

Tamworth Listens Question Time Event

This year's Tamworth Listens initiative was a question time event held at the Assembly Rooms on the evening of 16th October 2013. This gave residents of Tamworth the opportunity to ask a panel of public sector representatives questions about Tamworth.

The event was chaired by Gary Phelps, the editor of The Tamworth Herald and the panel was made up of
Donna Gibbs, Chief Inspector, Tamworth Police,
Tony Goodwin, Chief Executive, Tamworth Borough Council,
Cllr Daniel Cook, Leader, Tamworth Borough Council,
Cllr Robert Pritchard, Deputy Leader, Tamworth Borough Council,
Cllr John Faulkner, Leader of the Opposition, Tamworth Borough Council,
Cllr Richard McDermid, Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Tamworth Borough Council,
Tim Leese, District Commissioning Lead – Tamworth, Staffordshire County Council.

The event was split into 2 themes; Future plans for the town centre, and Safer Tamworth, with a section for general questions.

The event was attended by 170 residents and a number of questions were posed by them. Due to time constraints, not all questions were able to be answered; those questions were given a written response following the meeting. Copies of both verbal and written responses are shown below in order of the appropriate theme.

Outcomes from the event were;

- There was consensus that there needs to be a different look and mix to the town centre, and the housing needs of both an ageing population and young people, who need smaller houses, have to be a part of that,
- There is a passion about heritage but it has to be accepted that the Council cannot do it all on its own,
- Parking in and around Marmion House is an issue and the limited actions the Council can take will be put into effect,
- That this type of event will happen again.

FUTURE PLANS FOR THE TOWN CENTRE

QUESTION

<p><i>Does the Council have a Plan B regarding the proposed redevelopment of the former Lower Gungate Precinct if the original proposals based around a major shopping unit prove unsuitable?</i></p>
--

RESPONSE

<p>It is not our land to have an alternative plan on as it is belongs to a private developer, Henry Boot.</p>

<p>Tamworth Borough Council has acknowledged that the site can no longer be a pure retail offer and we can seek to influence the developers to look at real sustainable, workable options that meet the needs of the local people. One of these options is around a mix of specialist residential housing, niche retail and soft leisure.</p>

<p>Potentially, the footprint of the Lower Gungate site could be much bigger as there is no longer a Magistrates Court, consequently; the footprint could be extended to encompass that area. Options that have been looked at include a new leisure centre.</p>
--

<p>The issue is that the developer, having bought the site, will want to make a profit. They will want to look at a plan that gives them a return on their investment. Providing this mix of specialist residential housing, niche retail and soft leisure will provide them with this and ensure Tamworth gets what it needs.</p>
--

QUESTION	
-----------------	--

<i>When is a proper coffee bar/snacks/bistro going into Tamworth mainline station instead of a mobile van parked outside?</i>
--

RESPONSE

Staffordshire County Council and Tamworth Borough Council are exploring the Gateways into Tamworth as sites that create a positive impression to the Borough and Town. This includes areas not in either Council's ownership or control, like the station. A part of this is to consider the appearance of such areas and to consider how their appearance can be improved. As always such developments are dependant upon resources being available. We are keen to involve partners and in this area the Rail providers would need to be approached.
--

QUESTION	
-----------------	--

<i>Why does the Council provide a 30 minutes parking option on only certain short term car parks, while providing a 60 minute option on none? Either all short term car parks should provide 30 minute, 60 minute then 2 hour options or the 30 minute option should be discarded in favour of a 60 minute option priced at 70p, the current 30 minute price?</i>
--

RESPONSE

The 30 minutes tariff was originally set in response to requests from businesses and residents wishing to make very quick visits to town e.g. to the bank. This enables a quick turn around in the short stay car parks that are closest to the town centre.
--

The provision of an up to a 2 hour tariff (i.e.70p per hour) provides a flexible choice for motorists to try and encourage longer stays in the town centre and does not restrict them only 1 hour.
--

The two hour is the most popular flexible tariff and there are currently no plans to amend at present.
--

QUESTION	
<i>The council owned shops in Market Street (old TIC) need restoration and re-opening. When will you do this to prevent them eventually having to be demolished?</i>	

RESPONSE
<p>The old TIC shop at 29 Market Street is being launched in November 2013 as “Created In Tamworth” a creative industries incubation hub which will see up to five local creative businesses open in the building and share the shop floor. The scheme is supported by our Arts and Events team and also by our Economic Development team. The incubation centre offers low rent and discounted business rates for the first 3 years on a reducing scale. So far five prospective tenants are lined up with a larger number of potential tenants having expressed an interest.</p> <p>The remaining void Market Street Unit within the Council’s ownership requires significant capital funding to bring it back into use which is currently beyond the Council’s budget without external funding. Currently only works to protect the fabric of the building have been undertaken.</p>

QUESTION	
<i>It was stated in the Herald that we should have more living accommodation in the town centre. Do you think we should encourage this and other uses rather than shopping there?</i>	

RESPONSE
<p>The old precinct site is in the ownership of a private property developer. Their initial plans were to attract a flagship store onto the site and then build around that. However, the economy has changed since then and this is no longer viable.</p> <p>There needs to be a mix of residential property for those people commuting to Birmingham, sheltered and flex care schemes for our ageing population and suitable accommodation for young people trying to get on the housing ladder. This needs to be mixed with a niche retail offer, a ‘soft’ leisure offer of restaurants and cafes to sit alongside our current heritage offer.</p> <p>The developers have been asked to consider all of these things when drawing up their future plans for this site.</p>

QUESTION	
-----------------	--

<i>Can we have a central bus station in Albert Road/Marmion Street/Spinning School Lane and possibly the bus garage?</i>	
---	--

RESPONSE

There is not adequate space in the area suggested. However, if the plans for the old precinct site come to fruition then the mix of retail, accommodation and soft leisure will create a demand for buses to converge on the area in question as that is where the demand for them will be.

QUESTION	
-----------------	--

<i>While the council makes up its mind as to what to do about our decaying town centre, why not lease (at a peppercorn rent) empty shop windows to other more successful retailers? That way, all the shop fronts will be full and everyone benefits. I think this is being tried out in Lichfield.</i>	
--	--

RESPONSE

There is a misconception that the Council owns all property in the town centre when it only owns 11 shops. One is currently empty but there are plans for its future use as a 'Created in Tamworth' incubation hub for creative industries and other carries posters promoting the Mercian Trail and Staffordshire Hoard.

The hoardings at the new flats in Two Gates contain information about tourism in the town and we are pushing other developers to do the same.

On the issue of parking, it is not the issue of the cost of parking that is the issue; it is what is on offer in the town centre. If the town centre plans come to fruition and the offer improves as a result then the cost of parking becomes less of a factor.

Car parking provides the Council with an income stream of £600k to £1m and to remove this amount from a budget of £8.9 million is not financially viable.

QUESTION	
-----------------	--

<i>How are you going to regenerate George Street with more shops closing down? Bistros and quality food might attract people.</i>
--

RESPONSE

There are a team of officers dedicated to economic prosperity in Tamworth; one of the focuses is the Town Centre. This team sells Tamworth to future developers. As George Street is predominantly owned by Ankerside we would need to be in dialogue with them over any development there.

With regard to having a Saxon Village. At this moment, we don't have the money to do this. The council has a deficit in its budget of £1.4m in 2016/17.

If a trust wanted to submit a National lottery bid for a Saxon Village, Tamworth Borough Council could support that with officer time and expertise but with having a major bid in for the Assembly Rooms and managing a bid for Tamworth Castle our ability to proceed and approve another lottery bid, at this time, is highly unlikely.

However, when the opportunity arises in the future, as the financial situation improves, we need to be in a position to capitalise on it and be ready to secure external funding by understanding what is needed.

We have not tried to secure outside sponsorship for this at the moment as it is not one of our top priorities, housing and the delivery of services are. However, there is nothing to stop someone other than the Council doing this.

The Council is committed to its heritage. The fact that Tamworth Castle loses £600k per annum and the Assembly Rooms lost £250k last year, with the Council underwriting this, demonstrates this commitment. However, the Council cannot afford to take any more financial commitments like this at the present time.

QUESTION	
<i>Regarding the Assembly Rooms refurbishment, is the second stage lottery grant application approved and do you have match funding??</i>	

RESPONSE
<p>At this moment the second lottery grant application has not been approved. There is a raft of work that needs to be undertaken such as architects drafting what it will look like and surveyors costing the work out.</p> <p>We are aiming to define a time when the Assembly Rooms can be closed so that this work can be carried but a lot of issues are affecting our ability to do this.</p> <p>The Council is committed to investing in its infrastructure and has set aside £400k to match fund any lottery investment.</p>

SAFER TAMWORTH

QUESTION

One of the biggest gripes that ward councillors receive from residents is the fear of crime. What are the Police going to do about this?

What happens to Police resources on a Friday and Saturday night as we are aware of issues that a resident does not get to see a Police officer until the next morning or later?

RESPONSE

Fear of crime is a nationally recognised issue that people often fear they are more likely to be a victim of crime. Part of that is the way in which we communicate with the community, how we tell them about current crime and successes in the justice system and how we tell them how they can prevent being a victim of crime.

That communication needs to improve and this is part of an emerging strategy; how can the Police be more visible so that people can directly ask them questions and how do we communicate with them.

As for resources on a Friday or Saturday night. Many resources are called for and they are not deployed to other areas. The town centre is a very vibrant one and the Police need to manage the risks and threats that can pose.

Appointments are offered to the public whose calls are of a non urgent nature. These appointments are usually for later on Saturday, Sunday or during the week.

QUESTION	
-----------------	--

There is a general requirement that there has to be a history of injury accidents at a location before improvements to roads and crossings can be justified. Do the councils agree with this policy or do they accept that changes can be made to prevent accidents happening in the first place?

Comment: I wrote over a year ago to the Highways Department of Staffordshire County Council suggesting that the southbound bus stop on Ninian Way near the junction with Brent be moved to the south side of the pedestrian crossing. This would encourage people walking between the bus stop and the co-operative supermarket to use the crossing rather than dodging the traffic. Despite a number of follow-up letters and e-mails, no meaningful response either in favour or against the suggestion

RESPONSE

Personal injury accidents throughout the County are constantly monitored and remedial measures are introduced where cluster sites with common factors that can be treated are identified.

Improvements to roads and crossings are also introduced for various other reasons, including the following:

- To prevent accidents happening where a potential problem has been identified
- To improve the quality of life for local residents. For example, by providing traffic calming and pedestrian crossings
- To encourage cycling and walking by providing cyclist and pedestrian facilities
- To encourage the use of public transport. For example, by improving bus stops and improving access to train stations
- To provide facilities for the disabled. For example by providing dropped crossings, tactile paving and pedestrian crossings
- To encourage businesses. For example, by providing better access to development sites and improving town centres.

As resources are limited, improvements are prioritised in conjunction with local communities and the benefits assessed before being included in a programme of works.

As regards to the Bus stop location referred to. The site would need to be investigated to understand any need for re-location. Further discussions would also be required with the bus providers.

QUESTION	
<i>When will some thing be done about the Illegal car packing on The Leys, as it causes traffic problems?</i>	

RESPONSE
<p>The Local Parking Board is discussing which areas should next be considered to be included in a Residential Parking Scheme. Once the scheme in Victoria Road is concluded, The Leys is one of the areas that hopefully will be considered.</p> <p>On the issue of Tamworth Borough Council employees parking in the streets around The Leys during the working day the following things will be done;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tamworth Borough Council will promote a car sharing scheme,• Tamworth Borough Council is prepared to look at charging for staff parking but this would be a change to employees' terms and conditions and subject to consultation,• The Chief Executive to send an e-mail to staff regarding their attitude towards residents when parking. <p>Regarding reporting car crime, it is acknowledged that some crimes are not reported and therefore not included in the official crime figures. The Police acknowledge this and their change in focus towards greater community engagement will encourage people to report those issues important to them.</p> <p>The Neighbourhood Watch Scheme is an under utilised resource that the Police will seek to have a service level agreement with and this group can be used as a useful consultative group.</p>

QUESTION	
-----------------	--

<i>Tamworth's excellent Community Safety Partnership became the template for the whole of Staffordshire. What impact will the plans of the Police and Crime Commissioner have on the Partnership and on Neighbourhood Policing in Tamworth?</i>
--

RESPONSE

The Police and Crime Commissioners Plan is clear in that he feels the statutory agencies and voluntary sector should be working together to promote community safety and the priorities we have currently align to those of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Tamworth has one of the best community safety partnership relationships with the local Police, this is not under threat and we will be looking to improve it in the future.

Several meetings are planned with the Police and Crime Commissioner to ensure that Tamworth gets its fair share of funding and will support the community to ensure that they can bid for other funds that he holds.

This funding is in place for the next two years and in the future if a move to payment by results, as has been seen in other areas, is established this would bode well for Tamworth.

QUESTION	
-----------------	--

<p><i>The Community Safety Partnership is actively encouraging residents to protect their homes with Smartwater. But the product is only being offered in selected areas of the borough and can only be purchased by cheque from the Tamworth Neighbourhood Watch Association. Can you find ways to support the TNHWA offer all residents the opportunity to buy Smartwater sooner and with more payment options?</i></p>	
--	--

RESPONSE

Smartwater is a very successful product in reducing burglary. However, its distribution can be very bureaucratic and we need to look at ways to make this more efficient.

It has been distributed into the priority areas first but we need to look at different ways to make it available either through the neighbourhood watch scheme or volunteers.

The payment for it is an issue and better ways of procuring it also need to be explored.

On the subject of the closure of Tamworth Magistrates Court, Tamworth Police has just commenced a pilot for virtual court attendance and is the first in Staffordshire to do so. This means that officers can be on duty right up until their time to give their evidence and then resume duties once this is done, thereby ensuring that they still maintain as visible a presence as possible.

GENERAL QUESTIONS

QUESTION	
-----------------	--

<i>Can we sit down together and make a plan to make Glascote High Street a more attractive place especially as it is a main route into Tamworth?</i>	
---	--

RESPONSE

There is widespread support from the panel for a meeting to be held to discuss how the Council can be more proactive in this area.

The Council alone spends £890k per annum on picking up litter dropped by other people. If, what is spent by the County Council is added to this it exceeds £1m.

QUESTION	
-----------------	--

<i>Can we please look at using other venues to host the polling stations? Many churches or community centres would welcome some extra footfall, they could promote their services. If the venue is near the school you would get the parents of the children, voting on their way to or from the school run. Having the schools close for yet another day, every year is difficult for working parents, and as polling day is a Thursday, it can't even be tied into a long weekend.</i>	
---	--

RESPONSE

Many schools in the area arrange an inset day for staff to coincide with election days, thus causing the least inconvenience for pupils.

There is nothing to prevent schools remaining open for pupils on polling day provided that it meets their own health and safety requirements in respect of the children and ensures that there is no interference with the polling process.

The Local Authority along with the Returning Officer has a statutory duty to promote democracy and to provide appropriate facilities for the voting population. Schools the length and breadth of the country are used to support the election process and their suitability as a polling place have been recognised by the government and are enshrined in the law. Rule 20 of the Local Elections (Principal Areas) (England and Wales) Rules 2006 provides

Review of polling station ensures we ask people where they want to see polling stations

QUESTION	
-----------------	--

In view of the increasing number of people starting to cycle as a result of the success of the British teams in recent years, what plans do the councils have to improve conditions for cyclists?

The “Cycling in Tamworth Borough” map issued by the County Council shows a number of places where cyclists are advised to walk their bike rather than ride it. Are there are plans to improve these locations so that cyclists can ride their bikes?

Comment: As the reasons for people cycling are as varied as those for people driving cars, a simple provision of more cycle paths will not be sufficient. The cycle paths in Tamworth cannot be called a network. The provision is piecemeal and fragmented. Many of the existing off-road routes peter out and dump cyclists back on to roads, often at rather dangerous spots

RESPONSE

In comparison to other districts, Tamworth has a good network of cycle routes. It helps that Tamworth is an urban area.

On some routes, pushing of the bike is advised. This occurs where the route is in a pedestrianised area such as the town centre or where there maybe safety concerns due to the surface of the track.

As part of the ongoing improvements to all routes, Staffordshire County Council is exploring how the cycle routes can be best maintained and improved. As always the challenge is to make best use of existing resources and securing future investments from other sources (Government external grants, Developer contributions).

The future considerations of the cycle routes is also included in Tamworth’s Integrated Transport Strategy, (ITS) which sets out the key areas for intended improvement, dependant upon resources being available. The ITS was consulted on in July 2012 and is viewable on Staffordshire County Councils web site. As mentioned this does not guarantee that such improvements will be made. We are however finding that as Government Grant Schemes become available often at short notice we have to be ready with costed up schemes that we can present at short notice.

It should also be pointed out that the authority has a good track record of promoting a safe environment for cyclists and other vulnerable road users. Data from the Dept of Transport shows that over the last 3 years Staffordshire performed better than other county councils in relation to the number of cycling injuries and accidents on the roads.

QUESTION	
-----------------	--

The Council has recently published some projected population figures using the 2011 census figures. This was compiled before the 2012 population estimates which gave an increase of 200 up from 76,900 to 77,100. The Council's projected figures states that by 2021 the population of Tamworth will increase by 5,000 – a figure of 500 per year increase. Analysis of the figures shows this projection to be unrealistically high. It does not appear to take any account of net outward migration from Tamworth. Nor does it seem to consider a rising death rate. Could I ask that the Council investigate this and arrange for the figures to be corrected?

RESPONSE

The population projections published by the Council are **nationally derived sub national population projections produced by the Office for National Statistics**. Further information on their methodology can be found on the ONS website. ONS use the internationally accepted cohort component methodology, assuming the continuation of estimated local trends in fertility, mortality and migration.

Sub national population projections are published every two years by ONS. Sub national population projections are used as a common framework for local area resource allocation, planning and policy making in a number of fields such as health and education. The projections are not forecasts and do not take any account of future government policies, changing economic circumstances or the capacity of an area to accommodate the change in population. They provide an indication of the future size and age structure of the population if recent demographic trends continued.

In terms of our Local Plan production we will endeavor to use the most up to date and robust data to inform our evidence base, such as assessments on future housing need, and policy making. We must recall that when the Council decided to withdraw the Local Plan for inspection earlier this year we decided to do so because of comments by the inspector on achieving our 5-year land supply and how we fetch this forward, certainly around infrastructure / deliverability issues surrounding Anker Valley. At no point has the inspector questioned our evidence base on housing / population growth.

You also miss keys points about these projections do not just take into account population growth, but also the shortage of housing we currently have locally to house the current population. As the council we are aware and have struggled to house residents to their needs today, never mind in 5 years time. I personally am aware of young children sleeping on sofas and floors of friends and relations due to our struggle to use the current stocks effectively because of shortages of housing in Tamworth compared to demand. I am sure you too have met those adults in town who sofa surf awaiting a solution. Our housing waiting list is still massive.

The housing targets we currently project were historically supported by County Structure plans, the RSS phrase 2 and even now national projections. The inspector has no issue with them, thus we feel as the Council the numbers are correct and unless significant / factual evidence can be provided to challenge these, they will not change.

QUESTION	
-----------------	--

<i>Why is the council not prepared to take any action against residents turning housing estates into caravan parks? E.G. Caravans on driveways?</i>
--

RESPONSE

From a legal perspective a single caravan parked within the curtilage of a dwelling, and used ancillary/incidental to the use of the property, would not constitute development and as a consequence would not fall under the control of the local planning authority i.e. Tamworth Borough Council.

If the caravan was used as an independent dwelling i.e. by a person not related to the occupier of the dwelling, and in a permanent manner (not a friend visiting for a couple of days), then it may be argued that there has been a material change of use in the land.

The only control that sometimes exists is on the deeds to individual properties. These restrictions will have been imposed by a private party, not the council (unless it is a property sold under the right to buy) and it is for that private party to enforce their covenants.

In conclusion, unless there are very unusual circumstances appertaining to a particular caravan, we would not get involved from a planning perspective.

QUESTION	
<i>When will the pot holes in Tamworth's roads be filled in?</i>	

RESPONSE
<p>Staffordshire County Council inspects urban roads once per month. Any repairs needed are scheduled based on a prioritisation of risk ranging from 1 day for emergency repairs to 28 days for non priority repairs. In reality some repairs take over the 28 days period. This is essentially due to the high demand on the service.</p> <p>It is important to realise that Potholes are not just an issue in Tamworth or in Staffordshire but that they are a nationwide issue across all UK Local Authority areas.</p> <p>When considering the reasons for the pot holes we should consider that apart from this last summer we have had some extremely wet summers over the past few years. Generally the water table in Staffordshire has been high. This along with cold winter conditions has a devastating impact on roads.</p> <p>We also have to consider the financial reality that we receive £16m/year from the Dept of Transport for this type of road maintenance. This does not cover the total cost of such repairs. Despite additional funding from Staffordshire County Council there continues to be a funding gap in respect of repairing pot holes.</p> <p>There are over 4000 miles of roads across Staffordshire. We aim to manage the road repairs programme through ensuring that we carry out an ongoing scheduled maintenance programme to maintain the quality of the road network to prevent pot holes from developing and also running a managed response to all reports of such repairs.</p> <p>The most effective Highways Inspectors are the general public. It helps us if you report potholes so that we are able to manage our response most effectively. Please use the Staffordshire County Council Corporate Contact Centre number of 0300 111 8000.</p>

QUESTION	
-----------------	--

<p><i>The Council makes excellent use of its website and various social media to keep residents informed about its activities. When will residents be able to literally see local democracy in action by watching web casts of council meetings and the work of committees such as Planning and Licensing?</i></p>

RESPONSE

<p>We will be launching a new website this autumn and continue to use social media both on a day to day basis, and to cover events such as elections and tonight.</p>

<p>With regard to live streaming, we can look into it but it is currently very expensive to do, recent estimates show £15 - £19k.</p>

<p>Some authorities have introduced it with varying degrees of success; we would need to know there was a need for it and people would view it. We would also need a much cheaper alternative at this stage.</p>
--

QUESTION	
-----------------	--

<p><i>Why is smoking allowed in public spaces? I am referring to Middle Entry?</i></p>

RESPONSE

<p>Smoking is permitted in public places because the health risk is limited, given that any smoke emitted is diluted and dispersed. The legislation that protects health relates to premises where the same degree of protection is not available.</p>
--

<p>Middle Entry is not regarded as premises for the purposes of the smokefree legislation under the Health Act 2006; it is defined as a walkway rather than premises.</p>

QUESTION

I would like to know about the Upper Gungate “widening” project announced by our MP this week.

I am currently trying to glean information via Borough and County on how this will affect home owners along the street (I am one), but to little avail, so I can only ask the general questions as follows:

“What do you know and how soon will we know exactly what is proposed?”

More specifically, if possible, what land is to be used, how long will the project take and what restrictions are expected to be needed during the project?”

RESPONSE

The Government recently announced that it had made available an additional £80m into the Local Pinchpoint Fund.

The aim of the scheme is to ease congestion and to support economic growth.

Staffordshire County Council led on 3 bids which were successful in receiving funding. The relevant one for Tamworth was for the improvements at Upper Gungate. These improvements are intended to help the Gungate Corridor route cope with increased traffic, supporting new development.

The work intended involves;
Widening of the carriage way
Modifying the Fountains Junction
New Toucan crossings close to the High School
Improvements to junctions close to the schools
Modifying of traffic signals

This work is due to start in April 2014. There will be further communication from Staffordshire County Council prior to any works being carried out. Elected Members from the authority will also be fully informed of the intended works.

To ease any concerns there will be very little land grab around the development area. There will be localised widening of the carriage way around Fountains Junction and there will be very little disruption to pavements with little impact to immediate householders. The work will also see the retention of significant trees in the vicinity.

QUESTION	
-----------------	--

How would the panel suggest we can restore local pride in the town centre to help raise Tamworth's profile nationally?

I am asking from the perspective of having run a business from Tamworth where I was guilty of denying where I was based, in favour of Birmingham. Many others like me continue to do so and have turned down the opportunity to have premises here because of Tamworth's poor image.

RESPONSE

Everyone has a role to play in this; it is not the sole responsibility of the local authority.

'Destination Tamworth' is Tamworth's Town Team, a body brought together to get people working together and bringing a sense of place, a community, a pride and passion from people willing to step up to the plate, outside of their normal working day and put something in, with the belief that if everyone gave a little, then the total sum could be huge. A sharing and learning of information, knowledge of the place, in order to promote and serve as ambassadors.

It is time for the community to take some responsibility, i.e. local retailers in the town getting their shop windows cleaned, maybe a lick of paint on the window sills, landlords/property owners looking to utilise empty window space; lots of small actions making a large impact.

Destination Tamworth's mission statement is:

'Destination Tamworth, working together, supporting each other, influencing change and taking Tamworth into the future.'

Destination Tamworth is currently working on their new business plan and community engagement should certainly feature in this. This is a journey to change culture.

The new website gives access to everyone to promote themselves, whether an event, a business, an offer, a news item. Paid for advertisements will generate income which can then support larger marketing and PR campaigns. The use of the 'T' brand promotes advocacy and buy in to the bigger picture and pride in using it.

QUESTION	
<i>TBC has improved the waste collection and recycling services by collaborating with Lichfield but can you do anything to allow Tamworth residents to dispose of bulky items without incurring the considerable expenses under the present system, bearing in mind residents' financial hardships, the increase in fly tipping and damage to the environment</i>	

RESPONSE
<p>The Local Authority under the current economic climate has no alternative but to make a charge in order to offset some of the substantial cost it incurs in providing a bulky waste collection service from residents door steps.</p> <p>Whilst the authority fully understands that residents are not immune from financial difficulties, they do have the option of taking their items free of charge to the Household Waste Recycling Centres at Lichfield or to Lower House where there is also a reuse facility/store. There are also several local charities that will collect some bulky items for reuse/resale.</p> <p>In addition if the bulky items are still usable, residents could consider selling them on national or local sale websites or using websites such as Freecycle where people advertise items that can be taken free of charge.</p>

QUESTION	
<i>If there is a new swimming pool, can it be built on the lines of Corby's i.e. 50 metre pool with moveable boom for a diving end with a retractable floor for depth?</i>	

RESPONSE
<p>The Council is conscious that longer term there could be a shortage of swimming pools in the town as the existing facilities age. We are working with schools and private providers to support access to the existing pools and to promote investment in them. Wilnecote Leisure Centre has recently (with support from the Council) been awarded a Sport England grant to update some of its facilities. The Council also subsidises SnowDome Swim and Wilnecote Leisure centre to provide public access to swimming at affordable rates and at Wilnecote free of charge.</p> <p>If a new pool was to be provided it is likely to be a 25m pool with movable floor. This would be adequate to meet our local needs and more affordable in terms of revenue and capital. The Midlands has a number of 50m pools so it is unlikely that we could evidence a need for that size pool or generate support from Sport England for one. The Council is currently considering how a new 25m pool and other leisure facilities could be part of a regeneration</p>

scheme for the town centre and contribute to improvements in wider health issues.

QUESTION

I've been making enquiries to the council about building Tamworth's first zero-carbon home. I'm concerned about local planning policy as the council won't support a small-scale zero-carbon housing project on low quality open-space land but is advocating large-scale projects like the Anker Valley Sustainable Urban Neighbourhood. If I were a large private housing developer with deep pockets and plans to concrete over vast areas of greenbelt land to build thousands of conventional houses, would the council then want to listen and engage with me?

RESPONSE

The proposal put forward was for an eco house in a piece of land described by the questioner as of low value. The advice we have is that it isn't of low value.

If the questioner were a large scale property developer then would Tamworth Borough Council listen to him anymore favourably then if, he were going to do something that meets our local housing needs, then yes we probably would.

There is a key issue about where the proposal is to be situated and what exactly wants to be done which could only be further resolved by making an appointment with our Planning Department.

QUESTION	
<i>Why is the grass allowed to grow on our footways and roads? This breaks up the surface, allows water in and holes and loose slabs appear</i>	

RESPONSE
<p>The County Council has a number of maintenance teams who routinely spray weedkiller on paths, roads and verges. The product that can be used is governed by environmental regulations and is of limited use, can only be sprayed onto the weed when it has grown and has no long term preventative effect.</p> <p>In the localities, the County Council Neighbourhood Highway teams liaise with Borough and County Councillors, the voluntary sector and locality hubs to find out where the problem areas are and are very much reliant on the public supplying local intelligence to assist in this.</p>

QUESTION	
<i>What does the Council do about tackling untidy gardens in Council House as a number have been spotted on walkabouts this year?</i>	

RESPONSE
<p>Firstly, it is difficult to tell from walking past a property if it is council owned as, with the right to buy many, are now privately owned and some are let out by private landlords.</p> <p>Enforcement is a slow process and individuals have to the right to rectify problems. If it is not rectified then it is escalated to another level. We do not want to evict people in the current economic climate as this not only adds to the scale and problem of homelessness in Tamworth but also places a burden on Council Tax payers too.</p> <p>If someone has evidence that a Council tenant is failing then a complaint should be made to the Environmental Health or Housing Teams or an approach to a ward councillor can be made.</p>

This page is intentionally left blank