

CABINET

2 NOVEMBER 2015

Present: Mayor (Chair)
Councillors D Scudder, S Johnson, I Sharpe, P Taylor and M Watkin

Also present: Councillors Bell and Dhindsa

Officers: Managing Director
Legal and Democratic Section Head
Corporate and External Communications Section Head
Planning Policy Section Head
Democratic Services Manager

18 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

No apologies were received

19 **DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST (IF ANY)**

There were no disclosures of interest.

20 **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 September 2015 were submitted and signed.

21 **CONDUCT OF MEETING**

Councillor Bell spoke on behalf of the Labour Group.

22 **PETITION**

A petition, containing 71 signatures from Watford residents, had been received in the following terms:

“Please sign this petition if you agree that Kings Avenue should be Full day (8am to 6.30pm Monday to Saturday) parking control zone”

Mr Naveed Iftikhar attended the meeting and was invited to present his petition to Cabinet.

Mr Iftikhar stated that the road was very narrow for parking and currently only had match day parking restrictions. It was very difficult to find a parking

space at night. He thought that other zones were less congested. He had received a letter from the Council saying that there had been a vote against full zone hours in his road. However, the majority of people wanted a fully controlled zone.

The Mayor responded that people would say different things on the door step when presented with a petition. People signed petitions because they did not want to upset their neighbour. However, petitions did raise concerns. The Mayor had asked for the letter to be sent to residents following the consultation as there had been roads which were in favour of going into a controlled parking zone. As a result of the letter there had been the petition which was now before Cabinet, and other roads had been in touch with the Council and their local councillors wanting to be part of the zone.

Parking was a difficult issue and the Council had to do what was best for the majority of residents. The Mayor had spoken to officers and local councillors, including Councillor Dhindsa who was present at the meeting, and had decided to put a temporary hold on the three roads that were due to go out for statutory consultation for extended hours. The Council was going to write again to properties in zone M/N which had rejected the proposal for full hours at the last consultation. This would include Kings Avenue. The letter would state that this was residents' last chance to have their say on being included or excluded from the extended hours proposal. If the response was yes from these roads then the Council would look to add them to the three that were already proposed to be included in the scheme for full hours. If the response was no then they would remain match day only controlled parking. The Mayor encouraged Mr Iftikhar to approach his neighbours and ask them to respond to the letter.

In response to questions from Councillor Bell, the Mayor said that the timeline would be as soon as possible for the letters to go out to residents and officers had stated this could happen within the next three weeks. There would be no need for further use of consultants, it would just be the council contacting residents again. The name of the zone could be discussed with officers.

In response to the petitioner the Mayor explained that three weeks should be sufficient for residents to reply. Once this further consultation had been carried out there would be no change to the zone for two years. Local councillors would also help to encourage responses. The Mayor would speak to officers about working with local businesses as it was important to protect them and to find ways to work with them.

Councillor Sharpe commented that there had been a meeting with local ward councillors. The situation had arisen as there had been a mixed response within the area following the last consultation. Zones M and N had a large divergence of views on the issue of parking. This final approach would find out what people wanted.

LOCAL PLAN PART 2 - ADDITIONAL POLICY ON TALL BUILDINGS

A report was received from the Head of Regeneration and Development regarding an additional policy on tall buildings. This was necessary as there had been a significant increase in the pre-application discussions for tall buildings. The current planning policy needed to be strengthened to prevent inappropriate tall building development.

Councillor Sharpe introduced the report and stated that the policy had emerged from approaches by developers. These approaches were understandable as there was a need for more housing but Watford was a compact Borough. There were some tall buildings already within Watford such as the YMCA and the Meriden tower blocks. It was important for the Council to be clear where tall buildings were acceptable or not acceptable.

Appendix A to the report included a general policy. This was what the Council wanted to see when considering applications for tall buildings. There would also be a supplementary planning document produced. This would be quite descriptive and prescriptive. There was a supplementary planning policy as part of the 2000 District Plan but now it needed to be updated to respond to changing times. The draft would be available for consultation.

The Mayor explained there had been a policy on no tall buildings in the town centre. As a result there had been no hotels so it had been necessary to make some adjustments. The Mayor felt that this approach was the right one and thanked the Planning Policy Advisory Group and the members who had attended the tall buildings workshop.

From the report the Mayor favoured the Merton approach in their local plan. New legislation from the government meant that brownfield site developers would not need planning permission. In the District Plan any area which had been identified as a housing site would have an assumption of planning permission so developers could start building. Brownfield sites in Watford were at risk of inappropriate development so the council needed to have the policy in place.

The Planning Policy Section Head informed Cabinet that work was progressing as fast as possible. Currently they were considering views by looking at a model and using photographic techniques. Some 3D work had been commissioned to look at blocks of buildings. A workshop had been arranged with Design South East to include officers and councillors.

In response to a question from the Mayor the Planning Policy Section Head explained with regards to quality that officers were looking at other schemes which worked. For the design of interiors the Council already had a residential guide. Planning policy would also look at how uses were split within a tall building vertically e.g., cafes, offices and residential or spaces to mix in the middle of a building.

Officers would look at winds and microclimates created by tall buildings and review guidance on how winds circulated around buildings and how this could be prevented by using canopies over cafes. All the information would be included in the guidance to help achieve the desired outcome for Watford.

Councillor Bell welcomed the report and referred to the potential locations which would be identified. The Mayor suggested that residents were shown the model to reassure them.

RESOLVED

That Cabinet:

1. endorse the broad approach to tall buildings and support further work being undertaken to prepare a policy for inclusion in Local Plan Part 2.
2. supports the preparation of a tall buildings supplementary planning document to guide such development and to assist decision makers in advance of the adoption of LP2.
3. agrees that the Head of Regeneration and Development in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Development has delegated authority to agree the wording of a draft Tall Buildings Policy and supplementary planning document for consultation, to undertake that consultation and report back to Cabinet following the conclusion of the consultation.

Mayor

The Meeting started at 7.00 pm
and finished at 7.30 pm