

COUNCIL

TUESDAY 25TH OCTOBER 2022

REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

STATE OF TAMWORTH DEBATE

Exempt Information

None

Purpose

To enable Council to undertake the annual State of Tamworth Debate.

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- Members use the report's contents as the basis for this debate.

Executive Summary

The annual State of Tamworth Debate provides members with the opportunity to look back at the work of the council over the last 12 months, discuss plans for the future and consider public feedback gained through consultation exercises.

It gives members the chance to comment on the council's vision and priorities and the work that is ongoing in each of the main areas of focus.

The debate is also a key part of the Budget setting process for the coming financial year.

The overriding goal is to make sure our organisation remains fit for the future, while protecting services to the most vulnerable in our community. This approach requires members to put evidence and insight at the heart of decision making to ensure that we are transparent about the rationale for our decisions and plans; it will involve managed risks and will sustain essential services critical in supporting the most vulnerable in our communities at a time when demand is increasing and resources reducing.

Significant uncertainties around the council's finances remain, pending an update on the Fair Funding Review (and Business Rates reset), as well as significant cost pressures arising from the current economic situation. Members will face difficult decisions around prioritising services when faced with significant reductions in funding.

Corporate Plan

Tamworth Borough Council's new Corporate Plan was launched earlier this year, covering the period 2022 to 2025.

It includes the new vision 'Tamworth – celebrating our heritage, creating a better future'

This will assist with our mission to 'restore Tamworth town centre as the beating heart of the community, a place that people want to visit, rather than a place they have to visit'.

The Corporate Plan details five areas of focus for the borough; including the key outcomes we are seeking to achieve and how we will work to achieve them.

The plan was brought together by members, during a number of member-led workshops and seminars, and incorporating feedback given by residents during the council's Residents Survey and Budget Consultation exercises.

Annual Residents Survey

To help elected members set the budget and priorities, residents are consulted every year on spending and savings options through the Budget Consultation. Last year, we also launched the new Annual Residents Survey which dug deeper into Tamworth as a place and the issues that matter most to the people who live and work here.

The survey was the most successful consultation exercise run by the council for many years and attracted more than 500 responses. The most common themes were used to inform the Corporate Plan.

This year, to avoid duplication and for a more efficient use of resources, the Budget Consultation and Residents Survey have been combined into one 'Tamworth Conversation'. It again includes the Local Government Association recommended questions to provide a benchmark across Local Government and to enable us to measure the results over time.

The 2022 Annual Survey is open for six weeks up to October 18 and has attracted even more responses than last year. The results will be collated and presented to members later this year to help inform the 2023-24 Budget setting process.

This process ensures that the issues, concerns and priorities of our residents continue to be reflected in the work of the council as we navigate more uncertain financial times ahead in light of the cost-of-living crisis, significant cost pressures in areas such as energy and materials, uncertainties around the finalisation of the Brexit process and the as yet unknown outcome of spending reforms.

Please see Appendix 1 for an overview of the corporate priorities and the work that has been achieved/planned against each, together with some aspirational goals, which can be used to inform this year's State of Tamworth Debate.

Resource Implications

As a result of the updated forecast in July 2022, the Central Case forecast projections now identify General Fund balances of £2.1m over three years – with a shortfall of £1.6m by 2025/26 and £5.2m over the five years to 2026/27. For the HRA, the Central Case forecast projections at July 2022 now identify HRA balances of £1.9m over three years, £1.3m by 2025/26 and £0.9m over the five years to 2026/27.

However, with a potential rent cap, increasing cost pressures (and reduced income) the situation is likely to worsen.

It is also worth noting the substantial workload that officers are facing in delivering an already ambitious plan, particularly amid the outlined financial challenges.

Legal/Risk Implications

There are none.

Sustainability Implications

There are none

List of Background papers

Corporate Vision, Priorities Plan, Budget & Medium Term Financial Strategy 2022/23

<https://democracy.tamworth.gov.uk/documents/s30968/Corporate%20Vision%20Priorities%20Plan%20Budget%20Medium%20Term%20Financial%20Strategy%20202223.pdf>

Quarter 1 2022/23 Performance Report, Cabinet 8th September 2022

<https://democracy.tamworth.gov.uk/documents/s32571/Appendix%201%20Quarter%20one%20202223%20performance%20report.pdf>

Tamworth Residents Survey Results 2021

https://www.tamworth.gov.uk/sites/default/files/misc_docs/Residents-Survey-2021-Results.pdf

Tamworth Residents Survey 2022

Appendices

Appendix 1 - State of Tamworth Debate Table

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