day event is always popular because of the jousting and battles down on the grass so if we could set up a Saxon village or battle that would get people's attention as they are passing through the grounds. I think our castle is a brilliant venue that if properly marketed and funded could bring in much better revenue and is essential to our town.

“ I don't think the museum / collections are even known to the general public. ”

- I don't know if the Castle is important to TBC. As a visitor to Tamworth (usually Ventura Retail Park and when my daughter was little the park, bowling alley etc.), it is an iconic building. It is what I associate with Tamworth. It is an asset for the town and is a significant landmark. I have visited in the past to see the Saxon Hoard and felt it provided me with a local historical connection. My daughter, aged about 8 then, was fully immersed in the interactive exhibition and we had a really enjoyable day out as a family. I have also visited with friends and family from out of the area to show them my local heritage. So for me I feel the Castle has to be important to TBC as a place to connect people to their culture and history as well as for its prominence and association with the town. As a primary teacher (I taught in Stoneydelph Primary) and having lots of experience of learning outside the classroom (mainly outdoor education), I'm very impressed with its current education offer. It is fully booked, months in advance. The schools visiting are repeat visitors - many teachers say they have been coming for several years and it is their favourite school trip of the year. This to me illustrates that it fits into current curriculum requirements and complements classroom learning, whilst engaging and inspiring the children through interactive and living history sessions - it brings history alive! The organisation and flow of the visits is well thought out and considers other visitors to the castle. I have enjoyed working as part of this friendly and committed team. I don't believe this offer should change, as it appears to be working very well! The family events seem to be very popular too! I worked on the Santa Trails and I felt it created the magic of a Christmas past putting the child's experience at the heart of the event. I have helped set up for other events but haven't worked any so can't comment more than that. The nature of my role being a casual on an ad hoc basis, I wouldn't expect to be given all strategic development proposals for TBC. So therefore I am unaware of any opportunities across the authority that can support the activities at the Castle as I don't receive direct communication from the authority and also my role isn't strategic or planning (any relevant memos are communicated to me via my line manager and associated documentation is located in the staff room).

- Is the Castle important to Tamworth Borough Council? If so why?** Unique Heritage/ visitor attraction that attracts/increases footfall to the area – not all towns have a medieval castle. Part of heritage portfolio that adds to a wider heritage townscape Ancient Scheduled Monument listing supports unique historical evidence- visual archaeology. Opportunity to provide both formal and informal learning this feeds into a good customer experience. Beautiful backdrop to the Castle grounds which provides a free enrichment to visits/ visitors. Skilled, dedicated and capable staff who aim to provide the highest standard of customer service and care of the building. What is your view on the current Castle offer (visitor / museum / collection)? Good points: Access to a unique original medieval motte and bailey castle. Formal and informal learning opportunities from up to date panels, hands on activities for visitors and good educational programme. Provision for visitors with limited access to experience the site. Dedicated staff. Award winning education programme. Wide range of events catering to young families and the silver market. Limited opportunities: Staffing model restricts opportunities for event delivery regarding length of the event and scope. Areas of the building are tired and do not showcase the castle in its best light. On line interaction with collections. Additional events aimed at the twenty/thirty somethings market. The current offer attracts young families and the silver market. Hidden history/ historical aspects that could be utilised/ promoted (hidden parts of the castle, architectural characteristics etc.) Limited catering options for visitors and for events. Do you think the Castle or its current offer should change? If so what would you like to see at the Castle that is different and why? A staffing model that provides for better management of staff time and subsequent staff availability at key times such as events and school programme delivery. More exploration of events aimed at the twenty/thirty somethings market such as locked/escape rooms, history of gin/beer talks, paint & sip events, miss-guided tours etc.. Improved catering options for visitors and for events. An online catalogue of select items of interest from the collections with support information to encourage public engagement with the Castle service. What opportunities exist across the authority to support the ongoing activities at the Castle and how? Shared catering with the Assembly Rooms. Exploration of shared staffing for Front of House duties with the Assembly Rooms and the Tourist information Centre that could support each venue at busy times. Shared staffing may not work for delivering the education programme as a specific set of skills are needed.. Car parking offer for visitors to the Castle – this could help to offset the lack of bespoke customer parking to the visitor experience

Is the Castle important to Tamworth Borough Council? If so why? The castle is extremely important to the council and Tamworth as a community. With the new future high street grant by the government the castle offers a unique opportunity to be the jewel in the council's crown. So many school children visit on a yearly basis and come away with fond memories. Last June a girl visited with her school, I was playing Lucy the servant and must have made an impression on the girl as she came to EVERY event in the summer and sought me out calling me Lucy every time. She showed her parents around the castle pointing out what they did on the school trip. My concern is that it is not well known outside of the local area. Tamworth has such an amazing history that it should (and could) attract the same people that take coach trips to places like Ely, which 15 years ago was relatively unknown. On my travels around the country for re-enactment and holidays, many people I speak to have never heard of Tamworth- let alone that it has a castle with historical significance.

The castle could and should be the Jewel in the Crown of Tamworth Borough Council, as it is an unique site of historical importance in the UK being one of only two fully intact Shell Keep castles still standing - the other being Clifford's Tower in York. It occupies a stunning location overlooking the town centre, and surrounded by award winning gardens. It is easily accessible by foot from all of the local car parks, and the site itself is naturally disability friendly even if the interior of the castle is not currently.

Sadly the Castle does not feel important to the council at the moment; it always appears to come last in the list of priorities for spending, facilities, support and events. It rarely features on marketing materials about Tamworth that are seen outside the town, despite featuring as the main images for the town on Trip advisor and ranking above Drayton Manor in the top 10 things to do list. Despite the renovations and investment the Tamworth Assembly Rooms do not feature in the Top 25 places to visit/things to do in Tamworth.

What is your view on the current Castle offer (visitor / museum / collection) It is great but needs updating. The current mind set is that it worked 10 years ago, it's what has always worked; if it isn't broken don't fix it. Whilst I agree it works and it works well I feel it could work so much better.

There is a great collection of items, in a fabulous setting. However the displays and layout feel very dated. It reminds me of Castles and museums I visited as a child 20 years ago, and not like a modern well designed/planned site such as the Krakow Underground, In Flanders Field museum, the Anne Frank House or the Museum of London

Do you think the Castle or its current offer should change? If so, what would you like to see at the Castle that is different and why? We believe the castle would benefit from a major revamp to enable it to compete and attract new visitors, both in terms of the general displays and its events package.

It needs to bring all open rooms/spaces up to date in terms of modern displays and interactive information panels.

Based on recent personal travel in Poland, France, Italy, Belgium and the Netherlands every museum offered free public Wi-Fi (within your entry fee), and most had an app offering more detail on every exhibit alongside activities for children and adults. Nearly all offered some form of audio guide - either via rentable handsets or phone app.

There are also a number of exciting areas that are currently closed that would be beneficial to be able to open to the public - the intramural passageway, dungeon, Tudor footbridge & tower roof.

Alongside these it would be nice to see a modern visitor centre/portal/gift shop & cafe. This could be achieved in place of the current staff office and would also allow for the option of lift access to the ramparts and upper floors, along with better catering to allow for a better menu in the cafe.

The castle also needs to engage more in general town activities - events in the Castle Grounds or town centre need to be linked to the Castle, maybe through linked ticketing and complimentary activities. The castle should be more than a photo backdrop on a hill during these days. Recent examples of success here would be the Poppy net for the WW1 centenary.

We would also envisage the castle engaging in smaller group activities and events - such as food/drink tastings, talks, Escape Rooms. These can be run by a small number of staff (2 or 3) and could also work in partnership with local businesses such as the Tamworth Brewery. The space offered by the Great Hall could be utilised to offer these events in the evenings, especially around Christmas when carols could be sung. During these evenings the rest of the castle can be closed/locked off to reduce the workload on staff.

What opportunities exist across the authority to support the ongoing activities at the Castle and how? There are a large number of wider activities and groups that are engaged in local history and community that the Castle should be linking with and working hard together.

Friends of Tamworth Castle - should be an active group that attend all public events with a stall promoting the castle, this could include small scale children's activities (colouring competitions, etc.) and possibly even exhibit small local items from the collection to raise interest. This should extend to other local towns such as Atherstone, Burton, Hinckley or Nuneaton and local Country Shows.

Tamworth Heritage Society - do not appear to feature the castle as part of their literature, nor does it have an article on their website despite being the main photo displayed. The castle needs to engage more with them, bringing the heritage society into events, and offering out some of the castle's spare collection for their display/centre in Middle Way.

Local events - St Georges Day & Bonfire Night both feature big events in the Castle Grounds, the castle should be working with the organisers of these events so that they can feature as part of the event and not just the photo backdrop. This could be via linked ticketing, or activities in the castle promoted by staff outside at the event.

Local schools - the castle needs to actively engage with local Tamworth based schools, possibly expanding its education activities to include visits from costumed staff to take specific workshops out to the schools as a regular occurrence (e.g. Saxon archaeology for Year 4 every spring term at a specific school).

Local hospitals - visits from Storytellers/Ruby the Dragon to the children's ward(s). Raises awareness of the castle and goodwill from local residents.

Further Suggestions:

Memberships:

Name: Castle membership aimed at: Adults, silvers

In Brief: a yearly membership Price: £50

Details: every other attraction has a membership scheme that allows visitors to repeat visit. I have had people in the past ask about such memberships. Could do family passes, couples discount. It could also allow you to bring a guest at a discounted price and x% off in the cafe. Early bird access to purchase tickets for ticketed events (Santa trails, Canterbury tales, ghost search etc.)

Name: Aimed at: ages 11-17

In Brief: A passport for kids to come along to the events

Price: £30-£40

Details: Older children are encouraged to visit the castle for the older events: Castle Quest, Murder Event, and Haunted Castle. Similar to the Ruby membership but for older kids.

Name: Ruby's Adventurers Aimed at: children aged 4-11

In Brief: A passport for kids to come along to the events Price: £30- £40

Details: Children are encouraged to come to Ruby's main events: Dragon Hunt, Enchanted Castle/Egg Hunt & Haunted Castle with one adult included with passport access.

They get a ruby toy when they sign up and a passport to bring to events.

They get a discount at all other events and are given a stamp at each event they attend for that year in their passport. If they collect all the stamps for the events in the year then they receive a prize (Ruby's family toys?)

They will also receive personalised letters/emails from Ruby.

Name: History hunters Aimed at: ages 8-17

In Brief: A passport for kids to come along to the events

Price: £30-£40

Details: similar to the memberships above but focused on living history events.

“There are a number of exciting areas that are currently closed that would be beneficial to open to the public.”

New Ticket Types:

Name: Gift certificates aimed at: people living distantly who have family in Tamworth or people who have no idea what to purchase for gift ideas

In Brief: different levels of gift certificates that are available to purchase – i.e. Bronze, silver and gold Price:

Details: each level has two prices for family/couple. Family or couple

Bronze: entry to the castle for a non -event

Silver: entry to the castle during an event

Gold: Entry to the castle including tea, coffee, cake and goodie bag.

Platinum: Entry to the castle including tea, coffee, cake and goodie bag. Also includes a private tour guide (must be booked in advance)

Regular Activities:

Name: Handling Weekends aimed at: Adults, older teens, Silvers, university students

Objective: drive repeat visits and increase weekend visitor numbers.

How: online/social media marketing, local press, targeted university marketing.

Details: One weekend a month a small (6-10) connected group of items are brought out of storage and displayed with a volunteer/staff member and members of the public are allowed controlled handling in one of the rooms.

Price: included in normal entry.

Name: Collections Days Aimed At: Silvers, Adults, University Students

Objective: Gather interest in the castle, show off collections, attract new categories of visitor, and bring in midweek numbers.

Marketing: online/social media, local press and targeted university.

Details: one day a month a small-medium (10-20) selection of items are brought of storage into a specific room (Ferrers room). Access is via ticketed 45 min sessions on the hour where the collections manager gives a short talk/presentation and runs a handling session on these items. Followed by a short (60 min) guided tour. Groups of max 18.

Price: £15

Name: Private Tours aimed at: silvers, special interest groups, etc.

Objective: Repeat visitors, higher cost entry.

Marketing: website, U3A, etc.

Details: Groups of 12-25 given a 90 minute tour of the castle by a member of the castle staff. Will be outside standard public hours - so mornings, evenings or midweek off season. Minimum 12 people, but could run with less at the cost of 12 people.

Price: £15 per person.

Name: Guided Tours Aimed at: Families

Objective: Higher interest, up sales

Marketing: online, website, desk/onsite, tourist info

Details: Weekends at set times volunteer takes small-medium groups around the castle for a guided tour - approx. 90 mins. No minimum numbers, max 20. Ticketed via front desk.

Price: £5 per person on top of castle entry < 11's free.

Name: History of tasting Aimed at: Adults, silvers

Objective: bring in a different clientele of people - i.e. the foodie market.

Marketing: food and drink websites,

Details: Themed evenings on a variety of food and drink that includes tasting. Examples: Gin(s), mead(s), different periods of history - see Oliver Cromwell's house the Hungry Roundhead

Price:

Name: History talks aimed at: Adults, silvers

Objective:

Marketing:#

Details: on a variety of themes / topics - Sex in history, WW2, medieval women, Anglo-Saxon language,

Price:

Name: Brownie/scout evenings Aimed at: brownie, scout, guides, etc.

Objective: more people visiting and using the castle in the evenings

Marketing: directly with the brownies / guide groups
Details: Lots of these groups contact us to ask about activities in the castle such as guided tours or adapted school workshops. However with our minimum fee lots of these small groups can't afford to come. By doing an afternoon/ evening especially aimed at them we would get lots of groups coming. We could also mix groups as usually these groups are used to working together

Price: £8 pp (could always include a tuck break as well?)

Name: Brownie/scout sleepovers aimed at: brownie, scout, guides, etc.

Objective: more people visiting and using the castle in the evenings

Marketing: directly with brownies / guide groups

Details: we have 5 groups interested in sleeping over at the castle and currently we only do one a year.

Price:

Name: Paranormal investigators Aimed at: Amateur/professional paranormal investigators

Objective: more people visiting and using the castle in the evenings- very easy money

Marketing: many groups contact us directly asking to use the site for ghost hunts. Most haunted TV show contacts us frequently.

Details: Crews can rent the castle for 4-6 hours. Must be accompanied by a member of staff.

Price: standard rent of castle for 4-6 hours

Specific New Events:

Name: Carols in the courtyard Aimed at: Adults & Silvers

When: Christmas

In Brief: Get a local choir to sing in the courtyard. Visitors buy a ticket and then get a mince pie/mulled wine.

Price: £10

Details: More Christmas activities - carols in the courtyard- get a local choir to sing in the courtyard. Visitors buy a ticket and then get a mince pie/mulled wine. Hymn sheet is provided for people to sing along. We decorate the castle thoroughly yet it is only open for Santa trails.

Name: Tamworth explorers Aimed at: families

When: Year round

In brief: People purchase a treasure map of the town that takes them round the towns historic features.

Price: £5

Details: The map or clues takes them all around the town visiting the castle, grounds, assembly rooms, war memorial, etc. Getting them to solve riddles and puzzles. This could be either in paper or digitally via an app [?]. They can then submit their answers for the chance to win a prize - year's entry to the castle / tickets to a show at assembly rooms

Name: Combined themed events in the grounds/ castle. Aimed at: All

When: once a year

In brief: ticketed events where visitors can experience goings on in the castle and castle grounds.

Price:

Details: The events such as St George's day fireworks night, and Christmas lights switch on, Saxons in the grounds are great events for the public and create a community spirit. However these extremely popular events in the grounds see very little footfall in the castle itself. It is also a free event that brings in very little money. A combined ticket event in the top lawn where the Castle staff & props help with some activities both outside and inside the castle may raise footfall and help the castle be involved in these community events. This could include battle re-enactments,

Notes:

Yearly theme - 2020 WW2 (VE Day), 2021 Victorian, 2022 Medieval, 2023 Saxon, 2024 WW1 (110 years), etc. Used to tie major events together, with shared characters, props, and linked stories.

Three main events targeted at younger kids (all Ruby themed)

Three main events targeted at older kids (yearly theme?)

Half term can be split into:

Event 1: Sat, Sun, Mon, Tue,

Wednesday reset (reduced price?)

Event 2: Thur, Fri, Sat, Sun.

This could then be events aimed at younger children in the first half of the week

Key Dates

January - { ? }

Feb - Half Term

March - Easter { ? }

April - Easter + St Georges Day

May - Early Bank holiday, late bank holiday/half term

June { ? }

July - Start of school holidays

August - School holidays + bank holiday

Sept { ? }

October - Half term + Halloween - Haunted Castle

November - Guy Fawkes + Remembrance Day

December - Christmas

General things to help the castle run smoother:

Name: Cleaning

Why: Used to have volunteer cleaning and staff do what they can but not always time to do a full clean. Only high volume places covered. The castle would benefit from having a monthly deep clean that covers the whole castle.

How to implement: Hire cleaning team

Pros: gives the castle an overall more cared for appearance - have had public in the past point out cobwebs and dust - it's a little embarrassing

Cons: Expensive. Needs training on how to clean historic delicate items.

Name: centralised booking system

Why: at the moment we have multiple diaries and folders where school bookings, weddings, events and guided tours are kept. It would be useful to have a digital database/booking system that everyone can see and use. It would prevent double bookings and everyone would be aware of what is going on. It would also make searching for a particular booking easier and more time efficient.

How to implement: IT would need to design something and then people need to be trained on how to use it.

Pros: Would make creating bookings easier and look more professional. A typed document looks better than a hand written one. It also makes finding something quicker and easier.

Cons: takes time to implement and transition. Staff may be reluctant to learn a new way of doing things.

Name: Online ticketing system

Why: Allows for individuals to book for general visits, event specific tickets without phoning/visiting the castle. Could also allow for preliminary bookings for school visits/guided tours feeding into the digitised booking system.

How to implement: IT would need to design something and then people need to be trained on how to use it.

Pros: Saves staff time, makes things easier for customers (individuals, groups & schools). Makes the castle feel like a modern business.

Cons: Time & cost to design/implement. But could be done via an existing platform (e.g. Eventbrite).

Name: cull of items / props

Why: make space in various storage areas and make things easier to find. Also lots of costumes are inauthentic. Furthermore lots of costumes are damaged and or dated and tired. Many costumes are not worn and just taking up space. This is because we have bought newer ones and the old haven't been disposed of.

How to implement: Staff who are "history aware" who are able to distinguish between costumes that are authentic and which are not. All staff also needs to make a note of which costumes they wear for what. I understand that some need to be kept for future staff/ volunteers but lots NEVER worn. Could have a "table top" style sale in the grounds during an event.

Pros: Old costumes present a tired and uncared for view of the castle

Cons: time consuming. Some staff can be hoarders and refuse to dispose of items

Linked With:

Name: Purchasing new costumes that are historically accurate. This includes costumes we dress the children in during workshops

Why: gives the castle a more polished look and experience. Also reveals the true history and not the Hollywood fashion.

How to implement:

Pros: Looks better to visitors, new photographs and videos can be created for online and social media marketing. Castle staff feels appreciated and cared for. Brings pride while wearing the costume. Better historical accuracy - possible approaches for TV/Film work.

Cons: can be extremely expensive. Also time consuming for research into proper costumes and having them made

Name: Social Media Presence

Why: Enhances the castle's awareness in the public conscience.

How to implement: Social media - regular postings such as collection highlights, educational videos featuring staff in costume.

Pros: Free/cheap advertising/exposure.

Cons: Requires staff resources to plan & create posts/videos.

Name: Online Collections/Archives

Why: Enhances the castle's awareness in the public conscience, specifically among research groups.

How to implement: New website section offering a selection of digitised items from the collection / catalogue of items

Pros: Encourages visits from research focused public - students, silvers, etc. - helps engage with local historians who may be willing to help fund future improvement projects.

Cons: Requires staff resources to catalogue and digitise, also maintaining the online archive once created.

Example: <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections>

- I have spoken to you at the Castle with regards to some ideas, especially on staffing etc. I have been trying to think of ways to respond to your email request so here goes!

First of all, and I think anyone working at the castle will shout as one voice, that of course the Castle is important to the Town, the area, locals and visitors alike! Main reasons are its history - it was purchased for the people of the town and it should remain that way but it must be supported with cash to keep it going and as up to date as possible but also to upkeep an iconic building. Its history is fantastic and is a treasure to people who visit. But it does need money; there are places that should be repaired, not just for health and safety but to show case the building's beauty and uniqueness. Visitors say it is like a Tardis and are amazed when they come but this can be increased even more I am sure.

“ Permanent contracts need to be seriously considered especially for duty managers/team leaders. ”

As a castle museum it has lovely pieces but I do believe money should be made available here also just for everyday cleaning to show them at their best. We had used to have voluntary cleaners from the “Friends of the Castle” but they no longer come and to be honest, it is impossible for front of house staff to keep that up as well as all their other duties. We have a great deal of collections in storage, pieces for the Town and not just the Castle and as Green Badge Guide for the Town, as well as a Castle Assistant, I would love to see these on regular display. With the opening of the new gallery it is not possible to show any museum artefacts from the town such as Peel items, Roman discoveries, weights and measures, Gibbs & Canning to name but a few. It would be nice to have say the Guard Room and landing turned over to permanently display local museum pieces which could be turned over every so often to show a new display. It's sad that all of those items are stored and no one ever gets to see them. Some are donated items and different exhibitions could be displayed and advertised, and may encourage some new visitors, family members perhaps of those who donated items.

In addition, it would be nice to have different pieces shown on a temporary basis; something which I believe was done in the past - a different theme each time in the Great Hall for a mini exhibition. As schools use the great hall through term time this would be necessary at either weekends or school holidays when there is not an event on. But again, staffing has to be considered and there would need to be a member of staff available to advise/explain or just secure the items on display.

Permanent contracts need to be seriously considered especially for duty managers/team leaders (that we do not currently have!) and front of house to enable continuity of service.

Weddings are an area that should be advertised on a council basis. Weddings are a big thing and not many people know that we do them. With the updating of the Assembly Rooms it would be ideal to run in conjunction with them. We are unable to serve wedding food so the Assems would be a great reception venue but I think it would be nice if we served canopies/ champagne in the dining room. The castle should always be closed to the public for weddings - even if it was always an afternoon only availability and then this should be advertised on the website. People spend a lot of money on weddings and am sure we could charge more for privacy and a little champagne reception which would easily cover the number of afternoon walk in visitors we would have.

I'm sure I will think of more things but think you hopefully have enough to go on!

- Is the Castle important to Tamworth Borough Council? if so why?**

I think the Castle is both important to the Council and potentially unimportant. It straddles an uneasy divide of being a hugely symbolic site engendering fondness, pride and love from locals whilst at the same time being seen as a site that drains resources and is misunderstood as to what it delivers for the community it is serving. It is the town's biggest asset but is not utilised to best advantage. It's been a long standing joke across the Council as to when it's going to be sold, and yet has been the backdrop for the highest profile events the town has seen. The Castle features within the towns crest sitting atop the heraldic shield and flanked by regal animals, so appears to have a clear place in the formal representation of the “town”.

All in all, the above is symbolic of the unbalanced nature of what the Castle is and what it means for the Council. I suspect it is seen as something difficult to get rid of and difficult to do something with.

Overall it is important because:

- It is a nationally important site as designated through law by its status as a Scheduled Ancient Monument having unique and exceptionally significant features.
- It has a significant contribution to the historic environment and townscape of Tamworth, particularly to the visual and aesthetic qualities of the Castle grounds.
- It is valued by residents as a symbol of the town's depth of history, and does stimulate a local sense of pride and pride of place.
- It contributes to local tourism through the visitors it brings to the site, from day visits and school group visits.

- It has further potential for heritage-led regeneration and consistently remains as the top ranking feature to be identified from studies looking at what may revitalise Tamworth as a place.
- There are significant local object and archive collections and extensive opportunities for learning through the formal and informal education and events programme.
- Award winning heritage site that maintains Museum Accreditation, part of the Visitor Attraction Quality Assurance Scheme. Sandford Award winner for Education, Staffordshire Small Visitor Attraction of the Year winner.
- It has a dedicated, skilled and award winning group of staff who are passionate about delivering its services.
- It has a reputation of securing funding for large projects many of which have been so designed to allow maintenance work on the building to be undertaken at a greater cost to others than to the Council, whilst also delivering wide ranging resources for visitors.
- It is aware of its audience and can deliver increased visits as proven by its HLF projects, and can adapt to audience needs.
- It receives continued praise through feedback from visitors to the quality of its staff, events and its value for money.
- It is one of only 3 places engaged with when the Staffordshire Hoard was discovered and played an important role in promoting this unique historic find to the public. It remains only 1 of 3 places allowed to display it within the country.

It may be perceived as unimportant due to:

- Lack of consideration beyond tourism as to how the Castle's services have a positive link to Council agendas on children services, wellbeing, and education attainment within the borough.
- Insufficient budget to deal with complex maintenance needs of such a high status building. This will always be expensive and a long term view should be taken.
- Lack of understanding of the complex access issues of the site, the routing and juggling of visitors between spaces to accommodate simultaneous events.
- Lack of wider understanding that the Castle audience is a regional one, not necessarily a local one, and this may not fit easily with Council strategy.
- Understanding that a visit is a cultural experience, and one which visitors do not directly associate with a price tag.

What is your view on the current Castle offer (visitor / museum / collection)?

It reaches out to its key audiences and delivers a good range of formal and informal learning through its events and education programme.

It offers a great visitor experience and is good value for money within the socio-economic environment within which it operates.

Through project work it now has the best understanding and information about the history of the building, the families that lived there and the architectural merit of the site. This has been used to best advantage with clear interpretation for a range of visitors.

It uses layers of interpretation to reach out and educate; this is achieved through living history, hands on activities, events and written word/reading material.

Continued positive reinforcement of the delivery through surveys and feedback; highly rated response to individual events, quality and value for money.

Maintains Museum Accreditation status, the quality mark for the care and maintenance of our collections. This is our key to applying for funding from external organisations, and remains a fundamental factor for both Arts Council and Heritage Lottery Funding.

Not a traditional Museum as such as we operate beyond glass cases. The collection, in the main, is unrelated to the historic surroundings of the Castle. We do not hold vast collections that complement the period room settings, but we have adapted to show collections where we can including looking at themes such as Saxon Tamworth and the Castle families which allow us to discuss object collections.

Collection remains in a state of underuse. A priority should be to complete the cataloguing process which can then lead to us making more of it available on-line through digital resources.

There is a carefully balanced delivery on site due to difficult access within a compact site.

Restrictive staffing structure needs more support for day to day delivery and a change in reliance on casual staff if existing services continue to be delivered. Dedicated contracted staff for education and events delivery is needed. Move away from reliance on Front of House casual staff and require duty management support for Front of House activities.

Focus to date has been on events for families with young children, events for teens, and selected evening events for adults. Need to consider implementing range of ideas discussed but not set in action such as escape room events, wine tasting evening, Summer evening tour with drinks on tower or in courtyard, special afternoon for silvers tour, and using the living history workshops with children to translate to team building skills for adults (shield wall, arms and armour, character roles) etc.

Not sure Weddings are a viable income stream any longer.

Limited shop and catering offer on site.

No outdoor space that can be used exclusively by the Castle, as it sits within a public park.

Do you think the Castle or its current offer should change? If it should change, what would you like to see at the Castle that is different and why?

- Need a staff structure that reflects the needs of delivery and supports staff, including the need to address day to day trouble shooting through duty management, dedicated bookings officer to manage all bookings, giving staff time to deliver more strategically and proactively rather than reactively.
- Consider removal of weddings from the offer. Feel weddings have become the victim of the refocus of the site and success as a family friendly heritage attraction, combined with economic downturn over the past few years. It is a quick win but managing such a personal, important day when we remain open to the paying public is tricky.
- Need to put event ideas into place. Staff is currently ideas rich but time poor, and struggle with demands of delivering high level projects and managing all aspects of day to day operations.
- Ambition has been to create a space that can deliver more traditional museums events such as temporary exhibitions. However this would come with a need for existing collections staff to be more flexible or new staff which may be an expense and cannot be stretched to. It could however create a reason to return in addition to the event programme with a programme of small exhibitions and enable community displays in a great setting.
- Ambition to see the visitor experience starting outside the entrance gates or at least from the bottom of the Castle slope. During the 2010 HLF discussions this was mooted, but a lack of match funding meant that certain elements of the project had to be excluded including a lift to access the Tamworth Story, opening up of back cellar, new staff kitchen facilities, relocation of TIC/ reception and orientation building at bottom of slope, inclusion of gatehouse archaeology as part of the visit.
- Castle suffers from a lack of outdoor space that is not its own. Unlike National Trust properties it does not have grounds that can be access controlled and isolated for more regular large scale events which could add additional income such as bush craft weekends, festival events and re-enactments.
- Consider a dedicated Saxon festival to build on existing Castle stories and themes, and more joined up approach to borough wide event programme developing experiences. In the past this was not supported but the success of the Aethelflaed academic conference may have changed that view.
- Return to external marketing delivery, and dedicated marketing staff.
- Limited kitchen facilities and poor staff area which makes delivering of catered events very difficult including unprofitable for external caterers who have served us well in the past.

“ Need a staff structure that reflects the needs of delivery and supports staff. ”

What opportunities exist across the authority to support the ongoing activities at the Castle and how?

- Support from the Assembly Rooms for catering provision; this happened before for our Murder Mystery Evenings and Banquets. The Assembly Rooms clearly now has the facilities to be able to deliver.
- Avoidance of competition between the Assembly Rooms and the Castle with regards to delivery so each site is supported to its best advantage. We don't need to be competing for each other's audiences: if they can deliver wedding service and after party on one site, should we bother with the service? Or should we acknowledge that the service only is our strength. Clear communication from the outset over what can be delivered and how.
- Town centre group focus on delivery of projects which support a visitor experience across the town and includes individual sites and multiple sites working together.
- Careful consideration of joined up offers based on realistic examination of past projects: Hotel link ups did not generate visitors as the business focus of the hotel visits does not relate to day out visits; Coach tours are not attracted to the Castle due to the age group that these attract, we also need to think about a post –Covid 19 visiting experience.
- Reconsider links to heritage in Lichfield, Whittington Barracks and other local attractions for a package visit for the silvers market and again in consideration with the Assembly Rooms.

- **Is the Castle important to Tamworth Borough Council? if so why?;** I don't think the Council know or see the importance of the Castle. It's been seen as a millstone by many in the past. The financial costs are foremost to the Council (understandably) but the historical value of the Castle is not considered, because it is not seen to bring in the revenue in the same way as the Snow Dome or the Assembly Rooms.

What is your view on the current Castle offer (visitor / museum / collection)? The Castle is an historic building and an historic entity in itself, the interpretation of which can only be surmised in part due to the age of the building and lack of written record for the early part of its history. Interpretation of the Castle could be multifaceted and take many forms, putting it into historical context nationally, and locally, and the context of Tamworth's history. The Castle is inevitably limited by the confines of the building, its location and access. The interior displays are limited by what is relevant to the Castle, and the structure of the internal space as it stands today, as well as retaining the context of the building. The majority of visitors enjoy the Castle for what it is and don't think it should change. There is a minority who think it should offer more, but similarly have also complained when we have provided events such as 'Enchanted Castle' that there were 'not enough fairies', or Halloween events where it was 'not spooky enough'. The old adage of 'you can never satisfy all of the people all of the time' applies very much to Tamworth Castle.

Do you think the Castle or its current offer should change? if so what would you like to see at the Castle that is different and why?; As previously discussed, the Castle would benefit from a greater digital / online presence that would increase the access to Castle, the object collections and archives. Audio guides have been considered in the past and dismissed as too costly to run and too easy for the public to exit with equipment that was required previously. With the advances in technology, and the majority of people having access to a smart phone this and other digital options could be reconsidered.

Having digital access to the object collections and archives could enable public access to items relevant to different areas in the Castle. In an ideal situation visitors could pay extra at reception or on their online ticket to access the digital collections / archives. An area or room would have a digital link that provides the smart phone access to the relevant collections, providing additional information / imagery. This in turn protects the collections, particularly the fragile items, through access that is not damaging by continuous handling / light / dust / changes in environment. Increase the income stream through an online presence for the Castle with a stock of unique items that use patterns / images / designs from the collections. This opens up a worldwide market particularly with US and Japanese tourists.

“Having digital access to the object collections and archives could enable public access to items relevant to different areas in the Castle.”

What opportunities exist across the authority to support the ongoing activities at the Castle and how? Use currently empty premises Market Street? Particularly close to the Castle as a bigger commercial stock outlet, as well as the shop in the Castle. Make use of the Upper Lodge by the Castle (at the bottom of the narrow Castle slope, instead of it being rented out at a peppercorn rent without income to the Castle) as a visitor information point with Castle staff (similar to National Trust properties) / ice cream sales – ice creams available on exit!! (We do have some serious problems if people go round the Castle with an ice cream in hand!!) . Link businesses in the town, like the micro-brewery and somewhere to eat with ticket sales. Historic bottle styles from the collections for beer / tankards. 'Castle eatery' in town with trenchers instead of plates!!

Tamworth Borough Council Verbatim:

- Light the outside of the castle, more events parties private functions. Manager has been left to get on with it, challenging individual and sees change as a threat, strangling the castle. Take back the kiosk and repurpose the lodge and coach house, they are expensive assets. Arts and Events have always been separate (e.g. St George's Day), they need to be aligned. Relaunch Heritage Day to get locals back in love with the castle, make it council and events team led. The 1970's adverts on social media don't work. Involve schools and the community to sponsor projects (name on a brick etc.). Deliver quick wins with ambition and set out longer term plans. Deal with the pigeon problem in the town. The castle is part of Tamworth, as a castle and museum, its part of our heritage. The current manager has a curator role and finding pots of money but isn't the person to take the castle forward.
 - My only comment really will be from an asset point of view. Whilst I appreciate that we have an obligation to maintain the castle given its heritage status my question/concern would be around the level of investment and ongoing upkeep cost and what the most cost effective long-term approach would be. If we assume that there is not likely to be any external interest in taking on the castle in its current state (not sure if this has been or is being tested) then we are retaining it. Whatever we do with it there will be a cost associated with upkeep, however I would anticipate that the cost of upkeep could vary considerably depending on how we intend using it. Given where it is and what it is I am not sure that we will see a direct return on investment but the question from me around costs is at what point we consider the level of return for the investment required to be viable. A more cost effective solution could be to simply shut the doors and only undertake the level of upkeep required to meet our statutory obligations. I appreciate that there are opportunities to expand the use of the Castle to make it more of a visitor attraction, a wider visitor venue and for us to tie it in more with other elements around the Castle to make the wider area an attraction/venue but if we do then the business model needs to be right and whilst I find it difficult to see that the Castle will ever become a 'Cash Cow' I wouldn't want to see it become a 'money pit' either; we need to make sure that we don't repeat the mistakes of the past by not factoring in the long-term upkeep of the Castle and its surrounds into the business plan and then locking that money into the upkeep. I think in the past we have seen proposals that point to how much revenue venue / facility can generate but factors such as upkeep of the building itself reflecting the proposed new uses have been ignored until the point comes where work is needed and everyone realises that there is no money. In terms of where the castle sits, my personal view is that there should be a better link across the 'ditch' to the Town Hall (I know that there are already discussion around this as part of the Town Centre plan) on the one side but on the other side bringing in the Café, toilets and the buildings that were the old outdoor pool. We know for example that the proprietors of the café have always struggled and would probably be amenable to the business side being bought out. The outdoor pool buildings aren't in great shape but I'm sure with some creativity could in some way be linked to the Castle activities. As a general observation, in my opinion the Castle as it stands now is fine for a one-off visit that lasts no more than a couple of hours and once done there isn't much else to keep you in the town and not a lot else that would really make you come back. This is not to be derogatory but there is nothing really in Tamworth that I can't find locally to where I live so other than a visit to specifically see the Castle there wouldn't be much to keep me coming back. I think the one-off special events are good and would result in a visit but that would be for the event and not a re-visit to the castle per se.
- The Castle as it stands now is fine for a one-off visit that lasts no more than a couple of hours.
- Full cooperation with Tamworth Assembly Rooms for a bespoke wedding and catering package with a co-ordinator. Limited opening times as a museum – could this be done on selected days perhaps. Continued schools programme and maybe open this up for community groups etc. rather than public opening. Special events to continue – Easter/Bank Holidays/Christmas etc. Could the shop at the bottom be the entrance kiosk? Provide a more limited café with vending machines rather than food service – unless the kitchen is upgraded. Theatrical and other musical evenings in the great Hall with light food (we used to have Film noire and horror films in the great Hall). Food/historical fayres? Corporate events – maybe hire out the whole Castle. Small scale weddings completely at the Castle with catering? Historical tours – linked to other buildings including Town Hall/Church. What do the Friends of the Castle do now? Could they assist? Potential for events on the Upper Lawn linked to the Castle – specialist markets/re-enactment? A public consultation on the future of the Castle. Is there anything that could be done at the Gatehouse for small exhibitions/visits – is there a full inventory yet of the collection. Visiting collections e.g. the Hoard increased visitors. Personally I think that the Castle does not work as a museum with limited visitor numbers and clashes with weddings/corporate events – 2 hours is not a day out, therefore this needs to be looked at to provide a 'day out'. Encourage cafes to give join in e.g. admission plus a cream team somewhere? The terrace café to the side of Ankerside overlooking the grounds could be fantastic – could there be some partnership there? Car park – I am aware that the closest car park was changed to 2 hours max by Council decision some years ago to encourage shoppers/bank visitors and stop the car park being used as long stay. This needs factoring into the town centre strategy and a decision made. There needs to be clearer directions to the long stay car parks and signage from Jolly Sailor/Riverdrive.

- The castle has always been an issue, poor general management and current manager unwilling to work with other service areas. The castle works in a silo and doesn't utilise other service areas, this includes external tenders for services that could be delivered from within existing resources and therefore save the authority money. Aware of some corporate issues that were badly managed last year, manager doesn't role model corporate responsibilities. Don't understand why we've allowed pigeons to have such an impact on the visitor experience, don't understand why we haven't got a proper plan in place to deal with structural issues, the castle is important to the council and sits in the middle of amazing grounds. The castle comes at a significant cost and should offer more events and services, again we should be reaching out and working more closely with arts and events and assembly rooms (catering, wedding, events, grounds, café).

“ The castle works in a silo and doesn't utilise other service areas. ”

- There is a control and command culture within the castle, evidence of silo working and corporate messages not being followed through. I'd like to see more engagement between the heritage experts and TBC functional experts to achieve more. I think there should be more events and more use of tech and augmented reality. I'd really like to see the blockers and lack of willingness to tap into the creative minds change. The castle can no longer be a little niche castle on its own and we need to find a way to promote it more to the 70,000 plus residents.

- **Greater clarity on what the venue is** – ‘Tamworth Castle Museum and Grounds’. It is currently marketed and promoted as Tamworth Castle, no mention of Museum or its relationship to the Castle Grounds especially the Scheduled Ancient Monument on the Castle website, yet Tamworth Castle has had museum status for a number of years and something we work hard for and pride ourselves in. Do we fear clarity may impact the target family audience and footfall? Do we fear clarity may affect Customer expectations – managing, raising or exceeding them? Do we fear the word ‘museum’ creates a pre-conditioned mind set of the type of experience we think people might expect? Hence why we operate and treat as a museum but promote and attract as a tourist attraction? Is it time to embrace ‘museum’ and promote its USP's.

Bringing history to life, educating, entertaining, inspiring. The new Battle and Tribute Gallery will set the bar with regard to customer experience, does the rest of the Castle stand up to delivering a memorable Museum experience? Is the Building clean, repaired, maintained, and accessible? Are the Room sets visually stimulating, immersive, atmospherically. Are the Objects and artefacts meaningful, relevant, impactful, and interesting? Can they be interacted with, touched? Do they add value to the Castle story? Are the Room Graphic Design Panels and Interpretation refreshed? Are they immersive, informative, educational, set the scene? Does the Castle tell the stories within the stories, those interesting snippets which connect people, and the stories which can only belong to Tamworth Castle? More use of Technology to bring history to life, promise of fun, attention grabbing. Continual improvement to marketing, PR, photography, videography – create a buzz, clear messaging. Look beyond the Castle walls for the visitor to experience, stay longer and enjoy. Café, does it offer quality and choice, welcoming ambience, comfortable, light, airy, and clean. Is merchandise specific, relevant, quality, cost appropriate? Is customer service always welcoming and consistent, is training updated? Are themed in-house events educational, qualitative, engaging, immersive, informative, inspiring, accessible, and entertaining? Some in-house events lack impact, leave one feeling underwhelmed, with paid visitors spending no more than an hour to an hour and half in the building. Some rooms are excluded from being dressed due to lack of available funds and those which are dressed are of low quality and do not always deliver the expected or desired results. Events are annualised and quite repetitive, could this be prohibitive to repeat visits. In house events are always delivered within Castle Walls, could events be expanded to include the upper lawn of the grounds, the Stables, expand the visitor experience. Living History weekends could include the upper lawn, enclose Upper lawn and make entrance fee to include venue and grounds – has been done before in the 80's.

“ The new Battle and Tribute Gallery will set the bar with regard to customer experience. ”

Look beyond the walls of the Castle – Think BIG. Use of audio and visual could expand the offer, i.e. St George's Day, the sound of a roaring dragon to be heard from the top of the Castle and a plume of smoke be seen, could a dragon be locked in the dungeon and roams the courtyard as people enter. Could a dragon's tail be swinging from the side of the castle? Could St George be running up and down the slope telling people of the dragon in the Castle? Could lighting effects show a dragon climbing the castle walls of an evening? We currently know (Commas has data and customer feedback) that people looking for Castle Grounds information especially events are first looking on Castle website when in fact the information is located on the Assembly Rooms website under a separate URL - Tamworth Arts and Events. Customer comments tell us this is too confusing and people have difficulties finding information. Should details about the grounds and What's On and locate on the Castle website?

Raise the profile of Tamworth's Heritage – its USP. Bring back Heritage Open Day, invest & lead the event, celebrate and promote Tamworth's Heritage in line with national event (Sept each year). Hold an annual weekend Saxon festival in the grounds to mark HOD, have Aethelflaed declaring her battle plans, soldiers fighting, re-enact burying the Hoard etc. etc. 2020 could be the platform to launch the new 'Battle and Tribute' gallery.

Technology Use and engage latest technology to wow and attract the visitor, video PR, Augmented Reality bring history to life in and out of the building. Set the scene and customer's expectations before they visit to show what Tamworth Castle Museum can deliver and dispel the myths of a traditional museum.

Bigger Offer Use other buildings/areas to extend the Castle offer or be seen as a combined offer –Town Hall, Stables, Holloway Lodge, Upper lawn, the dell?.

Commerciality Weddings Complete overhaul of wedding offer, sell USP as romantic, intimate museum setting perfect for that evening candlelit ceremony with closest family and special guests. A truly atmospherically, quality, specialised venue. Create better and improved marketing and PR, this commercial revenue stream is stagnant at the moment. Tell the story - What can Tamworth Castle Museum provide against competition? Promote and pursue the Castle as a film/location venue, raise its profile. Attract a greater and varied commercial activity/event programme, infinite possibilities, Event Organisers, Corporate events, Room Hire/Meeting Rooms, Themed Historical events, Theatrical, Musical, Suppers/wine tasting, Arts and crafts activities, Film. Commercial events will not be aimed at the target family audience but will provide the opportunity of showcasing what fabulous experiences can be delivered within a museum setting and open the door to new audiences.

“Complete overhaul of wedding offer, sell USP as romantic, intimate museum setting”

Combined ticketed events with Assembly Rooms - Day visit to the Castle combined with a ticket to an evening show in Assems, Ticket to Panto combined with a ticket to Santa Trail, A day to Castle combined with a children's theatre event at the Assems in school holidays, TBC seasonal passport across its venues.

Membership/Loyalty - Castle Annual membership for rewards – advanced notice of events, priority tickets, special offers, money off etc., Possible TBC combined loyalty card, Could open up to a Tamworth Loyalty scheme where local businesses could pay to be included – could help stimulate local spending and support shop local.

Friends of Tamworth Castle - Review purpose and relationship with Castle, benefits, expectations, support?.

TBC Annual Wedding Fayre in Assembly Rooms - Promote TBC venues to hold a wedding, do catering (Assems, Castle, Town Hall, Castle Grounds) attract quality local businesses to partner and promote, i.e. hair salon, florist, dress shop, limos, photographer etc. etc..

Company/Organisational Incentives - TBC staff, NHS, MOD. **Castle Grounds** - Tamworth Castle website signposts visitors to the Castle Grounds as a separate venue to visit when at the Castle, there is no attachment or informative history as to how the Castle and Grounds relate – see Warwick Castle website.

Collection - Evaluate – location, purpose, relevance, cost, worth, usability. Can the collection be digitalised? Could digitalised collection be offered to view for a fee? Is it possible to partner with Universities, other collections to attract study and research programmes? How easy is it to move items? Is this done on a regular basis? Offer membership scheme to archives separate from Castle membership. Expand educational programme to include archive lectures, art projects, demonstrations and courses attract other touring collections to be held at Castle or other TBC venues.

Would Arts and events staff sit more easily within Castle team rather than Assembly Rooms and be able to look at attracting commercial activity within the Castle as well as organising outdoor events, i.e. at Xmas lights switch on, have a traditional Victorian Xmas market on upper lawn and in the Castle courtyard roasted chestnuts, barrel organ etc., carol singers in bandstand and Victorian household events throughout the Castle.

Opening hours – Re-evaluate -Is it a viable offer to close the building 6 months of the year, which still costs money, or is it better to open the building and attract footfall and increase income

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