

## **CABINET**

**4 December 2017**

- Present: Mayor (Chair)  
Councillors P Taylor, K Collett, S Johnson, I Sharpe and  
M Watkin
- Also present: Councillor N Bell  
Majid Ali, Watford Hackney Carriage Drivers' Association (for  
minute no. 44)  
Adil Butt, Watford Hackney Carriage Drivers' Association (for  
minute no. 44)
- Officers: Managing Director  
Deputy Managing Director and Director of Place Shaping and  
Corporate Performance  
Shared Director of Finance  
Head of Service Transformation  
Head of Community and Environmental Services  
Head of Corporate Strategy and Communications  
Legal and Democratic Section Head  
Corporate, Leisure and Community Client Section Head  
Communications and Engagement Manager  
Mayor's Political Assistant  
Democratic Services Manager

### **40 Apologies for Absence**

No apologies were received.

### **41 Disclosure of Interest (if any)**

There were no disclosures of interest.

### **42 Minutes of previous meeting**

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

**Conduct of meeting**

Councillor Bell spoke on behalf of the Labour Group.

**Petition**

A petition had been received which, at the time of publication of the agenda, had 65 signatures of Watford residents. Mr Ali attended the meeting to present the petition. The Mayor welcomed Mr Ali to the meeting.

Mr Ali gave apologies from Mr Shafiq Ahmed, the lead petitioner. Mr Ali explained he was part of the Watford Hackney Carriage Drivers Association. With regards to the proposed Wellstones rank there were some concerns as it was a service road and not a main road. It was out of public view and currently used for vans. At peak times it could take 15-20 minutes to get onto Market Street then more time to get to the lights on Market Street which only let 2-3 cars through. There was also anti-social behaviour in Wellstones.

Mr Ali explained that Mr Ahmed had had various meetings with the Transport and Infrastructure Section Head and had proposed other ranks and other places which could be looked into but nothing was agreed. The only rank presently was outside Iceland and could accommodate 6-8 cars. At night there was a police patrol but other companies came through such as minicabs and Uber drivers.

When taxi drivers were dropping off passengers in the High Street there was no safe spot, and they were often moved on by traffic wardens. There had been a working rank outside intu but this was taken away along with the police putting a bollard up outside Oceana which meant the area outside Gade Car Park was restricted. There were 304 taxis in Watford, but only 25 car ranking places in the whole of Watford. Mr Ali made reference to St Albans and Borehamwood where taxi ranks were visible on the High Street.

An assault on a taxi driver had recently happened outside the Palace Theatre but the police were unable to identify the offender from the CCTV. Taxi drivers had spoken to their customers regarding the proposed changes and all of them disagreed, with their main concern being public safety.

It had taken a long time to establish the rank outside the Entertainer and this was now being taken away. Taxi drivers wanted a visible and suitable alternative rank. Uber were touting for business but they did not follow the by-laws and had no road knowledge. Mr Ali also felt that traffic wardens were treating Uber drivers differently to Hackney Carriage drivers and allowing them more drop off time. There was also a safety issue when taxis reached the town centre that

there was nowhere which had dropped or raised bays for disabled people. Drivers wanted a permanent rank for the next 10 years.

The Mayor thanked Mr Ali and commented that if alternative places for taxi ranks had been suggested then this should have been followed up and reasons given if they were not suitable. The Mayor said a formal written reply to the petition would be produced and asked the officers to investigate the concerns raised. The Mayor continued that with regards to Wellstones the whole area would be cleared up and CCTV cameras would be installed.

Councillor Sharpe continued that the move of the taxi rank to Wellstones was part of the wider context of making the High Street a more attractive environment as well as making it safer and more pedestrian friendly. The improvements would attract more visitors and hopefully provide more custom for the taxis and buses. The Wellstones location was close to the High Street and there would be signage to direct people and an indicator to show when there was a taxi available.

Councillor Sharpe explained that, in addition to the above improvements, the part time taxi feeder rank in Church Street would be converted to a full time rank and the loading bays in Kings Street would become evening ranks. Therefore there would be a net increase in the number of taxi ranks in the High Street. In addition, the intu centre would be introducing a taxi call system. However, there was always a dilemma in managing conflicting uses of an area and the council wanted to find a way to ensure people had close access to a taxi but not having cars drive through the High Street.

The Mayor commented that much of the traffic driving on the High Street presently was illegal and when the redevelopment was completed there would not be the same amount of traffic. This would alleviate the concerns raised regarding getting out of Wellstones and onto Market Street. The Mayor stated there would be a review of the rank after three months and again after six months.

The Managing Director suggested a communication to all drivers regarding the three and six month review and to agree with the drivers when the review took place what would be looked for in order to deem it a success.

The Mayor thanked Mr Ali for attending and raising his concerns.

45

**To recommend a level of fine under the Unauthorised Deposit of Waste (Fixed Penalties) Regulations 2016**

Cabinet received a report of the Senior Environmental Crime Officer

Councillor Collett introduced the report and explained that currently fixed penalty notices were £200, which were reduced to £120 if they were paid within ten days. Regulations came in 2016 which allowed councils to make variations and it was considered time to change the penalty level to £300 with a reduced fee of £150 which would be in line with other councils. It was considered that this was a significant enough penalty to be a deterrent and would reflect that the council took fly tipping seriously.

In response to questions from the Mayor, the Head of Community and Environmental Services explained that the penalty helped to cover the council's costs and the increased monetary value would act as a deterrent. It was also explained that an example of small scale fly tipping offence was two black sacks.

RESOLVED –

that the penalty charge for a fixed penalty notice issued for fly tipping under the Unauthorised Deposit of Waste (Fixed Penalties) Regulations 2016 be set at £300 and reduced to £150 if paid within 10 days.

46

### **People Strategy**

Cabinet received a report of the Head of Human Resources

Councillor Watkin introduced the report and explained that the People Strategy would reflect the council's 2020 programme and would ensure there would be the right skills in place. The People Strategy, ICT Strategy and 2020 Programme were all aligned. The aim was to have a focussed workforce ready to deliver what the council needed.

RESOLVED –

that Cabinet notes the progress on the People Strategy

47

### **Corporate Peer Challenge: final report**

Cabinet received a report of the Managing Director

The Mayor introduced the report and explained it would also be going to Full Council. The feedback had been good; particularly that staff liked working for the council and the encouragement to share best practice with other organisations. There was also sensible challenge in the report around having the right skills in place to deliver the council's ambitions.

The Managing Director described the review as the equivalent of a CQC inspection or OFSTED. It was the sector's way of reviewing how well a council was performing. The peer review found Watford's performance to be in the top 10% of district councils in the country. The feedback concluded that the council was bold, progressive and ambitious. Areas for improvement included enhancing capacity and skills which was recognised and being addressed through the People Strategy. The council was also aware of the need to join up the Medium Term Financial Strategy with Watford 2020 and the Commercial Strategy to become more integrated. It was recognised that the council's partners were very supportive and engaged and that they had offered to be ambassadors for the council. The Local Government Association was not aware of the level of creativity at Watford which other districts would benefit from and there should be opportunities for two way learning across the district network.

Councillor Taylor thanked the Head of Corporate Strategy and Communications for the level of detail included in the preparation for the peer challenge.

RESOLVED –

that Cabinet:

1. notes the final Corporate Peer Challenge report and recommends the report to Council
2. notes that the Corporate Peer Challenge actions based on the recommendations will be incorporated into the council's strategic planning at both corporate and service planning level.
3. notes that the Corporate Peer Challenge team will re-visit Watford next year to assess progress against the team's recommendations

48

#### **Exclusion of press & 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 items of business as it is likely, in 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 reports.

49           **Restructure of the ICT Section**

Cabinet received a report of the Head of Service Transformation. Councillor Watkin introduced the report and the Director of Finance and Head of Service Transformation responded to questions from Cabinet members.

RESOLVED –

that Cabinet agrees the recommendations.

50           **To appoint a contractor to deliver the new leisure centre management contract to operate the three council owned leisure facilities: Central and Woodside Leisure Centres and Woodside Stadium**

Cabinet received a report of the Head of Community and Environmental Services. Councillor Taylor and the Leisure and Community Section Head introduced the report and responded to questions from Cabinet members.

RESOLVED –

That Cabinet agrees the recommendations.

51           **Award of parking enforcement contract**

This item was discussed jointly with minute number 52.

Cabinet received a report of the Deputy Managing Director. Councillor Sharpe and the Deputy Managing Director introduced the report and responded to questions from Cabinet members.

RESOLVED –

that Cabinet agrees the recommendations.

52           **Award of parking ICT contracts**

Cabinet received a report of the Deputy Managing Director. The discussion was part of the previous item.

RESOLVED –

that Cabinet agrees the recommendations.

Mayor

The Meeting started at 7.00 pm  
and finished at 8.00 pm