



MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD ON 19th MARCH 2013

PRESENT: Councillor T Clements (Chair), Councillors J Garner, M Clarke, D Cook, C Cooke, M Couchman, S Doyle, J Faulkner, D Foster, K Gant, M Gant, M Greatorex, R Kingstone, A Lunn, M McDermid, R McDermid, K Norchi, J Oates, S Peale, R Pritchard, S Pritchard, E Rowe, P Seekings, P Standen and M Thurgood

The following officers were present: Anthony E Goodwin (Chief Executive), John Wheatley (Executive Director Corporate Services), Jane Hackett (Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer) and Lara Allman (Democratic & Election Services Officer)

62 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors L Bates, S Claymore, G Hirons and A James.

63 TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 February 2013 were approved and signed as a correct record.

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

64 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest.

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

None

66 QUESTION TIME:

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

NO.1

Under Procedure Rule No 11, Councillor M Couchman will ask the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development and Enterprise, the following question:-

"How much will it cost if the Council takes back the Golf Course and reopens it, running it in house?"

In the absence of the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development and Enterprise, the Leader of the Council gave the following Reply:

Thank you Cllr Couchman.

Madam Mayor, I realise this is a time of uncertainty for the golf club members, paying public and staff. We are, as members will be aware, looking at the options available to us, as a local authority. Firstly, I am cautious of public comment in regards to the future. We must remember that Tamworth Golf Centre LTD is a private company about to go through the liquidation process; the staff employed by the company have rights. Whether they see redundancy through the liquidation process or a government protection scheme, until the end of the liquidation process I wish to avoid comments that could affect their rights. At present I am aware there is a meeting of the liquidators on Thursday 21st March.

As we all know the land remains in our ownership, thus the tax-payers ownership. It was clear that the company was no longer viable and could not meet its commitments. As I stated through the Tamworth Herald, I could not – and would not – justify any further change to the rent payments and other terms any further. It was time to take control of the situation in the benefit of the whole tax-payer. I have been working with the operator for some time, and I had personally led discussions which brought an earlier end to tipping on the site, agreed last year, I met the operator and stated we must now bring an end to the tipping.

We recognise that for the majority of the time the company ran the course, the Borough Council benefited financially from the arrangement. However I also recognise we had reached the point of no return. We must recall that by 2006 it cost the Council Tax payer about £60,000 to £80,000 per year to subsidise the golf course and this was not sustainable in the long term. We needed to do better with our assets.

At present there are a lot of variables that need to be understood. I am happy to personally meet with any member who wants taking through this, especially around costs of running the course. If the member wishes to contact me and arrange some time I would be more than happy to run through everything. However, I simply cannot at this stage in this arena quantify exactly the total costs of running the course in-house.

Supplementary question:

I'm glad you feel concerned about the Golf Course and the rights of the employees. Is it true that part of the Golf Course is designated for other use on it?

The Leader of the Council gave the following reply:

A small part of the land that is not actually part of the Golf Course, according to the original lease has got alternative use so could be freed up for other sports, housing etc.

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL **NO.2**
Under Procedure Rule No 11, Councillor M Couchman will ask the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Waste Management, the following question:-

"How much will it cost the council taxpayers this year for Tamworth In Bloom?"

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Waste Management gave the following reply:

Thank you madam Mayor, The current annual entry fee for Tamworth in Bloom is £200 for the Small City Category. There is no separate budget line for "in-Bloom", the associated costs are met from within existing resources.

Supplementary question:

It obviously takes up a lot of time. Can you quantify the number of man hours and the cost of the plants etc?

The Portfolio Holder for Environmental and Waste Management gave the following reply:

The annual income from external sponsorship for Bloom is approximately £5000 which supplements existing schedules for grounds maintenance and street cleansing.

However the Council spends over £2.2 million pounds a year on grounds maintenance and street cleansing as part of its existing on-going schedules.
Precise information for the Public Open Spaces budget for 2012-13:-

- £2,239,970 total,
- £1,703,250 net or salaries £1,133,220

Part of the associated costs in the budget for plants, was for 2012-13:-

- For the Summer Period - £21,000
- And for the Winter Period - £15,000

The majority of the bedding plants are used in the Castle grounds and in the hanging baskets around the town.

All of this work is undertaken in house so the teams alter their working practices to fit the "in bloom" competition into these practices, to avoid any additional costs.

An example of how costs are kept to a minimum is last year's entry to 'in Bloom', the route was designed around the Olympic Torch route to avoid duplication of effort, and worked alongside other services to ensure the town was presented in a way that everyone could be proud of.

There are also hidden benefits into this, in that it involves substantial opportunities for community involvement.

This policy also provides opportunities to schools to educate children on the environment and how plants and vegetables grow, to sheltered complexes having beautiful gardens and the wild about Tamworth volunteer groups being recognised for their level of community involvement.

We must also remember that the flowers also form a welcome to the town, especially on the main gateways into the town centre. This adds the welcome factor and demonstrates this Council's commitment to trade and visitor attractions in the town centre.

It is likely this would continue even if we did not enter Tamworth in Bloom as it is the current policy and provides a positive environment in which to live and work.

Tamworth in Bloom is something that is bigger than the individual component parts and should not be viewed in isolation, providing many different benefits as well as a sense of pride for the people of Tamworth.

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL NO.3

A question was received from Councillor G Hirons but it was withdrawn as he was not present at the meeting.

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL NO.4

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

"Since the last meeting of Tamworth Borough Council on 26 February 2013, what further considerations has he had to eliminate the annual deficiency of nearly £2,000,000 in the funding of Tamworth Borough Council's general fund in future years which has been caused by policies of his own Conservative Government?"

The Leader of the Council gave the following reply:

Thank you Cllr Faulkner,

Madam Mayor, to advise members that a number of key pieces of work have been commissioned by the Executive Management Team (Cabinet/CMT) under the umbrella of the draft Sustainability Strategy.

The strategy incorporates a range of outcome based work streams designed to provide tangible contributions towards tackling the deficit over the five year period “sooner rather than later”.

These work streams will focus upon generating “sustainable” outcomes and not simply ‘one off’ efficiencies. Our intention is to use innovation, managed risks and long term efficiencies to help to achieve a balanced budget by working with officers, across boundaries and involving all tiers of the organisation.

These work streams include:

- **Income Generation**
- **Growing the Business**
- **Strategic Policy Reviews**

As members across the Chamber will be aware, circumstances such as this rarely have a quick fix. Indeed, having already reduced revenue spend by over £12.5m since 2006, we already have one of the “leanest” Councils in the region.

I am hoping to adopt a “whole Council” approach to tackling the deficit. The Chief Executive has already hosted one workshop for CMT and Cabinet; a second involving all Heads of Service & CMT is scheduled for 25th March with the findings to be report to Executive Management Team on 15th April.

Madam Mayor should opposition Members wish to engage in this corporate project, I am certain that the Chief Executive would dedicate a workshop for that very purpose.

Finally, as and when appropriate, updates on progress will be reported as part of the Corporate Performance report. But this controlling group will not be pushed into snap decisions that can have massive effects on services and staff employment. Tamworth deserves long term solutions, not quick political fixes. The work is on-going, never stops and I have informed my Cabinet this is not a side project. It is now **the** project!

Supplementary question:

Thank you for your comprehensive reply. I welcome the opportunity to be involved. Can we have a Gant Chart to monitor progress as this is very important?

The Leader of the Council gave the following reply:

I suggest that I, Councillors J Faulkner, R McDermid, C Cooke and R Pritchard meet with the Chief Executive to take forward. I welcome your input and will set up a cross party working group to look at this issue. This is not a result of anything that has been agreed in this Chamber.

Under Procedure Rule No 11, Councillor J Faulkner will ask the Deputy Leader of the Council, the following question:-

"At the last meeting of Tamworth Borough Council on 26 February 2013, the Deputy Leader of the Council said that anyone who said that the budget report contained any cuts had either completely misunderstood the document or was a liar and that either worked quite well for him. Will the Deputy Leader of the Council now apologise for his utterly unwarranted insult to the integrity of fellow Councillors?"

The Deputy Leader of the Council gave the following Reply:

Answer - I said "anyone who said the budget proposed cuts" so no I don't

Supplementary question:

Will the Deputy Leader not agree with me that this is not in keeping with the nature of this office representing the Borough of Tamworth? By using tawdry language debases this historic borough.

The Deputy Leader of the Council gave the following Reply:

I believe you are saying all members are lying – no I didn't say that.

67 AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE ANNUAL REPORT

The Report of the Chair of Audit and Governance Committee advising Members on the action taken by the Audit and Governance Committee for the municipal year 2012/2013 was considered.

RESOLVED: That the findings of the contents of the report be endorsed.

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

68 SCRUTINY CHAIRS' REPORTS

The Annual Reports of the Chair of Aspire and Prosper Scrutiny Committee and of the Chair of Healthier and Safer Scrutiny Committee were received.

69 TAMWORTH LOCAL PLAN

The Report of the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development and Enterprise, presented by the Leader of the Council, informing Members on the progress of the Local Plan 2006/2028 examination, The Exploratory Meeting into the Local Plan, The Planning Inspector's recommendation following the Exploratory Meeting and updating Members on the Memorandum of Understanding between Tamworth Borough Council, Lichfield District Council and North Warwickshire Borough Council and the work arising from Inspector's notes and the Exploratory meeting recommendation letter was considered.

Councillor R Pritchard asked that Rule 14.10 (d) be moved.

A Motion was made to make the following amendment:

That a cross party working group comprising of three members of the controlling group and three members of the opposition be established to oversee the development of the revised plan.

(Moved by Councillor S Peaple and seconded by Councillor R McDermid)

This was carried.

- RESOLVED:** That:
- 1 The Tamworth Local Plan 2011-2026 as submitted in November 2012 be withdrawn from examination, and;
 - 2 The updated Memorandum of Understanding between the three Local Authorities be endorsed prior to it being signed by the Leader of the Council.

(Moved by Councillor D Cook and seconded by Councillor S Peaple)

70 REVIEW OF MEMBERS ALLOWANCES

The Report of the Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer advising Council of the recommendations of the Members Independent Remuneration Panel who have recently undertaken a review of Members Allowances in accordance with regulations was considered.

- RESOLVED:** That the recommendations contained in the Panels Report be accepted in full but with a change to the name of the 10% SRA to Attendance Allowance.

(Moved by Councillor D Cook and seconded by Councillor R Pritchard)

A Motion was made to make the following amendment:

To include attendance at seminars and training sessions within the attendance allowance.

(Moved by Councillor P Standen and seconded by Councillor P Seekings)

This was not carried.

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That members of the press and public be now excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item on the grounds that the business involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 1 and 3, Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

71 REVIEW OF PAY POLICY

The Report of the Leader of the Council and Chairman of Appointments and Staffing Committee was considered.

RESOLVED: That Council endorsed the Pay Policy Statement approved by Appointments and Staffing Committee and Cabinet.

(Moved by Councillor D Cook and seconded by Councillor J Faulkner)

The Mayor