

## **CABINET**

**4 March 2024**

Present: Mayor Taylor (Chair)  
Councillor Dychton (Deputy Mayor)  
Councillors J Pattinson, K Rodrigues, G Saffery, I Stotesbury,  
M Watkin and T Williams

Also present: Councillors N Bell, Opposition Group Leader

Officers: Group Head of Democracy and Governance  
Chief Finance Officer  
Associate Director of Property and Asset Management  
Intelligence, Performance and Improvement Lead  
Delivery Support Lead  
Environmental Health Manager (Environment)  
Community Commissioning Lead  
Mayor's Political Assistant  
Democratic Services Manager

### **69 Apologies for absence**

There were no apologies for absence.

### **70 Disclosure of interests (if any)**

Councillor Dychton declared an interest in minute number 76, as she was the council-appointed representative to the West Hertfordshire Crematorium Joint Committee and therefore had a disclosable interest. Following advice prior to the meeting she confirmed that she would be able to speak on the item but would then leave the meeting whilst any further discussion and the vote took place.

Councillor Williams declared an interest in minute number 78, as he was a trustee of Watford Sheltered Workshop and therefore had a disclosable interest. He confirmed that he would leave for the duration of that item.

Councillor G Saffery declared an interest in minute number 78, as he was a trustee for HomeStart Watford and Three Rivers. He also advised that he would leave the meeting during the vote on this item.

Councillor Pattinson declared an interest in minute number 78, as she was a trustee of Watford Community Housing and therefore had an interest. She confirmed she would leave the meeting during the vote on this item.

71 **Minutes of previous meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 February 2024 were submitted and signed.

72 **Conduct of meeting**

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

73 **Focusing on Delivery: Performance and Progress Report Q3 2023/24**

Cabinet received a report of the Associate Director of Customer and Corporate Services, Delivery Support Lead and Intelligence, Performance and Improvement Lead, which provided the latest update of the performance report.

The Mayor thanked officers for their work in collating the performance information and presenting it to Cabinet. He noted there were a lot of good news stories included in this latest update, including the Wetlands project, tree planting and River Colne funding. He was pleased to see that Everyone Active had achieved their target to reduce carbon emissions from the leisure centres. He referred to the night shelter, which was providing accommodation during the winter period for an average of 11 people, although three people had chosen not to engage. The Mayor commented on the continuing pressure on the housing service. Finally, he highlighted the updates on the strategies that had been approved by Cabinet over recent years.

Councillor Stotesbury also referred to the strategy updates and the infographics provided. He advised that a lot of work was in progress related to transport. He thanked officers and informed members that Watford was currently ranked first in Hertfordshire on the climate emergency score card. However, the council could not be idle and would keep working on this topic. He added that further news about the Wetlands would be shared in early summer for residents to get involved.

Councillor Watkin commented that the report showed how the council was getting to grips with key information and managing it. He had spoken with the Intelligence, Performance and Improvement Lead about the data and how it would be possible to review the figures month by month to check if services were meeting the targets with explanations if not met. It provided an opportunity to be able to react more rapidly as issues arose.

Councillor Rodrigues echoed Councillor Watkin's thanks to the Intelligence, Performance and Improvement Lead and Associate Director for their work, particularly responding to all his questions which was appreciated. He asked if the officer could provide Cabinet with details of the new methodology used for the telephone satisfaction surveys.

The Intelligence, Performance and Improvement Lead explained that all customers were given the chance to provide feedback rather than a selected number. The service had advised that the statistics had dropped; however, they were receiving more constructive feedback.

Councillor Rodrigues referred to statistics related to information within his portfolio. He felt it was important that officers phased their targets through the year.

Councillor Bell referred to levels of litter and fly tipping which were outside of target. He asked what would be done to improve this in the next quarter.

Councillor Rodrigues explained that the surveys were done at one point in time. In one ward of the six surveyed, only a small number of areas were reviewed which distorted the score. He had spoken to officers and suggested that in future the same number of surveys by wards were carried out to avoid the same issue arising in the future.

RESOLVED –

1. that Cabinet notes the progress updates within the report relating to:
  - The Council Plan 2022-26 and Delivery Plan 2022-24
  - The external key performance indicator results for Quarter 3 of 2023/24
  - The council's key corporate strategies
2. that Cabinet notes the report will be presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 13 March 2024.

74

### **Appointment to Council Companies**

Cabinet received a report of the Group Head of Democracy and Governance which set out recommendations for the appointment of directors and/or board member to council companies and the joint venture.

The Mayor referred members to the officer's report and the reasons for changes to council representation on the BID Board and the Partnership Board of the Watford Health Campus LLP. He thanked those officers who were stepping down for their input on the Boards. In addition, he congratulated those officers who had been put forward for the positions.

In response to Councillor Bell's question about the Chief Executive stepping down from Watford Bid Limited, the Mayor advised that he also attended the Board meetings as an observer. It had been a busy time for the BID Board and the Chief Executive had a number of demands on her time.

The Chief Executive said that this provided an opportunity for succession planning and some of the Associate Directors to get involved in new areas for them. It was therefore partly capacity but also growing the skills of the Associate Directors.

The Mayor added that the two officers proposed were very experienced in their fields and made sense for them to be involved in the BID Board.

RESOLVED –

1. That Ben Martin, Associate Director Planning Infrastructure and Economy, be appointed as Director of Watford BID Limited and as a member of the Partnership Board of Watford Health Campus LLP with immediate effect.
2. That Justine Hoy, Associate Director of Housing and Wellbeing be appointed as Director of Watford BID Limited from 1 October 2024.

75

### **Property Investment Board Terms of Reference**

Cabinet received a report of the Group Head of Democracy and Governance which set out proposed revised terms of reference for the Property Investment Board following its request at the Board's last meeting.

The Mayor invited Councillor Watkin to introduce the report, as he chaired the Property Investment Board.

Councillor Watkin explained that due to changes introduced by the government it was necessary to review the terms of reference for the Property Investment Board. He informed members about some of the changes being introduced and affecting how and when councils could borrow money. The proposed changes ensured the Board's terms of reference reflected the government's guidance.

The review was welcomed by the Mayor and Councillor Bell. The Mayor commented how the recent Peer Review team had been positive about the council's approach.

RESOLVED –

That the Term of Reference set out in Appendix B to the report be approved.

76

### **West Herts Crematorium Joint Committee**

Cabinet received a report of the Group Head of Democracy and Governance which included details of the new Joint Committee and Services agreement.

The Mayor thanked the officers for all their work that had gone into producing the new agreements. He invited Councillor Dychton to speak, who was a member of the Joint Committee.

Councillor Dychton said that she wished to highlight the huge input that officers had into the new agreements and the many challenges they had faced. The new facilities that had been achieved with the other councils were amazing. It was set in peaceful and dignified surroundings. The Joint Committee was proud of the investment in the green agenda. She believed it was the first crematorium to be able to be aligned with the green agenda moving forward. It was also accessible to many people, including those who may have restricted ability.

Councillor Dychton left the meeting.

The Mayor noted that five councils were involved with the crematoria. He asked if there had been any contentious issues.

The Group Head of Democracy and Governance advised that there had been a number of issues and many discussions had taken place between the Chief Executives before coming to agreement. There had been discussions about the hosting fee and when that should become payable, primarily due to the potential for each authority having to provide funding to support the Joint Committee in the early years of the opening of the new crematorium if it was payable. In addition, business rates were payable. It was agreed that the hosting fee would be deferred for a couple of years in order to help balance the crematorium's accounts. She mentioned that the numbers using the new crematorium were higher than originally anticipated in the business modelling. Finally, the Group Head of Democracy and Governance informed members that each participating council was in the process of signing off the agreements.

The Mayor noted the Group Head of Democracy and Governance's comments and was pleased that it had reached this point.

In response to a question from Councillor Rodrigues, the Group Head of Democracy and Governance explained about the hosting fee. It was a fee to the two councils who had a crematorium in their area.

RESOLVED –

That the West Herts Crematorium Joint Committee Agreement and Services Agreement, as set out in appendices 2 and 3, be approved.

Councillor Dychton returned to the meeting.

77

### **A review of fines for fixed penalty notices**

Cabinet received a report of the Environmental Health Manager – Environment which set out proposals for revised levels for fixed penalty notices.

The Mayor invited Councillor Rodrigues to introduce the report, which covered an important matter.

Councillor Rodrigues explained that the proposal was to increase the upper limit of the fixed penalty notices (FPNs) and would be effective from 1 April 2024. A new early repayment level had been included. The proposal reflected the council's commitment to a clean town and to discourage littering, fly tipping and ensure a duty of care with residential waste disposal. Watford had one of the lowest levels of fly tipping across the county. It was important to recognise that any form of littering or fly tipping was unacceptable. However, he stressed that the majority of Watford residents disposed of their waste through the correct channels.

The Mayor thanked the Environmental Health Manager for his work involved in the report.

Councillor Bell welcomed the report and said he felt it was right to impose higher fines as a deterrent. He said that fly-tipping and littering were big issues and asked the council to keep tackling it. However, he commented that there were a lot of residents who did not think the town was as clean as indicated in the report. He agreed to trebling fines.

Councillor Stotesbury referred to Councillor Rodrigues' comments and thanked the vast majority of Watford residents for correctly disposing of waste. He

disagreed with Councillor Bell and felt that Watford was a clean town. He thanked the officers for ensuring that fly tipping was not acceptable.

RESOLVED –

That the Fixed Penalty Notices be set at the following levels from 1 April 2024:

Offence	Early repayment fine level	Full FPN
Littering	£75	£250
Duty of Care Residential	£250	£600
Fly tipping offences	£250	£600

Councillor Williams left the meeting.

78

#### **NCIL Spending report 2024**

Council received a report of the Community Commissioning Lead which recommended a total of £249,711 was allocated and distributed between 17 local infrastructure projects funded from the Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy.

The Mayor thanked the Community Commissioning Lead for the work she had put into the application process and working with organisations. He was aware there had been many conversations with different groups about the process. The Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy (NCIL) was funded by the CIL which was collected from developers. The funding was given to groups to be used to mitigate development within the town. He noted there had been a total of 39 initial applications. Following a review of each application 17 were before Cabinet for approval. They covered a wide array of groups including projects in connection with the public realm, to a social and play space in Foxhill, funding to the Gurdwara for a community library and a grant to West Herts ABC and Educational Support CIC to support disadvantaged children and young people.

The Community Commissioning Lead informed Cabinet that there had been a lot of support for the NCIL application process this year.

The Mayor added that the Community Commissioning Lead was also working with those who were unsuccessful, helping them with future applications. He also noted that over 2,000 residents had voted.

Councillors Pattinson and G Saffery left the meeting.

Councillor Bell noted the funding for Victoria Passage which he was pleased had been agreed. He was supportive of the report and found it to be very encouraging.

The Mayor added that some work had already begun in Victoria Passage following some funding in the previous year. He advised that the third application to Watford Community Housing was in Leggatts ward and not Callowland. Also the Watford Gurdwara was in Central and not Vicarage ward.

Councillor Watkin commented on the breadth of applications and the range of subjects from the arts to a playground. There was a wide range of opportunities.

The Mayor agreed that the funding had been spread across the town.

Councillor Dychton thanked all of those organisations that had submitted an application and were possibly not successful. She also congratulated those who had been put forward for a grant. She felt this showed that the community understood the commitments in the Council Plan. She encouraged all organisations to try again next year.

The Mayor added that some organisation should have been signposted to other potential funding sources.

RESOLVED –

That the Neighbourhood CIL spend for 2023/24, as set out in paragraph 5.15 of the report be agreed.

Councillors Pattinson, G Saffery and Williams returned to the meeting.

79

### **Croxley Park Business Plan 2024/25**

Cabinet received a report of the Associate Director of Property and Asset Management which provided members with the Croxley Park Business Plan for 2024/25.

The Mayor invited Councillor Watkin to introduce the report.



Councillor Watkin provided the background to Croxley Park and the council's acquisition of the lease over the site. The business plan provided a comprehensive review of the local economic context. The rent levels were slightly lower than the predicted levels when the site was acquired. This was in part due to the leasing of Building 1 not yet being complete. He referred to the recommendations including the re-appointment of Workman LLP to manage Croxley Park.

RESOLVED –

1. that the Business Plan for 2024/25, as produced by LSHIM and attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved.
2. that the delegations to the Associate Director of Property and Asset Management, as outlined in paragraph 4.5 and Appendix 1 of the report, be agreed.
3. that the reappointment of Workman LLP, as property managers for Croxley Park, as outlined in the report and detailed within the Business Plan be approved.
4. that the lease variation with Regus, as outlined in the report and as detailed within the Business Plan, be approved.

Mayor

The Meeting started at 7.00 pm  
and finished at 7.45 pm