



MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD ON 20th JULY 2021

PRESENT: Councillor M Oates (Mayor), Councillors M J Greatorex, M Bailey, D Box, P Brindley, J Chesworth, T Clements, D Cook, M Cook, S Doyle, A Farrell, R Ford, S Goodall, J Harper, T Jay, J Jones, D Maycock, J Oates, Dr S Peuple, B Price, R Pritchard, R Rogers, M Summers, P Thurgood and J Wade

The following officers were present: Andrew Barratt (Chief Executive), Nicola Hesketh (Monitoring Officer) and Jodie Small (Legal, Democratic and Corporate Support Assistant)

Apologies received from: Councillor(s) R Claymore, A Cooper, K Norchi, S Peuple and S Pritchard

14 TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 20th May 2021 were approved and signed as a correct record.

(Moved by Councillor Dr S Peuple and seconded by Councillor J Oates)

15 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest.

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

Councillor J Oates made the following announcements;

“Thank you Mr Mayor under announcements I would like to move a Motion under ‘rule 4 .13 q Motion Without Notice’ that should a Councillor receive a ping as it’s been referred to or a notification that they should self-isolate and as a result they have to miss any meetings that that this is not taken into account when doing their attendance allowance, so they are exempt from that ruling should they receive the appropriate ping text message or email.

Mr Mayor the reasoning behind this, it's something that is beyond their individual control, they are merely following legislation and guidance going forward."

RESOLVED Council agreed;

Should a member receive notification to self-isolate due to COVID-19 that this will be an exemption from the attendance allowance rules and backdated to the start of the municipal year when the government changed the legislation to revert back to face-to-face meetings.

(Moved by Councillor J Oates and seconded by Councillor R Pritchard)

"That was the motion and I'm pleased it was carried. I would like to raise something else under announcements.

I'm sure members are aware and I would like everyone to be informed and pass on their congratulations to former Councillor Lee Bates and current Councillor Paul Brindley who were awarded Birthdays Honours last month.

I thought it would be appropriate that the council pass on their congratulations and support the good work that they did during the pandemic. They are not the only ones in Tamworth, there are two other people who also received Honours and I think as Mayor It would be fitting if you were to write to all four people and congratulate them on being recognised nationally. Thank you Mr Mayor."

17 QUESTION TIME:

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL NO.1

Under Procedure Rule No 11, Councillor T Jay will ask the Portfolio Holder for Environment and leisure, Councillor R Pritchard, the following question:-

"Over the past 18 months Street Scene has had to cope with significantly reduced staff numbers due to coronavirus, and we also lost the services of the probation board in maintaining Tamworth's public spaces. At the same time we have had a warm and wet few months, ideal for the growth of plants, grass and bushes.

Could the portfolio holder update the council and residents on actions being taken to address the general maintenance in our estates and residential areas?"

Councillor R Pritchard gave the following reply:-

"This question demonstrates all too clearly just how difficult the last 18 months have been for all Council front line services.

On behalf of all members of the Council can I extend my deepest thanks to All Street Scene officers for their work during the pandemic, and all officers involved in continuing to deliver vital services during the pandemic.

Members will be pleased to hear that the current burden placed on Street scene from the Covid 19 pandemic is easing and whilst the teams continue to work in 'bubbles' we are hopeful that this will limit further disruption to front line services following the lifting of national restrictions this week.

All the news is not good, normally we would have an significant contingent of community payback workers to supplement our efforts maintaining a clean and beautiful borough, however the probation service still have not resumed work in the borough and currently we have no date when they intend to do so.

Support has remained in the form of the army of volunteers who pick up litter in their own time and the council owes them a huge debt of thanks. Without the help of the public the council would have surely sunk during the height of the pandemic. Thank you to each and every single resident who works to help keep our town clean and tidy

Jurisdictions around the different paths, open spaces and roads in the Borough can lead to some confusion over who is responsible for what. Weeds in roads, public footpaths and moving of verges are usually the responsibility of Staffordshire County Council. Parks, public spaces, and paths on HRA estates are usually Tamworth Borough Council. Canal tow paths are the Canal and River trust, major A-roads and motorways is Highways England.

As part of the development of the housing maintenance offer in our HRA service, we are looking at how we can maximise efficiency in relation to ensuring our clean and green ambitions are joined up and consistently delivered across all of the Councils assets, particularly those that sit in the housing revenue account.

Yesterday I again raised with officers we need to do more weed spraying on Housing Revenue Account land. This is currently being investigated by street scene staff to determine the level of resourcing required.

It important to point out that weeds on the roads and footpaths we are seeing across the borough are the responsibility of Staffordshire County Council.

Staffordshire County Council inform me that their summer weed spraying programme in Tamworth started this month. I hope that this will address some of the areas the member is concerned about.

Another area that is often raised by the public is the state of the A5. The litter on this road is something I have long spoken about. Currently we have Street Scene officers working nights to cleanse the A5 whilst Highways England carry out night time closures for maintenance, moving and arboreal works.

Members will all agree this is great news and would thank Highways England for working with us, but as always, this major clean-up diverts resources away from

other areas. However, the public have deemed this important and Street Scene have risen to the challenge.

Unfortunately, we don't have an unlimited workforce but I am happy to discuss with Cllr Jay the areas and issues he is concerned about and see what can be done to address them. Including lobbying our partner organisations and share responsibility for open spaces in the Borough.

Getting the Borough to look its best and be a lovely place to live is one of our top priorities."

Councillor T Jay asked the following supplementary question-

"Thank you Mr Mayor. Obviously I appreciate that it's different Authorities that look after this but I believe some of it, is Tamworth. Would the Portfolio Holder and the relevant Officers give me 20 minutes of their time, I'll take you along a 15-20 minute route and show you the different issues and work out what is Tamworth and what's not."

Councillor R Pritchard gave the following reply:-

"More than happy to do that Mr Mayor."

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL NO.2

Under Procedure Rule No 11, Councillor Dr S People will ask the Portfolio Holder for Regulatory & Community Safety, Councillor S Doyle, the following question:-

"In the ministerial webinar held on Wednesday 14th, the minister outlined the reduction to be made to the regulatory powers available to local authorities. In the light of recent experience in Tamworth, would Cllr Doyle take this opportunity to reassure the Council and our residents that the remaining powers will be sufficient to protect public health, especially with regard to Covid 19, and to explain what his message is, to both the hospitality sector and the public, regarding how to embrace the wider freedoms now available?"

Councillor S Doyle gave the following reply:-

"Cllr People, Thank you for your question, I would like to respond to the three points made within your question.

Response to Webinar

Firstly, I find it difficult to comment on the Webinar that you attended on the 14th of July, as I was not on that one, I hope you found it very helpful.

Response to powers available to local authorities

In response to the question of regulatory powers and this local Authority this is my response.

As of the 19th July 2021, we entered Step 4 of the Road Map laid out by Central Government and many of the legal powers available to the Police and local authority under the various Health Protection Regulations have expired.

The Regulations allowed enforcement action and fixed penalty notices to be used where non-compliance was found regarding the relevant 'Step' contraventions in force at that time.

These related to areas such as travel, large gatherings, organised gatherings, and a range of business restrictions including the closure of nightclubs/dance halls in Step 3, table service and requirements to collect track and trace information/QR codes for customers etc.

As we enter Step 4, Tamworth Borough Council will continue to work very closely with our Director of Public Health (Dr Richard Harling) at Staffordshire County Council in the bi-weekly Health Protection Board meetings.

In which we will continue to review the Covid-19 case rate within Tamworth, any local outbreaks, hospitalisation data, variants of concern and the vaccination rate.

If an outbreak or serious incident is identified, this will result in an 'Incident Management Team' meeting and actions will be agreed to bring the situation under control.

Dr Harling will continue to have emergency powers to serve a 'Direction' if a serious threat to public health is identified, and this could still require a business to close or impose certain restrictions.

Although many of the legal requirements for businesses have been removed as of the 19th July, such as the requirement to wear face coverings at indoor venues, table service and track and trace records etc.

The Government guidance still recommends the continuation of many of these controls in certain business sectors and our Environmental Health team will be working closely with the business community to support them through this process.

In step 4, businesses still have a legal duty under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 to update their risk assessment and maintain suitable control measures to protect their staff and customers from any ongoing Covid-19 risk.

This covers areas such as improved ventilation, cleaning/disinfection, and provision of hand sanitisers.

Our Environmental Health team will be working with and sign-posting the new guidance to relevant businesses over the coming weeks.

As of the 19th of July, there will still be a legal duty for any individual who tests positive for Covid-19 to self-isolate for 10 days and this will be closely monitored by the Health Protection Board and if necessary, enforced by the Police.

There will also be an ongoing legal requirement for individuals arriving from red/amber countries to self-isolate and this will also be enforced by the Public Health teams and the local Police.

Response from myself

The message from myself, the Environmental Team and our Partners, which is brief and to the point.

To the public, local businesses and Members alike is to remain cautious as the pandemic is still not over and try and follow the latest guidelines as much as possible.

Regular guidance and campaigns will continue to be issued by the Communications team at Tamworth Borough Council and Staffordshire County Council to make sure that all residents and businesses are aware of the latest guidance.

Thank you.”

Councillor Dr S People asked the following supplementary question-

“Thank you Mr Mayor. Can I thank the Portfolio Holder for the detailed response and for the fact that he has reiterated the bit at the end about the need for continuing caution? Would he agree with me that this will continue to put significant pressure on resources in the council seeming as we’ve had examples of poor practice locally and because we have a low job rate can I ask him to reiterate again through every opportunity that the Council has the importance of improving the take up of jobs locally? Thank you Mr Mayor.”

Councillor S Doyle gave the following reply:-

“Thank you Mr Mayor. Yes I completely agree.”

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL NO.3

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

“Would the Leader of the Council inform us as to what steps Tamworth Borough Council is taking to maximise the take up of the opportunities for up-skilling provided by the National Skills Fund by local residents?”

Councillor J Oates gave the following reply:-

“Thank you Mr Mayor and thank you Councillor People.

I’m particularly interested about the take-up element of this question as that’s something I have concerns about in Tamworth but specifically in relation to this fund

The Economic Development Team along with the Employment and Skills Officer of the Southern Staffordshire partnership will be starting a promotional campaign to raise awareness of the National Skills Fund for local residents. The fund will be heavily promoted to members of the Southern Staffordshire Employment and Skills board, and the Tamworth Employment Action Group as well as through the local Job Centre. Promotional content will go out through our normal channels of the Council, including social media and through the local press in press releases. Officers will also be engaging with local businesses to raise awareness on this fund.”

Councillor Dr S People asked the following supplementary question-

First of all can I thank the Leader for the positive response we’ve done a lot of work on raising awareness about Covid over the last few months and I think this is important for the future as was for the present

National skills fund identifies qualifications which the government has decided are going to enhance peoples job prospects and in particular as a Glascote councillor the area I represent is a hotspot for low levels of skills leaving school so I’m particularly keen to make sure that the fund is followed up in areas like Glascote and I particularly therefore ask that the Leader to agree to a meeting where we can go through this in more detail to ensure that the Council will do its best for the residents of the town. This is an important opportunity for people to be funded to gain extra skills and I think that’s very important going forward. Thank you.”

Councillor J Oates gave the following reply -

“Thank you Mr Mayor, Thank you Councillor People. Yes absolutely let’s have a sit down and have a conversation and the reason I was particularly interested in your point about take up was that we can promote this fund and other opportunities but what we actually struggle to do very often is break into communities where we really need to get that message across so any local knowledge and avenues that the Councillor may be able to bring to the table I would welcome.

There’s not only this fund as I mentioned there’s also other opportunities in terms of apprenticeships and the Borough Council has recently supported the bricklaying centre in Armington which I believe is the only one in the region if not nationally, just up the road at Wishaw we have the HS2 Centre for the apprenticeships which are offering engineering courses and alike but there is also local stuff going on with a really low take up, most current scheme throughout the summer aimed at people who are likely to be in need is certainly school leavers, these are six week courses in Carpentry the end of which they are awarded their

CSCS cards so they can work on site. These are free courses they are six week courses with six attendees on each one and I know through dealing with them in the last few weeks they are getting three applicants for each set of courses when there are six vacancies, they are under subscribed so whatever we can do, whether it's in Councillor Peoples's ward or elsewhere to break into communities and get those messages across we really need to do this because there is a huge problem coming up for us with the economy and we need skilled people to fill the gap at the appropriate time. Thank you Mr Mayor."

18 NOMINATION TO CONFER THE TITLE OF HONORARY ALDERMAN ON JOHN FAULKNER

RESOLVED: That pursuant to Section 249(5) of the Local Government Act 1972 the Council in recognition of his services admit the title of Honorary Alderman of the Borough to John Faulkner

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

19 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE - 2020/21

The Chair of Audit and Governance presented the Annual Report of the Audit & Governance Committee 2020/21 for Council's endorsement

RESOLVED That;

The Annual Report of the Audit & Governance Committee 2020/21 was endorsed.

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

20 SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2020/21 ANNUAL REPORTS

The Chairs of Corporate Scrutiny, Infrastructure, Safety & Growth and the former Chair of Health & Wellbeing presented the Annual reports to Council to formally update Council on the activities of the Committees over the year 2020/21 which included,

- Chair's overview
- Working Groups
- Recommendations made in the year to Cabinet
- Committee Terms of Reference
- Membership and Attendance
- Training & Effectiveness
- Work Plan
- Resource implications

Corporate Scrutiny

RESOLVED That Council;

Endorsed the Annual Report of the Committee

Noted a particular thank you to the Democratic Services Officer and to all Committee members for the hard work and positive contributions during the year and adapting so quickly to virtual meetings.

(Moved by Councillor T Jay and seconded by Councillor B Price)

Health and Wellbeing

RESOLVED That Council;

Endorsed the Annual Report of the Committee

The former Chair of Health and Wellbeing also thanked all members of the Committee for their invaluable contributions and a mention of thanks was given to the Democratic Services Officer.

A special thanks was also given to Councillor T Clements for her role as County Councillor representative on the Committee and the Vice Chair Councillor P Brindley.

(Moved by Councillor R Ford and seconded by Councillor P Brindley)

Infrastructure, Safety & Growth

RESOLVED That Council;

Endorsed the Annual Report of the Committee

The Chair of Infrastructure, Safety & Growth thanked all members of the Committee, Officers and cabinet members for their attendance and also the Democratic services officer.

(Moved by Councillor S Goodall and seconded by Councillor Dr S Peuple)

The Mayor