

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 18th November 2015. This gave residents of Tamworth the opportunity to ask a panel of public sector representatives questions about Tamworth.

The event was chaired by Mike Thomas, presenter at TCR FM radio and the panel comprised;

- Cllr Daniel Cook, Leader, Tamworth Borough Council,
- Cllr Ben Adams, Staffordshire County Council,
- Matthew Ellis, Staffordshire Police & Crime Commissioner
- Dr. John James, South East Staffordshire & Seisdon Peninsula Clinical Commissioning Group (SES & SP CCG) Governing Body.

The event was split into three themes;

- Regeneration and growth,
- Safer communities,
- Healthier Communities.

The event was attended by almost 100 residents and businesses and a number of questions were posed by them. Copies of the responses are shown below in order of the appropriate theme.

REGENERATION & GROWTH



THEME	REGENERATION & GROWTH
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QUESTION	
<p><i>Tamworth town is wonderful with some remaining historic buildings and fabulous castle grounds.</i></p> <p><i>Tamworth should become unique in what it can offer and not be the same as every other town in the country. We also need to push the town into becoming known as a great weekend break destination.</i></p> <p><i>Ideas – a new outside lido, heated all year round, with outside saunas. To have all the charity shops in one building, something the size of the Co-op. Reduced rates for creative industries. With ‘creatives’ being attracted to the town, the town will in turn become more colourful and buzzy, hopefully more trendy cafes / bistros will open. More housing in the town centre - turn accommodation over shops into trendy apartments.</i></p> <p><i>I know I’m dreaming but I do think drastic changes need to be done and not be the same as every other town in the land!!</i></p> <p><i>What are your comments on these suggestions?</i></p>	

RESPONSE
<p>The creation of a lido would have to attract private sector funding.</p> <p>The idea of charities shops being situated in one hub is a good idea but would need the agreement of the charities involved.</p> <p>Reduced rates for creative industries – Following the Chancellor’s recent announcement on Business Rates this is something Tamworth Borough Council can look at once the finer detail of the future of Business Rates is made available.</p> <p>More housing in the town centre – The provision of apartments in and around the Gungate Precinct area is something the Council would like to see.</p> <p>The Council undertakes to include these suggestions in the review of the Town Centre Masterplan for 2016.</p>

THEME	REGENERATION & GROWTH
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QUESTION	
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We were told that a regeneration scheme between Wilnecote railway station and Fazeley (A5) was planned to tidy up and transform one of the busiest routes into the Tamworth Borough.

Bradley Scott Windows Ltd purchased a very run down and tired-looking building at Two Gates that had been empty for two years, the property was in a poor state of repair and was an eyesore. We spoke to the council about our vision for the property. We spoke with planners prior to submitting relevant applications and we also met with local councillors who we must admit were both very helpful.

The local councillor advised us of the regeneration scheme and was pleased that we shared the same vision and would be the first to transform this old building.

We set about the transformation at great expense and applied to various bodies for grants but found we hit a brick wall at every given opportunity. As a small business we have expanded and employed more apprentices and also full time staff but when we have asked for any help and support it seems that unless you are a manufacturer then no grants are available.

As a company we feel very disappointed that no grants are available to local companies who are trying to grow and put something back into the local community. Is this something which could be addressed?

RESPONSE

The Council acknowledges and recognizes what the Company has done.

There has been provision and take up of support in the form of loans and grants in the Tamworth area. For instance, the Staffordshire Business Loan Fund that has operated since 2009 by fund manager Black Country Reinvestment Society (BCRS) offers loans of £10k to £50k to businesses unable to obtain finance from mainstream lenders such as banks, to enable them to grow. Nine businesses including construction and facilities management firms as well as web-hosting businesses in Tamworth have been supported with loans to the value of £285k, which has led to the creation and safeguarding of 42 jobs. SCC has committed a further £600k to support more businesses over the next 3 years to help businesses to expand and anyone seeking a loan should contact BCRS direct on 0845 313 8410.

The Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Growth Hub, a Business Support Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) initiative, secured funding from the Department for Business Skills & Innovation (BIS) for delivery from April 2014/15 and has supported five businesses in Tamworth with over £7k of grant support that has been matched by businesses. This has been provided in the form of small business grants of up to £3k or grants towards developing business exporting plans, to enhance international trade.

It is worth noting that the Business Helpline, a LEP initiative, receives contact from businesses located in Tamworth and support is provided by Growth Hub Advisors who are employed by the Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce to provide tailored one-to-one support to any businesses requiring a more thorough diagnostic of their support needs. Businesses in need of support or assistance are encouraged to continue to make contact with these valuable sources, via the Helpline (0300 111 8002) to see what support is available. We are aware that the Greater Birmingham & Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership and the Stoke-on-Trent & Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership are looking at funding mechanisms either around grants or low cost loans to support businesses. As an accountable body, Staffordshire County Council submitted a full application to the Department of Communities and Local Government for a bid of European Structural and Investment Funds, on behalf of the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire LEP. In addition to provision of the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Business Helpline (0300 111 8002) and Business Growth Advisors, a Small Business Grants Programme is proposed to offer businesses grants from £1,500 to £10,000 to assist with their development. If successful, it is hoped this support will be launched from April 2016.

Currently neither Tamworth Borough Council nor Staffordshire County Council has the ability to offer grants but it may be something that Tamworth Borough Council can consider once it has control of National Non-Domestic Rates.

THEME	REGENERATION & GROWTH
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QUESTION	
<p><i>Regeneration of the town centre will no doubt bring an increase in visitors, yet Tamworth lacks basic public toilet facilities. Ankerside is only open during shopping hours and many of the pubs, cafes and restaurants now display signs indicating facilities are for customers only. At last year's meeting Danny Cook stated that the public were able to use the toilet facilities at the Tourist Information Centre as well as the Assembly Rooms; which is going to close for a significant period of time. Both these have restricted opening times. Visitors will not appear in Tamworth in large numbers if the town is unable to offer basic facilities. Would Danny Cook comment on this?</i></p>	

RESPONSE
<p>The Council provided public conveniences that were available in the Town Centre (Aldergate) were only ever open during the daytime, operating similar hours to those in the Ankerside shopping centre and the Philip Dix Centre and as such, their closure has had no detrimental impact on the availability of such facilities during the evenings in the town.</p> <p>The toilets in the TIC (Philip Dix Centre) have been available since the closure of the toilets at Aldergate, as an alternative location.</p> <p>The regeneration works around this area include the demolition of the old Aldergate toilet block so the option of reopening them is not available.</p> <p>The facilities in the Castle Grounds whilst operating reduced hours are available at times that are known to be those of the highest level of demand.</p> <p>Currently the Assembly Rooms is only open during shows or when the building is being hired by external users. Following the refurbishment the intention is to extend the Assembly Rooms opening hours so that the public can access the café and associated facilities, thus providing enhanced facilities in this location.</p>

THEME	REGENERATION & GROWTH
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QUESTION	
<p><i>Given the lottery funded improvements / alterations to the Tamworth Assembly Rooms and the Carnegie Centre, what assistance will be offered to the many voluntary groups who use the Carnegie Centre to find suitable and affordable alternative town centre venues with access to public transport and car parking?</i></p> <p><i>Following the creation of the planned piazza area between the Assembly Rooms and the Carnegie Centre, what alternative arrangements will be made to replace the eight Blue Badge parking spaces that currently exist and where will these be?</i></p>	

RESPONSE
<p>There are two parts to this question:</p> <p>Part 1: Both the Carnegie Centre and the Philip Dix Centre buildings are used by the Voluntary Centre. Users are either tenants or hirers of the rooms within the buildings.</p> <p>When the project moves from the planning stage to the implementation stage, the Voluntary Centre users will be given a minimum of six months notice of the need to vacate the building. At present, there is no project start date as the project is still in the funding and planning stages.</p> <p>The project implementation programme shows the Philip Dix project being carried out at the beginning of the project with the Carnegie Centre project being carried out at the end of the project.</p> <p>Tenants of the buildings will be offered accommodation within Marmion House and, if that is not acceptable, tenants will be offered advice on the availability of alternative premises.</p> <p>Hirers of rooms will be offered assistance to identify suitable alternative venues that provide rooms to hire in the town centre. Council staff will compile a list of rooms for hire along with a description of the facilities and costs.</p> <p>Part 2: The opportunities for creating new Blue Badge car parking spaces in the town centre are currently being investigated by Council staff. The results of this work will be produced on a plan that will show the eight existing Blue</p>

Badge spaces and the mitigation proposals for creating new Blue Badge spaces.

This plan will be submitted for public consultation as part of the planning application for the public realm works proposed in the area between the Library, Assembly Rooms and Carnegie Centre.



THEME	REGENERATION & GROWTH
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QUESTION	
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*Are there going to be anymore spaces created for Permit holders at the Riverside Estate?
Permit holders are being forced to park elsewhere because of non permit holders using the spaces. Residents are being ticketed for parking over lines because of non permit holders parking inconsiderately.*

RESPONSE

The area being referred to at Riverside, concerns the parking surrounding the high rise flats, for which there are around 350 spaces. Parking in all these spaces is permissible with a valid permit properly displayed. The permit scheme, administered by Landlord Services, is under review. Currently, all residents in the high rise flats have two permits per flat, so with 348 flats 696 permits are issued. Permits are also issued to Council staff whom are designated 'essential car users'.

Non permit holders are not permitted to park in the designated spaces. Civil enforcement officers do patrol the area and fixed penalty notices are issued where offences are observed. Should residents witness unauthorised parking then they should record the vehicle registration number and report it to the police who will liaise with the relevant agencies to enforce the parking restrictions in force.

As part of the review into the issue of permits, the Tenant's Consultative Group are looking at ways to prevent the sharing of permits. Parking problems are compounded as some high rise residents share their permits to non-residents who then use the permits to park when either visiting the town or neighbouring areas. The issue is then not so much about unauthorised parking, as permits are displayed, but potentially unauthorised use of the permit itself. Where misuse is alleged then permits are cancelled until the

permit holder confirms its proper use. Furthermore, time limited passes are issued to authorised carers and contractors to limit where and for how long they can park. A survey in to how permits were issued was conducted in 2013/14 and residents rejected withdrawal of the permits; this latest review is an attempt to improve the overall efficiency of the scheme. There is no charge for permits and permits are reissued annually, this is also part of the review.

As we know, town centre parking is a complex issue. Permitted parking at Riverside is only one aspect to this. For example, the Council has invested in the refurbishment of town centre garage sites, including Sunset, Richmond and Balfour to provide alternative and good quality parking provision. Since refurbishment, these garages have all been successfully let and are another way in which the council has tried to support local parking provision. Should residents wish to find out if garages are available they can visit the councils dedicated website – finding a garage, <http://www.findingahometamworth.co.uk/garages.aspx>

The Head of Landlord Services will be asked to address the issue at the next tenant consultative meeting so arrangements for the review into permitted parking can be confirmed and timetabled.

THEME	REGENERATION & GROWTH
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QUESTION	
<i>We would like to know when work will be started on the high rise flats balconies? Whenever we telephone the Council we are told it will be in two weeks.</i>	

RESPONSE
<p>A structural engineer has now been appointed to undertake a survey of the balcony areas; this works will take place during late November/December 2015. Clearly the very nature of this work is weather dependent, so the inspection dates have to be flexible.</p> <p>Until the survey work has been completed we won't know exactly what, if any remedial work is required.</p> <p>All residents will be informed of the survey dates as the surveys will be carried out by abseilers and access may be needed. Once the results of the surveys are available we will notify residents of the outcome; our proposals and the timescales for any follow-on works should there be any.</p> <p>We would anticipate the initial report on findings and recommendations being available late in December 2015, so it will be early 2016 before any further information is available.</p>

THEME	REGENERATION & GROWTH
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QUESTION	
<p><i>Does the Council intend to ask the public about joining a “Greater West Midlands?” From what I have read in the Tamworth Herald, it appears that the decision has already been made. What benefit will it be to the people of Tamworth? I thought that Tamworth was in Staffordshire, and Staffordshire County Council kicked the idea into touch.</i></p>	

RESPONSE	
<p>The Council is not joining a Greater West Midlands. It is taking up ‘associate membership’ of a public sector structure in order to benefit from growth, regeneration and skills opportunities that are part of a Devolution Deal with Government. No such deal exists in Staffordshire.</p> <p>Tamworth is and will remain part of Staffordshire however; its economy is influenced and affected more by the conurbation than by the County. The local economy and employment have benefitted considerably because of this relationship which in many respects allows Tamworth the unique opportunity to be part of both economic and administrative areas.</p> <p>The Council’s decision does not affect its relationship with the County Council and nor will it impact upon the excellent work it does in partnership with them. Tamworth Borough Council is a member of both the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership AND the Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Local Enterprise Partnership.</p> <p>The Staffordshire economy has been tremendously successful over the past five years with job seekers allowance levels at record low levels in Tamworth along with increasing wages, a welcome combination reported by the BBC in a national report last year. This is as a result of business growth in the town and county itself but also in surrounding areas such as North Warwickshire, Solihull and Birmingham.</p> <p>The county council, working with districts, boroughs and the city of Stoke-on-Trent in the LEP, has been successful in attracting millions of pounds in infrastructure funding and growth projects to all parts of Staffordshire but has also worked with neighbouring LEPS to further boost our economy. The notable example was working with Wolverhampton and the Black Country LEP to win the enterprise zone status and motorway funding that made sure it was the i54 site that Jaguar Land Rover chose for their engine plant. A thriving economy with higher wages is vital for people living in Tamworth and</p>	

we will continue to work together and work across all or borders to develop this further.

There are discussions underway about how we can work more closely together on the key public services within Staffordshire. These are services such as health, social care and education where our neighbours to the south are not performing well do not spend public money as efficiently as we do here. I expect these conversations to ultimately lead to devolution bid to government that will be well received and mean Tamworth has the best of both worlds with a strong economy and the public services that we value so much.



THEME	REGENERATION & GROWTH
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QUESTION	
<i>The pavement on each side of the Wigginton Road entry to the cemetery is collapsing and a couple of disabled people with mobility scooters have had some near misses. I noticed that some markers were painted on the kerbstones, presumably indicating a possible dropping of the kerbs to make it easier for disabled people and others. This was about three months ago and nothing has been done. Please look into it for the sake of disabled people.</i>	

RESPONSE
The need for a dropped kerb to improve disabled access to the cemetery was raised with Cllr Ben Adams as a local county councillor in August. 2015. He was pleased that the local highways team visited the site quickly and agreed with the suggestion. This work is now in the programme and will be done as soon as possible.

SAFER COMMUNITIES



THEME	SAFER COMMUNITIES
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QUESTION	
<i>At the meeting last year, I asked Matthew Ellis a question in regard to police officers being on patrol on foot, both in the town centre and on the housing estates. He assured me that by April 2015 Tamworth would see far more officers on foot patrol in all areas. My observations indicate that this has not happened. Would he care to comment?</i>	

RESPONSE
<p>In Staffordshire we are fully committed to neighbourhood policing and the total number of PCs and PCSOs in neighbourhood roles has actually risen slightly over the past 12 months.</p> <p>Alongside this, all frontline police officers and PCSOs in Staffordshire are getting new mobile technology that will get them out of police stations and back on the beat in local communities.</p> <p>Over 1,400 officers across Staffordshire now have these smartphone or tablet devices and the roll-out in Tamworth is due to finish this month (November).</p> <p>This will mean that officers will be able to carry out far more routine activities away from police stations and spend more time out and about in local communities in Tamworth and elsewhere.</p> <p>It's early days but the feedback from officers has been very positive. They're amazed at how good the technology is and the potential it has to free them up to be out of police stations and on the streets.</p> <p>Over the next 12 months, police visibility will rise because of these new devices. Because of this we've brought the roll-out forward – police really want this technology so they can do an even better job in their communities.</p> <p>When fully bedded in, the technology will help free up an extra 250,000 hours of police time to be out on the beat a year which is the equivalent of an extra 100 officers on duty.</p> <p>It is pioneering work that puts Staffordshire ahead of the majority of forces in the country, but more importantly we are taking a significant step to delivering the kind of policing local people tell me they want and need.</p>

THEME	SAFER COMMUNITIES
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QUESTION	
<p><i>It is rumoured that Tamworth Police Station is to close? Whenever there is a problem, ringing 101 is useless. By the time the police arrive, if they do come at all, the criminals are long gone. All the policing seems to be done from Burton. We have already lost a courthouse to Burton and it would appear that the police station is going there too. Our Neighbourhood Watch Official Don Palmer has left, who has replaced him? No one has emailed me to let us know. Please find out for us. Can you confirm or deny that Tamworth Police Station is to close?</i></p>	

RESPONSE
<p>There is no intention to remove policing from Tamworth - we are committed to having a strong and even more visible police presence in the town.</p> <p>We announced earlier this year that we've signed up to long-term plans with South Staffordshire College and the borough and county councils to relocate the college's Tamworth campus as part of ambitious proposals to regenerate the town centre. If this scheme comes to fruition, it means we would need to find a new base for police in Tamworth in place of the current police station.</p> <p>We are currently looking at opportunities to co-locate policing with other critical public services which should provide better facilities and better tools for the job of policing in Tamworth. This will ensure that we keep police officers in Tamworth. Meanwhile, a multi-million pound investment in mobile technology will get officers out and about on the beat in Tamworth more than ever before.</p> <p>There have been problems with the 101 system and my office has been working very hard with the police to resolve these. As a result, there's been an improvement in the percentage of calls answered within 30 seconds and in average answer time compared to last year. There's still a lot of work to do but things are moving in the right direction.</p> <p>We've worked hard to re-invigorate and enhance Staffordshire Police's commitment to Neighbourhood Watch in the last 12 months. In the next few months a brand new 'Staffordshire Smart Alert' system will be launched which will provide residents with real-time information from local officers and the force's new centralised community engagement team. This is about building</p>

on those things that work and helping more areas to establish links with Staffordshire Police using new technology.



THEME	SAFER COMMUNITIES
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QUESTION	
<p><i>Council tenants should have a six-monthly inspection to make sure they are looking after the property as most landlords do.</i></p> <p><i>This would also stop issues such as tenants claiming to be living alone when they have a partner or friend living there, sub-letting, anti-social behaviour or rent arrears.</i></p> <p><i>Is this something you would consider doing?</i></p>	

RESPONSE
<p>Tamworth Borough Council carries out property inspections to approximately 80% of all its tenanted stock.</p> <p>As part of its approach to identifying innovative approaches around managing demand, partnership arrangements have existed with Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service for the last three years to carry out a home fire risk check to all properties. Under the principles of 'lets work together', this visit includes observations around tenant and property issues so they can be efficiently managed and signposted to relevant agencies. There are many specific examples where this visit has resulted in targeted support around safeguarding, family intervention and tenancy sustainment and is very successful for the reasons mentioned.</p> <p>In addition to this, the Council's landlord service also achieves 100% tenant inspections in all our sheltered, supported and council house voids/empty properties allowing us to tailor and access services to support all our customers.</p> <p>As part of the options appraisal into the future of the repairs and investment service, the use of contractors to offer property inspections will be re-visited.</p> <p>The Council supports the use of tenant and property inspections and feels that this goes to the heart of demand management in terms of both identifying issues and strategies at the earliest opportunity and to ensure high levels of customer and community satisfaction; it will continue to work towards increasing the number of inspections.</p>

The Council's landlord service has a good track record in the areas raised; rent arrears targets were surpassed last year. When compared with other landlords, Tamworth Borough Council is recognised as one of the 'best in class', arrears as a percentage of the rent debit at the end of 2014/15 was 1.59%.

The Council was also the first Council Landlord Service to be externally accredited by the Chartered Institute of Housing for innovation in tackling anti social behaviour. Furthermore, in terms of tackling fraud the Council has invested in a post, funded by the Housing Revenue Account and General Fund, to ensure it is proactive in its response.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Waste Management will continue to monitor and support officers in the development of policies around this very important issue.



THEME	SAFER COMMUNITIES
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QUESTION	
<p><i>We have recently seen some interesting responses to the fact that refugees will be housed in Tamworth, which I personally have no problem with, however, it's quite obvious there are people within the town who are unhappy with this. This we saw when the pro and anti groups held their 'protests' in the Castle Grounds.</i></p> <p><i>What are your plans for integration and how are these families to be welcomed to the town? How will they be protected from the faction of people within the town who are unhappy with them arriving?</i></p> <p><i>In light of recent events, I think it is extremely important that this is something that is planned to avoid them being vilified for their beliefs. I believe that the council should take some responsibility for this to avoid a town full of people who hate each other, which is where we're heading if we can't learn some acceptance, which will only come with integration</i></p>	

RESPONSE
Tamworth has agreed to take up to a maximum of 10 families.

This support will include access to health services, education, care and housing - and central government will cover the costs, not local Council Tax payers.

Having being probable victims of torture and discrimination in Syria, the refugees could well have mental health issues and these too will need to be addressed. On the issue of health, there would be no discrimination at a CCG level or practise level. Everyone registered with a GP will get the same level of care irrespective of their background.

Not surprisingly, housing has been a contentious issue because so many people are on the waiting list for Council housing. It is because of this very sensitive issue that every effort will be made to accommodate the refugee families in either private sector properties or by a registered provider agreeing to accommodate all the families. Either way, every possible effort is being made to ensure that local vulnerable people are not affected by the Council's decision.

Refugees would not be housed in any areas that would make them more vulnerable. Indeed, to improve their integration in to the town, refugees would all not be placed into the same street.

In addition, the Council has been overwhelmed with offers of additional support in the form of food, clothing, transport etc from voluntary, charitable and faith groups. Individual families have even offered rooms in their homes. It has been a typical Tamworth response.

HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES



THEME	HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES
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QUESTION	
<i>Mental Health Discrimination is a problem in all areas of life. What action does the Council plan to take in order to address Mental Health Discrimination within its own working environments and across the Borough as a whole?</i>	

RESPONSE
<p>Mental health services are not a responsibility of Tamworth Borough Council; preventing discrimination is.</p> <p>Following recent changes in legislation not relating to mental health specifically but prompting a review of current policies and practises, the Council intends to include mental health within its equalities agenda as part of that review.</p> <p>Housing services take into account mental health issues when considering homelessness. Those vulnerable customers presenting themselves will be considered along the same lines.</p> <p>Tamworth Borough Council and its partners have commissioned a range of services from third sector organisations which impact on a range of age groups including those with mental health issues.</p> <p>The CCG understands Staffordshire County Council have a robust occupational health scheme which covers mental and physical health and looks at managing work life balance, stress at work, building resilience. It is provided in house with good e- learning support.</p> <p>All the partners in Staffordshire have worked together to the mental health strategy 'Mental health is everybody's business' which the former Accountable Officer, Rita Symons and South East Staffordshire and Seisdon Peninsula CCG took a lead role in. There were also a series of specific events around the county in partnership with Health Watch called 'Making Mental Health and Wellbeing Everybody's Business' which were well attended and feedback from these is now helping to form implementation plans.</p> <p>The CCG ensured at our 'Let's Talk about Health' events there was a specific question on each table around mental health and wellbeing – we work closely</p>

with partners such as the South Staffs network for Mental Health and Pro Health who sit on our Patient council and help us look at ways of improving the health and wellbeing of the those with mental health issues.



THEME	HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES
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QUESTION	
<i>Can we be assured that the facilities that currently exist at the Sir Robert Peel Hospital will not be reduced?</i>	

RESPONSE
<p>The simple answer is that we cannot guarantee this because the financial challenges the NHS has and particularly locally are immense. What we can say it that:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Quality and Safety of patient care is paramount• Access to services locally are a priority• Investment in Primary Care and community services is our priority <p>To achieve the above, however, we must reduce duplication of services where possible which will release resources to balance our books and deliver against the three objectives above.</p>

THEME	HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES
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QUESTION	
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Our organisation offers and delivers a funded counselling service within the Tamworth area and has done so since being set up in November 2006, we receive referrals from many organisations and agencies in the area. Funding is a big issue for us, as for a large number of organisations. We have been made aware in the past that GP practices have a budget for providing counselling. We are getting an ever increasing number of referrals from GP practices which are happy to refer to us but never offer any funding. We believe that the Tamworth Wellbeing Centre receives funding for providing emotional support to those referred to them. Could you explain how this how the allocation of funding is decided?

RESPONSE

South East Staffordshire and Seisdon Peninsula CCG used to have in-house counsellors aligned to each practice. All in-house counsellors were decommissioned, and then we undertook a formal tender process to secure a service. SSSFT in partnership with Mental Health partners were successful in their bid. In contrast, whereas the counsellors offered 1:1 therapy, with a dedicated counsellor to their practice; the Well-being service offers a range of therapies, including group therapies, 1:1 therapy etc.

There should be no in-house counsellors still in practices, funded by the CCG, and, or receiving referrals for mild to moderate depression/anxiety etc. All referrals for mild to moderate are seen within the SSSFT service.

There is a Children and Young Peoples Emotional and Well-being Framework of which there are a number of therapeutic interventions including counselling that any commissioner including schools can procure a quality accredited service.

THEME	HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES
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QUESTION	
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What effect is the decision to close the Minor Injuries Unit at the S.R.P.H. going to have on the Ambulance service? Someone suffering from a stroke or heart attack will have to be taken by ambulance to Good Hope, or even further to Burton. This is going to put a heck of a strain on an already stretched service and please don't say get in the car and drive there. Tamworth has a population approaching 100,000 and Burton around 84,000 - surely a Hospital should be in a larger populated place. Throw your axe away and give us the Hospital we were promised 25 years ago.

RESPONSE

The service that the MIU provides caters for minor injuries and illnesses. Based on the evidence and data that we have, we do not expect that changing the opening hours will affect 999 emergency call outs. If someone is having a stroke or a heart attack they would still need to be taken by a blue light ambulance to their nearest emergency department. They would not be taken to a MIU for this kind of problem.

There are also services that are available overnight that people can use instead of the MIU for minor illnesses or injuries. This includes NHS 111 and the GP Out of Hours services. If patients do need treatment in an A&E it is most appropriate that they are seen there. That way they will be seen by the right professional, the first time. NHS 111 has been proven to provide an effective telephone triage service for patients and help people to make the best decision about the course of action required to get treatment if they need it. There is no doubt that the services provided by the MIU contribute to the effective running of our local urgent care services and we recognise that they provide an excellent and convenient service for local people.

THEME	HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES
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QUESTION	
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Subject :- Saving prescription costs general NHS expenditure.

If a war pension Exemption Certificate only covers the prescription costs relating to an accepted disability then why does a Medical Exemption Certificate issued to a patient having a thyroid problem (as an example being their singular medical condition) be entitled to ALL of their NHS prescriptions free of charge regardless of age or financial status.

RESPONSE

Whilst Clinical Commissioning Groups have responsibility for commissioning services across a local population that they serve, they are required to do so within the financial envelope allocated to them.

The policies relating to NHS charges and exemption from charges are made nationally, and are not within the gift of CCGs to change nor influence.

So whilst we accept that the situation as described appears anomalous, we cannot comment on the rationale for this as the CCG is not party to such decisions.

THEME	HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES
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QUESTION	
<p><i>In the booklet entitled: 'A proposal for Minor Injuries Units in Lichfield and Tamworth', the case is set out for reducing the operating hours of the Minor Injuries Units at the Sir Robert Peel Community and Samuel Johnson Hospitals from 24 hours 7 days a week, to 8am to 9pm 7 days a week to go towards reducing a £16M deficit of the CCG.</i></p> <p><i>Could I ask if any other efficiency savings have been have been put in place by the CCG, if so, what are they, and what are the estimated savings.</i></p>	

RESPONSE	
<p>The CCG has a planned efficiency programme of between £6 million and £7 million per annum to support the delivery of financial balance by the 31st March 2018.</p> <p>The CCG is working across the system to increase efficiencies for example in planned care and urgent care.</p> <p>As well as focussing on system efficiency, we are also focussing on our own efficiency as an organisation. The management cost savings resulting from the new interim Accountable Officer, Andrew Donald developing a joint management team working across South East Staffordshire & Seisdon Peninsula CCG, Cannock Chase CCG and Stafford and Surrounds CCG are a good example of the efficiency programme, as well as the exit from Merlin House, which is also likely to save us at least £30K pa.</p>	