

CABINET

6 March 2017

Present: Mayor (Chair)

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

Also present: Councillors N Bell and K Hastrick

Officers: Managing Director
Deputy Managing Director and Director of Place Shaping and
Corporate Performance
Regeneration and Property Section Head
Planning Policy Section Head
Legal and Democratic Section Head
Finance Business Partner (Projects)
Democratic Services Manager
Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer (IM)

75 **Apologies for Absence**

No apologies were received

76 **Disclosure of Interest (if any)**

There were no disclosures of interest.

77 **Minutes of previous meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 February 2017 were submitted and signed.

78 **Conduct of meeting**

Councillor Bell spoke on behalf of the Labour group.

Review of Corporate Plan 2020: revised for 2017/18

Cabinet received a report of the Managing Director which presented the revised Corporate Plan 2020. This followed a comprehensive review of the council's corporate framework in 2016 including the vision, priorities and values.

The Managing Director explained how the corporate plan would cover the period to 2020 in the context of a significantly reduced budget from the government with the council losing the Revenue Support Grant by the end of 2020. However, the council retained its ambition to be bold and progressive. The population during this period was expected to reach 100,000 in the town. There were five major priorities in the plan:

1. Identify ways to manage the borough's housing need
2. Champion smart growth and economic prosperity
3. Provide for our vulnerable and disadvantaged communities
4. Deliver a digital Watford
5. Secure our own financial future.

The Managing Director continued that the Medium Term Financial Strategy as set out in the corporate plan demonstrated that the council's financial position was stable and sound. He described Watford 2020 which was an overarching plan to achieve a number of key objectives such as digital Watford, where the council was looking at service innovations to deliver services more efficiently and effectively. The council would adopt a more commercial approach and ensure it was maximising accommodation effectively by deploying property assets and reviewing the utilisation of the Town Hall. The council would also ensure that the IT and HR strategies were fit for purpose to deliver the council's ambitions. The proposals within the corporate plan were measurable and would be accountable at Cabinet and at Portfolio Holder meetings.

The Mayor thanked the Managing Director for the work on the corporate plan. She commented that as she was almost in her last year of office the corporate plan would ensure there was a firm foundation for whoever was Mayor in 2018.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet:

1. notes the revised draft Corporate Plan 2020 and recommends it to Council
2. notes that the corporate work programme within the plan will underpin service plans and staff's individual work programmes as set out in their annual performance development reviews.

3. notes the corporate work programme set out in the plan will be monitored through the year.

80

Local Plan Part 2 Submission

A report was received from the Deputy Managing Director which set out the site allocations and detailed development management policies to support the delivery of the vision and strategy set out in Local Plan Part 1 Core Strategy which was adopted in 2013.

Councillor Sharpe introduced the report and explained that it had to also be approved by Council. This was the second part of the local plan which included the development management plan and site allocations. The council had to justify its decisions through a sound evidence base which would be examined externally. However, the evidence base was constantly changing which had been problematic for all councils. It was important that the council had a plan as without one it would be far more vulnerable to developers. The changing evidence base meant that the council would have to review the plan at an early stage. However, the rewards were greater than the risks to have the site allocations and development management policies in place.

The Deputy Managing Director drew Cabinet's attention to the risks outlined in the report. There was an outstanding objection from Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) regarding transportation and the council would be working with them on a memorandum of understanding. Also regarding the metropolitan line extension if a decision was made which was not favourable then the council would have to consider the impact on the plan. Hopefully the council would know about both risks shortly before submitting the plan to the planning inspectorate.

Councillor Bell commented on the objection from HCC and the Mayor responded that the council agreed with HCC that the housing numbers could not be increased to the detriment of those travelling around Watford. The council wanted a sound transport plan and had asked HCC for a major review

Councillor Bell welcomed the taller building policies and that there was clarification on special policy areas e.g., western gateway, Clarendon Road, Ascot Road. This was an issue which would come up in future Development Management applications.

The Mayor responded with regards to tall buildings that the council could not refuse every application it received as it would go to appeal. With the government's housing white paper, urban density had been specifically mentioned. It was for the council to challenge the quality of the buildings which

would be proposed. It was further commented by Cabinet that the government's strengthening of the greenbelt was forcing further development within urban areas and similar councils to Watford were also looking at tall buildings policies.

Councillor Bell commented on the traveller site on Tolpits Lane and stated that this should be accepted as a settled area. The Mayor commented that there was not a great need within Watford for sites and some of the traveller community had settled within the area.

RESOLVED

That Cabinet:

1. agrees that Local Plan Part 2 should be reported to Council on 21 March with a recommendation that the Plan be submitted for independent examination in line with Regulation 22 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. This recommendation remains subject to agreement with Hertfordshire County Council on an acceptable way forward in respect of transport modelling.
2. agrees that the Deputy Managing Director is delegated authority to agree, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, any late minor changes/documents needed to accompany the submission such as the agreement with Hertfordshire County Council and the updated Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

81

Installation of telecommunications equipment on council-owned buildings.

A report was received from the Interim Head of Transformation regarding the installation of equipment in order to facilitate projects which supported the council's priorities to deliver a digital Watford to empower our community and champion smart growth and economic prosperity.

Councillor Watkin introduced the report and described how it meant installing little transmitters on the council's buildings. The council would receive support from the government as it was a leading authority and early adopter of the technology. The council would be working with software companies within Watford on using the technology.

RESOLVED

That Cabinet agrees that the Deputy Managing Director and the Head of Service Transformation be given delegated authority to authorise the installation of telecommunications equipment on council owned property.

Neighbourhood Forums - follow up to Cabinet discussions on 5 December 2016

A report was received from the Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer following a meeting of a working group set up by Cabinet which was made up of the Mayor, Councillor Collett and the Head of Democracy and Governance, together with the chair of the Neighbourhood Forum Task Group, Councillor Cavinder.

The Mayor introduced the report and commented on the recommendations. She described how the working group had tried to avoid any situation when a councillor in a ward was isolated if they were the only party member in that ward, therefore it was recommended that all three councillors signed off on the funding. The Mayor also commented that it was not a fund for supporting big charities it was meant to help ward councillors to do little things in their ward for small local groups.

Councillor Collett highlighted that currently funding was given to organisations but the council did not get any feedback from the groups. Under the new proposals the councillors would be doing an assessment about how the money was spent and whether it was well received. There would be more advertising on the council's website to direct residents' enquiries to ward councillors. The original task group had done a good piece of work; the working group had just tightened up on the guidelines and protocols.

Cabinet discussed the issue of members' interests in applications and the Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer confirmed that if a councillor had an interest in a group which would receive funding then it would be acceptable for only two councillors within the ward to sign the application.

The Mayor thanked Councillor Cavinder for chairing the original scrutiny task group on neighbourhood forums.

RESOLVED

Cabinet approves the Neighbourhood Forum Task Group's recommendations as amended by the working group:

General

1. Continue Neighbourhood Forum funds and increase the amount to £3,000 per ward with effect from May 2018.

2. Focus future funding on local organisations and charities promoting grass roots groups and activities, rather than larger national charities with other funding streams at their disposal.
3. Rename “Neighbourhood Forums”, “Neighbourhood Locality Funds”.
4. Relaunch the funds using the Council’s communications team, providing links to all relevant information on the Council’s website including contact details for the appropriate ward councillors.

Guidelines

1. To approve the revised guidelines and protocol attached as appendices 3 and 4 clarifying:
 - o how often recipients can receive funding (normally not more than once a year, however the type of project, rather than the organisation, should be the guide)
 - o proportionality criteria (including guidance stating that funds should not be used to subsidise the activities of larger, formal charities, nor for individuals)
 - o declaration of members’ interests
 - o expenditure during the purdah period
 - o rules regarding donations to groups organising treats and outings
 - o retrospective expenditure.

Process

1. Require all three ward councillors to formally agree funding proposals before being submitted to the Head of Democracy and Governance for approval (unless one on them has a conflict of interest when a minimum of two must agree.)
2. Officers to investigate the possibility of allowing Neighbourhood Forum funds to be carried over to the next financial year. Projects would need to be justified on a case by case basis.

Value for money

1. Encourage wards to minimise their administration costs for meetings in order to seek the most cost effective means e.g., utilising the Council's communications team and social media options, particularly in regard to advertising meetings.
2. Require recipients to complete a feedback questionnaire on their completed projects. Any funds not used for the specific purpose granted should be returned to Watford Borough Council. Any questionnaire should include an assessment by ward councillors about whether such events or organisations should be considered again in the future.

83 **Exclusion of press and public**

RESOLVED

That under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business as it is likely, in the view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the public were present during consideration of the item there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in Section 100(1) Schedule 12A of the Act for the reasons stated in the report.

84 **Pilot Modular Building Project**

A report was received from the Deputy Managing Director on a pilot modular building project. Councillor Johnson, the Deputy Managing Director and the Regeneration and Property Section Head responded to questions from Cabinet.

RESOLVED -

That the recommendations be agreed.

Mayor

The Meeting started at 7.00 pm
and finished at 7.45 pm