



## **MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 5th SEPTEMBER 2024**

**PRESENT:** Councillor S Smith (Chair), Councillors G Coates, M Couchman, H Hadley, T Jay, K Norchi, M Summers and A Wells

**CABINET** Councillor Carol Dean  
Councillor Nova Arkney  
Councillor Lewis Smith

The following officers were present: Anica Goodwin (Executive Director Organisation), Paul Weston (Assistant Director Assets), Zoe Wolicki (Assistant Director People), Gareth Youlden (Head of Technology and Information Services), Tracey Pointon (Legal Admin & Democratic Services Manager) and Leanne Costello (Senior Scrutiny and Democratic Services Officer)

### **29 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor B Price.

Apologies were received from Councillor G Coates that he would need to leave the meeting at 7:30pm.

### **30 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> August 2024 were approved as a correct record.

*(Moved by Councillor T Jay and seconded by Councillor A Wells)*

### **31 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were none.

### **32 CHAIR'S UPDATE**

The Chair reminded the Committee of the upcoming scrutiny training session on the 16<sup>th</sup> September with the LGA.

**33 RESPONSES TO REPORTS OF THE CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

The Chair thanked Councillor Wells for attending Cabinet on their behalf on the 29<sup>th</sup> August to present the Committees recommendations.

The Chair highlighted that this is an issue that the Council need to work collaboratively on and this would have been a good opportunity for the Council and the Executive to talk about some of the recommendations that directly affect leaseholders and put their minds at ease over renewals.

**34 CONSIDERATION OF MATTERS REFERRED TO THE CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FROM CABINET / COUNCIL**

There were none.

**35 MARMION HOUSE RECEPTION AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

The Chair welcomed the Assistant Director People and the Leader of the Council to introduce the Report, who handed over to the Portfolio Holder for People Services, Engagement and Leisure.

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report and highlighted that recent research carried out as part of the corporate plan consultation, highlighted that priorities for residents included Council accessibility and communication, and improving face to face services and this was also the experience of Members. It would also be available for the voluntary sector to use and create a town hub, confirming the proposed opening times. The Assembly Rooms did not provide a suitable alternative to a front desk as it failed to provide decency to people who may already be in a vulnerable situation.

The Leader of the Council highlighted that the report also dealt with the issue of moving committee meetings to Marmion House where it was more accessible, there would be a bigger public gallery and give opportunities for better ICT whilst giving the Council an exciting opportunity to look embrace the heritage of the building and engage residents to look at use of the Town Hall for other purposes.

The Committee made the following comments/observations and asked the following questions:

1. Whether the item had been on the forward plan?  
It was confirmed that the matter had gone on to the plan on the 14<sup>th</sup> august.
2. Whether the Council were turning their back on its heritage by using some of the budget for the town hall improvements for this project highlighting that the town hall was still available for use during the day?  
Whether spending money on new items such as ICT and furniture in a temporary location was a waste of money and how could this be justified knowing that moving forward there are more budgetary pressures on the

Council and whether accessibility should be considered at all costs? It was highlighted that the public gallery was rarely filled at the Town Hall.

The Leader of the Council highlighted that whilst the building was only used for meetings in the evening, it was set up as a Chamber all the time. When there had been matters of public interest in recent years the Town Hall had not been able to accommodate all of the public who attended. Currently staff must move between two buildings, there are times that two buildings are using heating and lighting. Whilst there is a lift the building is still not disabled friendly, and the location meant that there were issues getting to and from the building. Freeing up the Town Hall would enable a piece of work to be carried out to look at what else the building could be used for. The hope would be that in the future that this could form part of a heritage trail. Contracts on Marmion House would mean that they would expect to be using this for at least 5 years.

The Portfolio Holder confirmed that there were constant complaints about the recording system and that this needed improving at either location.

The Cost of the relocation of the Committee meeting would not require all of the town hall budget referring to the figures in the report.

3. It was noted that there were concerns around personal safety particularly with the recent riots and with the darker nights when people may be walking to and from locations alone.
4. Whether a piece of work would be carried out to look at what could be done with the building?

The Leader of the Council confirmed that they would like to get all interested parties involved to look at how the Town Hall could be used and they had asked officers if they could look at whether there were any possible grants that they could apply for to support with the heritage of the Town Hall.

5. How the projected figures of 200 enquiries per week had been established when previous data suggested that the TIC were receiving 44 enquiries per month and were these overestimated? Whether a new purpose-built location would be better, highlighting that any location would have the issue of residents attending with personal matters to discuss at the front desk?

The Portfolio Holder highlighted that Marmion House could not be decommissioned for several years due to contracts. The Council did not know how many people were not using the TIC as they are unaware of it or because it is unsuitable.

The Leader of the Council highlighted that there are a number of people that still attend Marmion House to find it closed and they were unsure if they were capturing all of the vulnerable residents within the borough. They also confirmed that there would be a system to triage visitors at the front desk and take them to a separate room if necessary.

Officers confirmed that the figures are projected and that the service could be scaled up or down depending on the need.

6. The Committee suggested that the problems of privacy at the TIC could be addresses in the same manner as at Marmion House.
7. Whether Marmion house was open at the time of the meeting?  
It was confirmed that it was not.
8. It was highlighted that a petition had been submitted previously showing that over 1000 people had wanted the reopening of the front desk.

9. Would the improvements and inclusion of the Town Hall as part of a heritage trail increase tourism within the town.

The Leader confirmed that they would like to implement a proper heritage trail within the town including the town hall.

10. Whether this decision should be a Full Council matter?

The Leader confirmed that they would be happy for the matter to be discussed at Full Council if this was decided that this was required.

It was highlighted by Officers that this paper was not concerned with the disposal of Marmion House and there were no decisions being made on that matter.

**Resolved** that the Committee endorsed the following recommendations for Cabinet:

1. to reopen the reception area at Marmion House to provide face-to-face customer services which meet the needs of the whole community as follows: Monday, Wednesday, Friday between 10.00am and 2.00pm & Tuesday and Thursday 2.00pm - 6.00pm

*(moved by Councillor M Couchman and Councillor G Coates)*

Votes –

For – 5

Against – 3

Abstentions – 0

2. to reopen the reception area at Marmion House to provide face-to-face customer services which meet the needs of the whole community as follows: Monday, Wednesday, Friday between 10.00am and 2.00pm & Tuesday and Thursday 2.00pm - 6.00pm

*(moved by Councillor M Couchman and Councillor H Hadley)*

Votes –

For – 5

Against – 3

Abstentions – 0

3. to redesign the reception area to support the customer service offer which will open within four months of Cabinet approval (subject to contractors)

*(moved by Councillor G Coates and Councillor K Norchi)*

Votes –

For – 5

Against – 3

Abstentions - 0

4. to review opening hours, usage, and customer feedback on a weekly basis with a full review at six months

*(moved by Councillor M Couchman and Councillor H Hadley)*

Votes –  
For – 5  
Against – 3  
Abstentions – 0

5. to continue to develop the service to explore and incorporate co-location working with statutory partners, the voluntary sector and community groups.

*(moved by Councillor T Jay and Councillor M Couchman)*

6. to continue to deliver the full customer service offer from the Tamworth Information Centre at the Assembly Rooms during their opening hours.

*(moved by Councillor T Jay and Councillor M Summers)*

7. to relocate all council meetings to Marmion House upon completion of audio-visual technology installation and minor refurbishment of the council chamber, except for the civic ceremonies.

*(moved by Councillor M Couchman and Councillor G Coates)*

Votes –  
For – 5  
Against – 3  
Abstentions – 0

8. to approve the repurposing of capital funds identified for Recovery and Reset and Town Hall improvement projects to fund refurbishments to the chamber and Marmion House reception.

*(Moved by Councillor M Couchman and Councillor K Norchi)*

Votes –  
For – 5  
Against – 3  
Abstentions - 0

The Chair thanked the Officers and Portfolio Holders for their attendance and invited them to leave.

## **36 ICT STRATEGY PROGRESS UPDATE**

The Chair welcomed the Assistant Director People, the Head of Technology and Information Services and the Leader of the Council, thanking the Officers for providing a very comprehensive report.

The Leader of the Council introduced the report before handing over to the Head of Technology who provided an overview of the report detailing information on the 5 themes of the current strategy.

The Committee made the following comments/observations and asked the following questions:

1. Members highlighted from experience that transitions to the Cloud and working with SharePoint and MS Teams had been a good thing.
2. The Committee highlighted that usability was important and that it reports updates on status back to the people using the system and that systems were integrated and talking to each other across departments.
3. Clarification around security and where the Councils data is held, and if this was offshore, could these go bankrupt and is there a need for penetration testing?  
Officers confirmed that there was a requirement for penetration testing and one of the Council requirements is that all of the data is held in UK based Microsoft data centre in the south of the country and all migrations to the cloud were UK based.
4. It was highlighted by the Committee that using Power BI that could produce data metrics, and that the authority needed to be data driven organisation to be effective.
5. The report referred to implementing a new system at the Council Chamber at Marmion House and that this would go ahead in November, and where the governance was around this as the decision to return to committee meetings at Marmion House had not yet been made?  
Officers confirmed that the work had gone out to tender to give an idea of costings but that no award would be made until a decision had been made. It was confirmed that the works could be transferred to be considered to the current building if necessary.  
The Leader of the Council apologised and acknowledged for the wording within the report.
6. It was highlighted by the Committee that it would be good to have a commitment to bring these matters back on a regular basis.

Councillor G Coates left the meeting at 7:30pm.

The Chair acknowledged the report and confirmed that there were no recommendations and thank Officers for their input and invited them to leave.

### **37 WORKING GROUP UPDATES**

There were no updates.

### **38 FORWARD PLAN**

The Committee agreed to add the following items to the workplan for the next meetings –

Update on Strategic Review of Leaseholder Service Charges  
Update on the Housing Repairs Contract

### **39 CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PLAN**

The Chair confirmed that the next meeting was on the 9<sup>th</sup> October and that they are expecting the Social Housing Regulatory Update.

The Committee highlighted that in the future it would like to see the following –  
Complaints, Compliments and Comments  
Housing Voids Update  
Damp and Mould

#### **40 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

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

*(Moved by Councillor M Couchman and Seconded by Councillor A Wells)*

#### **41 UPDATE ON COMMERCIAL LEASE NEGOTIATIONS**

Report of the Portfolio Holder for Infrastructure, Heritage and Economy and the Executive Director Communities to provide an update on the current status of lease negotiations at the former Frankie and Benny's site on Bolebridge Street, Tamworth.

Resolved that Committee:

Endorsed the two recommendations within the report.

*(Moved by Councillor T Jay and Councillor A Wells)*

#### **42 UPDATE ON COMMERCIAL LEASE**

Report of the Portfolio Holder for Infrastructure, Heritage and Economy and the Executive Director Communities to provide an update on the current status of the Ankerside Shopping Centre Lease, it sets out actions that have been taken to date and considers options for the future of the centre

As no motion was moved by the meeting at 8:30 the item was deemed formally move under procedure rule 7.2 of schedule 1.

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Chair

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