



MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD ON 21st MARCH 2023

PRESENT: Councillor M J Greatorex (Mayor), Councillors D Cook, M Bailey, D Box, R Claymore, T Clements, M Cook, C Cooke, A Cooper, S Daniels, S Doyle, A Farrell, S Goodall, J Harper, T Jay, R Kingstone, D Maycock, J Oates, S Peaple, B Price, R Pritchard, R Rogers, S Smith, M Summers, P Thompson, P Thurgood, P Turner and J Wadrup

The following officers were present: Andrew Barratt (Chief Executive), Nicola Hesketh (Monitoring Officer) and Tracey Pointon (Legal Admin & Democratic Services Manager)

71 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Maycock, J Wade and J Jones

72 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest.

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

The Mayor Councillor M Greatorex made the following announcement

I would like to welcome Councillor Paul Thompson, welcome and I hope you are going to enjoy your first Council meeting and I would like to congratulate you and Councillor Farrell who won a seat on Staffordshire County Council

Councillor J Oates made the following announcement.

I would also like to welcome Councillor Thompson to the chamber but would like to re-iterate as per the email I circulated last week that Councillor Thompson will replace former Councillor Ford on his Committee allocation for the rest of the Municipal Year.

Councillor R Pritchard made the following announcement.

I just want to announce that Tamworth Borough Council received a finalist award in the National Prosper Awards they were one of three shortlisted play areas nationally and I think that is an incredible achievement. So would just like to thank everybody that has been involved in building that play area for the authority.

Councillor T Clements made the following announcement.

As people will know Staffordshire Day is on the 1st of May every year and this year's theme is Learn Something New. I would like to ask everyone in this chamber if they could think about something they could learn that's new, whether that be a language or turning the Hoover on in the morning and I want as many photographs and videos if you can do that send to Tania Phillips, just to prove that we as councillors can learn something new and get involved in Staffordshire Day on May 1st.

Councillor D Cook made the following announcement.

Just with your grace I'm not involved in the inner circle of the Conservative party anymore so I'm not sure if any other Councillors who are re-standing or not, but I am aware there are two Councillors in the Chamber who tonight marks their last meeting as Councillors, and it would be remiss of the chamber not to thank them for their service. First of all, Councillor Dennis Box who is not re-standing his seat in Glascote in May. I have certainly got to know Dennis very well over the last 12 months and I can tell you he's got an absolute heart of gold his passion for Glascote and the surrounding area. He gives everything to the residents he tries to help and what surprised me for a former UKIP Councillor is he's an absolute raving socialist, former trade union rep and as I say absolute heart of gold. And of course, Councillor Sheree People, I had a lovely text from her husband this week threatening me if I didn't say some nice things, but I was intending to Madam Mayor. As we know Sheree as brought a dedication and some passion to certain Scrutiny and Full Council, however, don't think the community of Tamworth is losing Councillor People because as we know actually Councillor People does so much in the community especially around the Heart of Tamworth and we know that work is essential up the areas of Glascote, Stoneydelph etc. I just personally want to thank them both for their service and wish them well in the future.

The Leader Councillor J Oates made the following announcement.

If I may I would like to echo the sentiments of Councillor Cook. I wasn't aware Councillor Box was stepping down, so I wish you all the best and thank you for your service of the people you represent not only in the Ward that elected you but across the whole of the borough. Also, Councillor Sheree People, not just Tamworth Borough Council but prior to that had a very active and involved stint at Staffordshire County Council and I can say Councillor Sheree People's legend lives on I think Councillor Sheree People was responsible for nearly every call in that was held at Staffordshire for the period she was on. So she certainly not afraid of challenging and coming forward and making sure we consider the right things, so yes it's with sadness that we say goodbye to you from the Council but I am aware of the work you do in the community and the effort and contribution you make and I think that should be celebrated and we should be grateful for the work

the pair of you have done. Madam Mayor I appreciate you have announced your not re-standing but you will have the pleasure of opening the next full council meeting so not goodbye quite yet but you have really done a cracking job in the short time you've been on the Council and we are grateful for the guidance you give us at Full Council.

Councillor Richard Kingstone made the following announcement.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity just to say a few words. Its really to say thank you to Officers and to many of the members here present for their wonderful support and kind words over the past 12 months since I my 'dicky ticker' started to play up as I call it but also in particular over the recent months of my wife's ill health which is still continuing and is going to continue for many many more months to come. As I mentioned at the start of the meeting, I really do want to thank you all personally I know we had some time in the pub a couple of weeks ago and the kind words that came through them were really really nice. And it's really touched me. As my wife has come out of hospital today so with your permission after my question I am going to head home and spend some quality time with her. Thank you all for your support over recent months.

The Mayor replied, thank you Councillor Kingstone I'm sure we all would wish you wife the very best.

74 QUESTION TIME:

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL NO. 1

Under Procedure Rule No 11, Councillor R Kingstone will ask the Leader of the Council, Councillor J Oates, the following question:-

When we will see a fully functioning council front desk service return to the town centre?

Councillor Oates gave the following response

Thank you, Councillor Kingstone, for your question I can confirm that the Council as a fully functioning front desk in the town centre and this is located in Corporation Street and it is housed in the building known as the Assembly Rooms

Supplementary

I'm trying to come up with a colourful metaphor to describe what we've just heard but I won't used one to describe the comment made by the Leader of the council. On the back of what you have just said Councillor Oates and given comments on my social media feed over the recent two weeks since I started a petition to ask this Council to debate the return back to a full service that petition which has been pencilled in for in to be discussed in July depending on how the Council calendar works out and taking into account of over a thousand residents' concerns, several members of the controlling group actually liking those social media posts, a Cabinet member actually commenting on my post that they could overhear a

conversation taking place in the front desk service that you say is being offered. Ex Council staff who have worked on front desk for many many years saying that the current service is not up to standard and is not safe for the staff that work there. Feedback from countless users of the service that you say is there at the moment, I say that the desk is not fit for purpose and so do may of the residents of Tamworth. So, do you really really want the residents of Tamworth to believe that the service you are saying is there is truly deserving of our residents to our vulnerable residents at that. So to get to the point will you think again and will you save me the embarrassment to you and the controlling group of having to present the petition in July and think again about restoring a proper full desk service to Tamworth town Centre.

Councillor J Oates gave the following response

Thank you, Mr Kingstone, for his long explanation in terms of the supplementary. Members of the public can access all council services through Corporation Street in the same way as they could at the previous location. All services are delivered in just the same way as they were when reception was in Marmion House. We have now housed them in the historic building of the Assembly rooms but they are the same access and the same services we had before.

Its three years and one day since this Country went into lock down and I hear the comments made around comments on social media and feedback. We've not had a single complaint about access to an individual service come to Tamworth Borough Council. Its also important to be aware of the many other ways that people can access services of Tamworth Borough Council. Before I do that let me explain some background. As covid hit like every other organisation the council had to adapt and adapted overnight. We didn't stop delivering our services to the citizens of Tamworth who needed the most. Marmion House did close as part of the adaptations we then launched one of our biggest corporate programmes which was the Reset and Recovery programme. This relocated the reception into Corporation Street. Just so you aware as a side note Reset and Recovery is a multi-stream programme of change which aims to save this Council in the region of 8 million pounds over a 5 year period. As part of that programme members have received no less than 5 separate updates on the change in landscape and expectation and also the regeneration of Marmion House. Investing in this building and responding to changes in public demand on services. But also, through those governance arrangements on that project each Scrutiny Committee as reviewed it relevant part of the service transformation. Health & Wellbeing debated customer service on a number of occasions and so as this full council. To deliver on the efficiencies and make better use of our assets tailoring service as a re-design access as meant we have been able to continue to invest and deliver our vision of celebrating out heritage and creating a better future. By making the Town Hall our municipal headquarters, the Assembly Rooms our front door and paving the way to the Town Centre revitalisation we are able to de-commission Marmion House. Aside from the savings let me clarify a few points in terms of the information around Tamworth Borough Council's reception. Its now located on Corporation Street, it's housed within the building we know and recognise as the Assembly Rooms. It's the front face of the council, it is open 6 days a week from 10.00am to 4.00pm it also operates as a ticket office for not only council shows but third parties and also acts as a tourist

Information Centre to visitors to Tamworth. It supports local town centre business. So that additionality we now have a reception that's open 6 days a week, plus if there are shows on the Assembly Rooms are open before and after shows so open in the evenings and even on Sundays on occasions. We have increased the opportunity for face-to-face communications with the public. We've continued to offer the same triage service for customers as we did in the old location in Marmion House. We've signpost to other agencies we book appointments we help people where they need help. In order the progress the re-development of Marmion House and be more efficient we are investing in this building bringing Tamworth Borough Council back to its home and celebrating our heritage. We are also looking at how we make our service more agile and responsive. In order to do this, we need to tailor our services and tailor it to our vulnerable citizens that we have talked about earlier on. We must ensure that those who do not have access to a telephone or the internet or a computer still have face to face opportunities and we've repeatedly said we are committed to that in fact it was 11 months ago I was asked by the then Leader of the Opposition to re-confirm that commitment and that commitment is still there Madam Mayor we will continue to have face to face front facing reception for Tamworth Borough Council. At the moment it is in Corporation Street in the future it may be somewhere else, the point is we will continue to have that face to face. We also must be aware of how we have changed the way we have delivered services. I will give you a couple of examples how we have changed since the impact of the pandemic. In the last 12 months we have made 800 home visits to people dealing with housing enquiries, this has included helping them fill in forms either at the customers home or Corporation Street, in their home where they are comfortable, we take the service to them, we are not demanding they come into town. We help people with their housing register verification in their home. Tennant sustainability and support. We discuss rent arrears one to one in peoples homes we go out and visit them if they have an issue. We give general money advice in their homes. Those unfortunate people that have to go into bed and breakfast because they are made homeless, we visit them there or we arrange a mutual place where we can see them face to face. Our supported housing teams still do face to face while being checked at all of our locations. We still offer mental health support and signpost. Revenues and Benefits now do home visits not only that they hold surgeries at community locations in the community where people need help. Planning is available on site or on demand, help with document verification completed at reception. Referrals to the food bank is made through all our staff when we see somebody vulnerable whether that be at the front desk or at some of our outreach operations. We also offer ICT training from our Council staff in the library. Support for rough sleepers is delivered with our partners St Editha's Church, St John's, Heart of England and Communities Together. Outreach for homelessness is delivered again with our partners at Sacred Heart and Manna House. Customer Services team also continue to support benefit applications and form filling. We deliver all these services not just on reception, not just online, not just on the phone also in people's homes and in community venues across the town, we are doing far more than we have ever done to each the people who need our help the most.

That's only a short list, members will receive a catalogue of support which we intend to convert into an easy, friendly to use fact sheet so we can sign post people to where they can access services easier. Let's not forget most of our

customers access us through the telephone. We also have webchats and email. I appreciate the argument around isolation and around being able to get onto the internet. Each month our customer services team handles 8,500 telephone calls, 1,700 emails and 650 online chat enquiries. This is in addition to the people that present face to face the people we visit in their home and the people we pick up at various surgeries. Not only that in our commitment to face to face last week the Cabinet approved the opening of the Homelessness Hub which will be launched based on asking partners to deliver surgeries with the council, at a range of local venues, providing more opportunity for face to face and providing early intervention support to rough sleepers and those threatened by homelessness. We have stepped up in terms of our communications with the public and the people that need us most, not only through a front desk which delivers the same as the old front desk but also by getting out of the office and going to see people face to face in their homes and in their local environment.

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL NO. 2

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

Readers of The Tamworth Herald last week will have been delighted to see the headline "Is flooding at the arches at an end?". For those who may not have seen the newspaper, please could you summarise the key points about proposed works to prevent flooding at the arches whose roads not only serve Bolehall, but also act as a key gateway to other wards in the town?

Councillor Oates gave the following response

Firstly I would just like to have put on record that I stand here as a Tamworth Borough Council members and Tamworth Borough Council does not have any involvement in those works, however, I am aware of the County Council project because I have different hat on where I've been involved in it. So I will be answering this in terms of giving information rather than the borough council claiming any ownership or involvement in that process. A number of years ago it was noticed that flooding was taking place at the Glascote arch I think it was actually over decades. With my County Councillor hat on when I was elected in 2017 I asked for that to be looked into by the County Council at the time I was informed that no-one at Stafford was aware of the issue and it had never been flagged before which amazes me and its I think its one of those where annoys everyone and causes problems for everybody but everyone assumes that everyone was aware of it and it clearly wasn't. So that was the feedback I got, so I pursued a number of options back then, including using my divisional highways plan to try and get some work done, so engaging with the Cabinet members at county this was eventually put onto along list of potential works if the Council ever got round to it. So, the announcement on the front page of the Herald was quite an exciting announcement if you read it and so what I am going to do now is explain what is happening. So what's actually happening is a series of survey works are taking place in the area and looking at solutions, £25,000 as been allocated and County Council will look at the investigations around what is causing the flooding or what can be done better in terms of mitigating against that flooding but also improving the flow of water away from that site. I don't think

I need to explain I think we are all aware that that site is a very low point and the drainage, and the drainage works adjacent to the river are almost the same height as the river itself. So as a result, there will be natural problems of shifting that water. It is also a key route as you've suggested to not only Bolehall but also Glascote, Stoneydelph and parts of Amington are on that side of town. Its also a key pedestrian route if we look at the area around the Tamworth Road, Kettlebrook their school is MacGregor school which is on the Glascote road, so in a morning the school children have to walk through or adjacent to that flooding. So, at the moment the project is to do some technical survey work actually find out what's under the ground because there is unbelievably there's no full record. Identify what drainage is there identify what other utilities are there and identify the opportunities for what we can do to remove that water quicker. But also looking at other mitigating factors, pone suggestion a number of years ago was around raising the footpath on the right-hand side so it isn't impacted by the water, I don't know how far that is going to go that was just a suggestion someone came up with. So at the moment it is £25,000 of investigative works to understand and identify the problem and identify what can take place in that area.

Councillor S Daniels asked the following Supplementary.

Thank you for the detail I hoped for it, and you delivered. You mentioned finances is there any information for our residents about potential timescale for those works

Councillor J Oates gave the following answer.

In terms of those £25,000 worth of works that have been awarded they will take place over the next 12 months so will be programmed into the Integrated Transport Programme.

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL NO. 3

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

Does the leader agree that Tamworth Councillors should engage with Officers and Portfolio Holders directly to solve residents' issues or go straight to the media as the first port of call?

Councillor Oates gave the following response.

There are number of ways in which the public can access services and I think I may have detailed those in my answer to question one. Should a member of the public have reason to escalate their issue to a Councillor then that Councillor has a number of options they may take. There is a dedicated email address for members to pursue housing enquiries and this is monitored through office hours so a response will be sent as soon as possible to members. The same applies to the Community Safety and they have their email. If a local Councillor cannot resolve their issue directly with Officers on that issue, they could engage the

relevant portfolio holder and pursue it through the Cabinet member and or Senior officers. As far as I'm aware the media whether it be printed or social, does not deliver services on behalf of Tamworth Borough Council and nor can it escalate issues or resolve those issues. So therefore, Councillor Goodall I would agree with your comment that the first port of call should be to resolve the issue for the member of the public and do that by reaching out to Officers, Senior Officers or Cabinet Members.

75 HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE LICENSING POLICY 2023 - 2028

Report of the Portfolio Holder for Voluntary Sector, Town Centre Evening Economy & Community Safety – Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy 2023-2028.

To bring before Full Council the Licensing Committee recommendation that they consider the draft Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy 2023 – 2028 as suitable for adoption.

RESOLVED: that Council

agreed to the recommendation of the Licensing Committee to consider the draft Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy 2023 – 2028 as suitable for adoption and effective as of 1st April 2023.

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

The Mayor