

CABINET

5 February 2024

Present: Mayor Taylor (Chair)
Councillor A Dychton (Deputy Mayor)
Councillors J Pattinson, K Rodrigues, G Saffery (for minute numbers 63 to 68), M Watkin (for minute numbers 60 to 63 and 65 to 68) and T Williams (for minute numbers 60 to 63 and 65 to 68)

Officers: Chief Executive
Executive Director of Place
Chief Finance Officer
Head of Legal Shared Services
Associate Director of Planning, Infrastructure and Economy
Associate Director of Property and Asset Management
Mayor's Political Assistant
Democratic Services Manager

60 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Stotesbury and Councillor Bell, opposition group leader.

61 Disclosure of interests (if any)

Councillor Williams declared an interest in minute number 64, as he was a member of Hertfordshire County Council and therefore had a disclosable pecuniary interest. He confirmed that he would leave for the duration of that item.

Councillor Watkin added that he also needed to declare an interest in minute number 64. He was a member of Hertfordshire County Council and, in addition, was a member of the panel who agreed the process under discussion; he therefore also had a disclosable pecuniary interest in the matter. He confirmed he would leave the meeting for the duration of that item.

62 Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 January 2024 were submitted and signed.

63 **Conduct of meeting**

The Mayor advised that Cabinet would consider the items in the order as published.

Councillors Watkin and Williams left the meeting.

64 **Breakspeare School CIL bid**

Cabinet received a report of the Planning Strategy and Infrastructure Lead, which provided details of a request from Hertfordshire County Council to allocate Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding towards the relocation and expansion of Breakspeare School.

The Mayor explained that the funding under discussion came from developers' contributions, called Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), following approval for new developments. It was used for new infrastructure which was required as the town grew. Government funding would also be needed for infrastructure works. The council decided how to spend the developer contributions, ensuring the right infrastructure was in place. However, other organisations, including the county council, were able to request CIL funding to support the infrastructure requirements within their responsibility, for example access to school places and special school places. Currently Breakspeare School had 51 Watford children in attendance. The school was full and therefore anyone requiring the specialist school facilities needed to travel outside of the county to other suitable schools. The proposal would increase the number of places and enable more children to stay within the area. He considered this to be an important provision.

The Mayor invited Councillor Saffery to further introduce the report.

Councillor Saffery concurred with the Mayor's comments. He noted that the CIL funds would not cover all infrastructure requirements and the council had to be discerning how the funding was spent. This particular proposal had been carefully considered. Although the school was located outside of the borough it provided important facilities for those pre-school children that needed it.

The Mayor added that other local authorities had also been asked to make contributions towards the overall cost of the school extension.

Councillor Pattinson acknowledged this was a positive move for Watford families. However, she asked whether the county council would be consulting residents due to the travel requirements to get to the school and relevant timelines.

The Mayor responded that he was unsure if the county council was going to carry out any consultation or the timelines, but the questions would be put to them and the response provided to the councillor.

RESOLVED –

that the request from Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) to allocate £769,058 of Watford Borough Council Community Infrastructure Levy funding towards the relocation and expansion of Breakspeare School be approved.

Councillors Watkin and Williams returned to the meeting.

65 **MTFS - Review and redesign of the senior management structure**

Cabinet received a report of the Chief Executive which set out proposals for a new senior management structure for the council.

The Mayor invited the Chief Executive to introduce the report.

The Chief Executive informed members that having approved the budget the previous week, members were aware of the council's budgetary pressures. As a result, the council was undergoing a review and redesign across the organisation. The first evaluation was of the senior management team, which had previously been reviewed in 2022. At that point the council had not been aware of the challenges coming in the following year. The report before members formalised the restructure that had been part of the council's plans approved at Council the previous week. The report provided details of posts proposed for deletion, some of which provided no savings as they were currently vacant. There was one request to establish the role of Director of Performance and Partnerships. The Monitoring Officer was a statutory role and it was recommended that the duties would be taken on by an existing member of the Corporate Management Team. The outcome of the internal recruitment would be presented to Council in May.

The Mayor thanked the Chief Executive and other officers for their work. He noted that no compulsory redundancies would be required, as the proposed deleted posts were either vacant or were being vacated by voluntary redundancy.

Councillor Dychton thanked the Chief Executive and other officers for their work on this matter, ensuring the residents of Watford were still able to get the help they needed. She said that she wished to express her appreciation for Kathryn Robson and her outstanding work and dedication to the Watford community and colleagues over the years. She had worked with Kathryn since being elected and welcomed her professionalism.

Councillor Watkin said that he wished to thank Carol Chen in her role as Group Head of Democracy and Governance and particularly as Monitoring Officer. He felt it was hard to think of Watford Borough Council without Carol. Carol had steered the council through difficult decisions and provided wise counsel. She would be a huge loss. He added that he wanted to welcome Jacqui Hutton, the Head of Legal Shared Services. He finished by stating he wished Carol every success in the future.

The Mayor asked for clarification if it was common for a Monitoring Officer not to have a legal background.

The Chief Executive explained it was acceptable. There was no requirement for the Monitoring Officer to have a legal background. The approach being taken would be that if the appointed person did not have a legal background, then they would need to appoint a legally qualified deputy either from a neighbouring authority or from the Shared Legal Services managed by the Head of Legal Shared Services.

Councillor Saffery echoed the comments of the other councillors. Both Carol and Kathryn had been professional and kind, guiding him as a new councillor when he was 25.

RESOLVED –

1. That the deletion of the following roles be approved:
 - Group Head of Democracy and Governance
 - Executive Director of Corporate, Housing and Wellbeing Services
 - Executive Head of Strategy and Initiatives (Partnerships and Community)
 - Executive Head of Strategy and Initiatives (Sustainability and Culture)
2. That the permanent establishment of the role of Director of Performance and Partnerships be approved.
3. In regard to the council's Monitoring Officer:
 - a. The assignment of the statutory role of Monitoring Officer to the duties of an existing member of Corporate Management Team be agreed.

- b. That, following an internal recruitment process, a recommendation to appoint a new Monitoring Officer will be made to Annual Council in May 2024 be noted.
4. That the realignment of services following the deletion of the posts referenced at resolution 1 above be noted.
5. That the adoption of the new senior management structure as set out in Appendix 1 be approved.
6. That all related constitutional changes, including the scheme of delegation, be delegated to the Monitoring Officer.

66

Long Lease Disposal of Ashington's Car Park, Lady's Close

Cabinet received a report of the Associate Director of Property and Asset Management which set out details of a proposed long lease of the car park adjacent to the Sikh Community Centre.

The Mayor reminded members that if they wished to discuss the appendix to the report it would be necessary to pass the resolution to exclude the press and public due to the commercial sensitivity of the document. He invited Councillor Watkin to introduce the report.

Councillor Watkin explained that the report set out the details of a long discussion with the Sikh community about the site. He congratulated the community on raising the funds needed to acquire the long lease. He explained the background to the site and the short-term tenancies to the Gurdwara. The land was surplus to the council's requirements. The council had obtained confirmation that it had achieved best consideration through an independent valuation.

The Mayor echoed Councillor Watkin's thanks to officers and the Gurdwara. He could recall this being raised with him prior to him becoming Mayor.

Councillor Dychton wished to thank Councillor Watkin and officers for their work. She was aware of the importance of the Sikh community in Watford and the support they gave to all communities.

The Mayor agreed that the Sikh community had played an important role during the pandemic and cost of living crisis, carrying out a lot of charitable work from the Gurdwara.

RESOLVED –

1. Cabinet confirms that the land is no longer required for the purposes for which it was acquired and is surplus to requirements.
2. that the disposal by way of the grant of a 250 year lease to the Trustees of Sri Guru Singh Sabha Watford on the terms outlined in the report be approved.
3. Cabinet notes that the premium payable by the Trustees is in accordance with best consideration, as validated through an independent valuation.

67 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 item 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) of the Act for the reasons stated on the agenda in terms of Schedule 12A.

68 LABV Watford Riverwell Business Plan 2023-2025

Cabinet received a report of the Associate Director of Property and Asset Management which provided members with an update and the latest LLP Business Plan.

RESOLVED –

1. that the Watford Health Campus Partnership LLP Business Plan 2023/25 for Riverwell, appended to this report be endorsed and that WBC representatives on the Partnership and Operations Board of the LLP can make decisions in accordance with the business plan be agreed.
2. that the progress made at Watford Riverwell to date in the delivery of key sites be noted.
3. that the financial commitments and implications over the period to March 2025 be noted.

Mayor

The Meeting started at 7.00 pm and finished at 7.30 pm