

SPECIAL COMMUNITY ASSEMBLY

10TH JANUARY 2018

		Action
1.	<p><u>WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS</u></p> <p>Tricia Gilby welcomed everyone to the meeting.</p>	
2.	<p><u>STATE OF THE BOROUGH PRESENTATION AND COUNCIL TAX PRESENTATION</u></p> <p>Huw gave his state of the borough presentation.</p> <p>Priority 1 is to create jobs in the Borough Priority 2 is to improve quality of life</p> <p>Kevin gave his council tax presentation</p> <p>Questions/Answers</p> <p>Q Following full council where I asked a question concerning people on disability benefits not paying council tax - please advise the results. A The government changes to welfare reform in 2012 brought about the council having to charge people with disabilities. Since the roll out of Universal Credits on 29th November, we are finding a large increase in Chesterfield families having to access the food banks and Gus' kitchen who offer subsidised meals. Anyone affected by the welfare reforms have somewhere to go to have a meal that they can afford. We have supported this and another kitchen in Staveley. Campaigning – labour party campaign regularly about the reforms – we lobby and raise this issue at every opportunity. We will continue to raise this and campaign on it. It is difficult to get things changed.</p> <p>Q Is there a legal limit of commercialisation that a council can do? A It's more about getting the balance right. Using the theatres as an example, it's about getting the pricing right around the strategy for people to access the services going forward. There is no limit.</p> <p>Q Talking about the roof, I have had the leaflet saying you can complete jobs, how do we compare the prices against the council and other private trades.</p>	

	<p>A It's up to you to decide whether the value is correct, you would go to a range of contractors and get the prices and then decide. We are a trusted trader. If we didn't get the job right for you, you know where we are. It's about the quality of work we do at the right price.</p> <p>A We had a situation in Brimington, where Cllr T Gilby was approached by a couple in their nineties. Private traders had indicated to them they needed work and had quotes and they had not turned up to do the work. When our inspectors looked at the roof, nothing actually needed doing, it was speculative. We will be honest and tell people whether they need the work doing or not.</p> <p>Q Why is Chesterfield town centre becoming a no go area at night due to homeless and drunkenness. It is becoming a really serious problem in our town centre. We say we have a brilliant market, but there are so many empty stalls, where have all the traders gone?</p> <p>A You are right, ASB has increased in the town centre, as shown in the ASB survey. When I became leader, we decided to step up, as we had not got the response from the police we expected, but now the Police and Crime Commissioner has formed a town centre summit, including local authorities, probation service, shop watch scheme, voluntary services etc. and we had a good discussion about what were the causes and solutions of this. The causes are extremely complex – the government welfare changes are meaning people are finding they are homeless more quickly than before – we do have a no second night out policy in Chesterfield for people who are homeless – they go around the town regularly, we fund the Pathways charity that works with homeless people to the tune of £10,000. We take a compassionate view, those that are genuinely on hard times we try to get them back on track. However there are a hardcore of people - the summit has also decided to focus on enforcement – public spaces protection orders – came in on 15th December – those performing anti social acts in the centre can be served with a fixed penalty notice of £100 – it acts as a deterrent. If they don't pay then they will go to court and will have to interact with services. I want a town where people can come and shop and enjoy our services without feeling harassed. But a town that is compassionate to those who genuinely need help. We need some support from the government as it is a national problem.</p> <p>A As part of my cabinet role I chaired the market traders and council meeting – we are aware that the high street</p>	
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in general is facing tough times. Shopping is moving on line – but I am not saying this as an excuse. We have a group, healthy high streets to support all of the business people in our town centre. We are doing things to improve ie 1940s market, medieval market. We are looking at what we can do. More events. You asked where the traders have gone – a lot have retired – we need to attract new people to the market, sometimes what we see is that once they've been on the market they take a stand in the Market Hall and then sometimes on to the high street. We are talking to and encouraging college students, young people and new traders with low initial rental rates to have a stall. The stalls are fixed, and the market can look empty because of this. So we are looking for future traders, future investors. How we can help is by using our markets and local shops and spreading the word to encourage others to do the same.

Q Behaviour in the town centre – you said you didn't have any support from the police – why, and what form did it take?

A Huw and Chris Ludlow tried to get help – after PCC got involved it did change – however there are not as many police officers around – with the decreases in the police force, so less officers able to respond. There are different types of crime. Don't know the figures of how many less there are – there is under investment in public services. The private sector cannot provide those services.

Q Councils retain the business rates – have we got control of

A The government released some relief to pubs – we've written out to all pubs that are eligible and have discounted their bills by £1000 – I can check that they were eligible and it has been applied. CPI – the rate should go up more slowly – government has introduced this. Business rates are challenging. They can appeal to the valuation office and have them reassessed. Only 40% comes to us. This is bar S41. A response from the council to Derbyshire Times would be appropriate.

A Social media - the business owner is saying that it is how businesses are assessed and it is not the council's fault. We will respond to the Derbyshire Times.

Q Is the ratio between the bands fixed or is there discretion.

A No the ratio stays the same. You calculate D and calculate up and down.

Q The percentage of council tax not collected because

	of non payers – has it changed during the last year. A We have a high collection rate of 98% across Derbyshire. This is consistent.	