

CABINET

12 September 2016

Present: Mayor (Chair)

Councillors P Taylor, K Collett, S Johnson, I Sharpe and
M Watkin

Also present: Councillor Kareen Hastrick (Liberal Democrat)
Councillor Derek Scudder (Liberal Democrat)

Officers: Managing Director
Head of Finance (Shared Services)
Legal and Democratic Section Head
Communications and Engagement Section Head
Transport and Infrastructure Section Head
Economic Development Officer
Democratic Services Manager

26 Apologies for Absence

No apologies were received.

27 Disclosure of Interest (if any)

There were no disclosures of interest.

The Managing Director declared that in his capacity as Managing Director of Watford Borough Council he was a member of the Skillmakers board.

28 Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 July 2016 were submitted and signed.

29 Conduct of meeting

Cabinet agreed some changes to the order of the agenda items.

Councillor Scudder attended as Chair of the Parking Strategy Task Group.

Skillmakers - Guarantee of Herts LEP Loan

Cabinet received a report regarding a loan from Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) to support the development and set-up costs of the Skillmakers service. A loan of £103,500 was approved by the LEP and the report was seeking Cabinet approval for the council to be a guarantor of the LEP's loan to Skillmakers.

The Mayor commented that Skillmakers was developed in response to businesses identifying that an issue had emerged around skills which were lacking in certain areas.

Councillor Sharpe welcomed the Skillmakers service and explained how the council had worked with partners to ensure that the town had a strong local economy. It was important to think about the future and how residents would have the opportunity to benefit from the new jobs which the council was hoping to attract to the area. The council wanted Watford to be an economic centre in its own right and therefore had to be focussed on positive outcomes. Skillmakers was a good project because it was about making sure there were opportunities for local people to have the skills to be able to benefit from new jobs and to up-skill themselves. The project was being led by West Herts College with the benefit of a loan from Herts LEP. Watford Borough Council should act as guarantor and the college had said it would not be drawing down the entirety of loan. There had been some success already in attracting sponsorship to the project.

The Economic Development Officer explained that Skillmakers was about enabling businesses to access skills for future growth and for the local population to benefit. Skillmakers was a unique scheme and Watford was leading it for South-West Herts. Watford had a track record of being able to deliver projects which meant that the LEP had confidence in Watford. Income streams had been identified to enable the college to repay the loan, so the risk was manageable. There were large corporate businesses in Watford which were keen to be part of Skillmakers as it was good PR and built skills in their supply chains. Skillmakers would primarily target Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SME).

Cabinet welcomed the project as being a positive initiative. In response to questions regarding sponsorship, the Economic Development Officer explained that there was a shift evolving away from sponsorship and towards donations, this varied between organisations. Most businesses wanted to be associated with the project and donations could be between £2k-10k. If financial support was made in the form of donations then there could be variances rather than with a sponsorship package which would have to be even across the board. The

financial model contained in appendix 1 of the report was evolving based on feedback.

The Managing Director commented that whilst the catchment area was SW Herts as a footprint, Skillmakers was a Watford led initiative. On the Skillmakers board there were business leaders such as Freedom, Warner Brothers and Watford Community Housing Trust. Given that Watford Borough Council was investing a significant amount there would be work done to track results to ensure that Watford residents benefited.

In response to a question about risk, the Managing Director explained that ultimately the council would be guarantor for the full amount. However, the college had said it would not be using the full amount. It had been agreed that there would be a financial review at the end of each financial year.

Cabinet thanked the Economic Development Officer for her work on the project.

RESOLVED

That Cabinet approves the council's position as guarantor of the LEP's loan to Skillmakers.

31

The Parking Strategy - Year 1 Recommendations

A report was received from the Head of Regeneration and Development. A task and finish group had been set up through the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider the Parking Strategy Year 1 works in relation to the allocation of kerb side parking space within the Town Centre/Ring Road.

Councillor Scudder, Chair of the Parking Strategy Task Group, introduced the report and explained that it had been a short timescale task group working on a specific brief from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Working from the consultants report the task group had looked at phase 1 of the parking strategy inside the ring road in order to maximise the potential use of kerb space. The consultants had identified 11 areas of focus. The task group then looked at plans along with officers' suggestions. Proposals were drawn up for each of the 11 areas and a set of recommendations produced which included more taxi space and blue badge parking and further provision for electric vehicles. Most recommendations did not require significant expenditure. There was one recommendation which would require more expense which was a blue badge space in Church Street near the church car park. There would still be work required on some recommendations involving consultation around the Met Quarter area with regards to the businesses and taxis, and also in the area around George Street. Councillor Scudder thanked fellow members and officers

on what had been an effective exercise which he would recommend for the second phase of the parking strategy.

In response to questions, the Transport and Infrastructure Section Head commented that the recommendations would address the balance of the type of parking available in the town centre. He explained that Watford was leading the way with electric car provision and had doubled the number of charging units in the town and there were now over 600 electric vehicles registered in Watford. This demonstrated that if the infrastructure was there then it would be utilised.

The Mayor commented that there were potentially over 50 new spaces available for a range of users. There would be a time restriction on blue badge spaces of 3 hours stay maximum to allow turnover in the spaces.

Cabinet discussed that the task group had been helpful and it would be useful to repeat the approach again as the parking strategy was taken forwards. All the recommendations would be subject to Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO). Cabinet was being asked to agree to use the parking reserve for some of the changes and it was commented that this was a strong message for residents that the money from parking services was reinvested in the town.

Councillor Hastrick, as Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee commented that due to timescales it had not been possible for the task group's report to go to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee before it came to Cabinet. Councillor Hastrick had offered to take forward any objections from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to Cabinet but none had been received.

Cabinet thanked the task group for a good piece of scrutiny.

The Transport and Infrastructure Section Head responded to questions regarding timescales to explain that normally the TRO process took 4-6 months.

RESOLVED

That Cabinet:

1. agrees that the task group's proposals and comments in each of the locations listed in the schedule be progressed.
2. agrees that further task groups be considered in future years for the parking strategy recommendations.
3. agrees that the parking reserve budget may be used for the proposed changes.

Procurement of Interim Section Head of Communications and Engagement

A report was received from the Head of Corporate Strategy and Client Services asking Cabinet to note an approved exemption from the council's contract procedure rules in relation to using Westco to provide an interim Section Head of Communications and Engagement.

The Managing Director introduced the report and explained that the previous post holder had left in July. Within the current restructure, the post would be deleted in April 2017 so there was a short time to cover the post. Recruitment had been tried but was unsuccessful. Therefore it was recommended to engage Westco in order to source an interim appointment. The service was bought in but as it was not procured it had to be reported to Cabinet after the decision made by the Managing Director and the Head of Corporate Strategy and Client Services.

Following questions the Managing Director responded that Westco were providing support to supplement the gap as the postholder was part time at Watford and would also do the same should the postholder become unwell.

RESOLVED

That Cabinet notes the approved exemption to the council's procurement procedures in relation to the Westco agreement.

Investors in People - Gold Assessment (2016)

A report of the HR Business Partner (Organisational Development) was received which acknowledged the council's success in achieving the Gold Standard Investors in People (IiP) Award.

Councillor Watkin introduced the report and commented that only 3% of organisations accredited with IiP achieved the gold award and that it had been the assessor for the silver award who had encouraged the council to go for gold. Councillor Watkin congratulated the Head of Human Resources and the HR team. He commented that there was a 'can do' culture in the organisation which started from the Managing Director and that staff believed in what they were doing.

The Mayor agreed with Councillor Watkin and asked that staff were given this feedback. Given the change which the council had gone through, the gold award was a credit to the Managing Director and all staff. The recommendations in the report were about continuous improvements.

RESOLVED

That Cabinet:

1. notes the key findings of the report and the successes identified
2. approves the suggested recommendations from the assessor as part of the Council's continuous improvement plan and to maintain the Gold Standard, including the following:
 - a. review how we work competencies
 - b. raise awareness of new service plans
 - c. review career development options, talent management, succession planning
 - d. consider tour of Watford for new starters
 - e. invite unions to induction
 - f. embed and develop employee council (terms of reference)
 - g. provide policy updates
 - h. embed new CSR, engagement, rewards, health and wellbeing strategies
 - i. enhance hot desking, homeworking, digitalization and IT capability (this forms part of the Council's digital Watford agenda)

Mayor

The Meeting started at 7.00 pm
and finished at 7.30 pm