

Watford BC: Self-assessment 2016/17

Karen Collett

Elected representative for:

Woodside Ward

Elected:

2016

Attendance: 96%

Reasons for becoming a Councillor

It was important for me to represent the local people in my ward to ensure that they have a voice, so that they feel integrated within their own community. Working for the local people is something I see as vital and important. I believe I can make a difference to their lives by working hard, listening to their concerns, views and look for a solution. In addition, I wanted to ensure that Watford remains a town that we are proud of and a place which offers opportunities for all.

What roles have you undertaken in the Council?

I am a member of the Mayor's Cabinet – I hold the position of Portfolio Holder for Community.

Chair Member Development.

Chair of Equalities Working Party.

Vice Chair of Watford Digital Board

Attended Overview and Scrutiny meetings as Portfolio Holder- Watford Palace Theatre, CAB, Shopmobility and W3RT.

What roles have you undertaken outside of Watford Borough.

Council representative on West Herts Crematorium Joint Committee. (Scrutiny)

I attend Leavesden Community Group Meetings once a month.

Local Children's Christmas Party, Quiz evenings and carol singing- run by LCG.

Woodside Scouts AGM.

How you have met the Council priorities

'All our passion determination and team work, that is what makes Watford bold and progressive'

In this section of the self-assessment, please explain how you have worked to fulfil, or contribute to, the Council's vision and priorities:

The Council's vision: To create a bold and progressive future for Watford

Priority 1: Identify ways to manage the borough's housing needs.

Housing is one of our key priorities and so I attend HPAG on a regular basis.

I attended WCHT Councillor's visit to hear of their long terms plans and aims.

Liaise with WCHT regarding the Boundary Way Development. The Brow Development, Police station site and Lincoln Green Court. Moreover, I attended public meetings and local consultations.

I visit local residents in regard to improving repairs and maintenance to their properties. Visiting the Boundary Way site with my Council colleague to ensure outstanding works are completed.

Supported some planning applications to ensure that we secure affordable housing. Supported a move for a family who needed more space due to disability requirements not being met in their present home.

Supported Origin housing in regard to educating residents on how to improve their flats in the town center by involving the children in a 6 week art project.

Continue to talk, write and discuss housing issues for local residents with WCHT and other housing providers.

Visited Haven Support Centre before their new reopening of their premises- this is where those who are homeless receive intensive support and short term accommodation. I also visited one of New Hopes first Hope homes. These properties are part of implementing independence for those who have found themselves vulnerably housed and those who are homeless. Follow up visit to meet their rough sleeping prevention team.

Furthermore, I supported their Garden Open Day where proceeds are used to support their projects.

Visited the YMCA to discuss their work, discussed housing needs and issues for young people.

Priority 2: Champion smart growth and economic prosperity

As a Cabinet member I review and support the plans of economic development of the town, one of which is the Health Campus, Croxley Rail Link and the Watford Business Park.

I worked closely with key partners, local businesses, police and council to maintain the Purple Flag status which the assessors awarded us in November. This is to ensure we run a safe town and where people can enjoy themselves.

Visited Watford Police Station to look at their control room and discuss community safety within Watford.

Supported our investment in parks and open spaces which paid off as we were awarded 8 Green Flags. I attended the presentation and picked up the award for Alban Wood, which is in my ward and where I regularly clean up once a month. Furthermore, I attended Watford's first Parks Forum where we celebrated our volunteers and Veolia team for ensuring we have wonderful open spaces. This investment supports peoples enjoyment to be at one with nature, places to exercise, and plays a key role in improving health and wellbeing.

Supporting Weekender in the town which was promoted by Watford BID supporting local businesses and stall holders.

Site visit to the Cassiobury Hub to review the progress that has been made and to the grand opening.

I attended the Watford BID Service Excellence Awards at the Watford Colosseum which pays tribute to all sectors of our town who help with our economic growth. I presented the award to the Best Live Music Venue-The Horns.

I attended the Audentior Awards ceremony which recognizes all our voluntary groups' good work. This is one of my favorite events of the year as we have so many heroines and heroes in our town who work consistently to help and support others.

Priority 3: Provide for our vulnerable and disadvantaged communities

Working and meeting regularly with W3RT to learn of supported groups within the Watford area.

Met with the YMCA and local youth club to support local projects; answered questions regarding community developments and young person's needs.

Assisted a local resident who was vulnerable to pick up their pension, prescriptions and pay bills.

Met with Youth Connexions to learn about their youth projects and promote their work in the local community.

Worked and met with the local police regarding ASB within my ward.

Met with local residents to ensure mediation took place with their neighbors to resolve differences.

Working on the Watford Get Active steering group on a project with Sport England to improve the health and wellbeing of local people in the Central Ward. Encouraging free and low cost activities from dance, cycling, netball skateboarding and swimming.

Supporting WBCs Environmental Health team and partners with their Safer Streets Project where we provide support, advice and free help. Listening to the views of residents and tenants in Cassio road this has clearly made a huge difference to the people who live there.

The three phases incorporate Love your street, Love yourself and Love your community.

As a Portfolio holder I have promoted the Small Grants Fund on Three Counties radio along with other recipients. This fund is available for the voluntary and community sector in order to benefit those who work and live in Watford. This year our main focus was to encourage more local groups or those setting up new organisations in their communities to apply for monies that will make a difference. This decision was made in order to support the sectors that have been affected by government cuts. I am pleased to announce that due to our advertising and media promotion new groups and smaller bodies have applied and have been successful. In addition, I supported the Voluntary Fair in the town centre to encourage more volunteers to sign up.

I am also the Chair of an Equalities Working Group where I meet staff from all departments of Watford Borough Council to discuss the importance of statutory requirements for data collection, the importance of surveys and why they are necessary. To develop and agree equality objectives for WBC taking into account our changing demographic.

Priority 4: Deliver a digital Watford to empower our community

I am a committee member for the Digital Watford Board whose aim is to create a digital infrastructure that transforms how the council operates but also provides local businesses with competitive advantage and enhances the quality of life for residents.

So far we have increased a wider use of Wi-Fi and launched a Watford App. In addition launched the digital reception area so that customer's queries are dealt with in a more efficient way. Supported the Gone live on council's website with missed bin reporting.

I use social media such as Facebook, Twitter, e-mails and Mailchimp to communicate with my local residents on local issues, town events and news.

Was filmed by College students on the need for more female politicians and the importance of my role within Watford.

Priority 5: Secure our own financial future

It is important that we show we are a trusted brand and are able to secure our financial future by taking brave steps to meet the difficult challenges ahead which are imposed on us by Central Governments cuts to services. One of those ways is proving we are progressive and open to commercialism. Our Environmental Health and Licensing Consultancy service can help businesses seek advice to new legislation and how to manage risk. We provide a number of services under my Portfolio which are Training, Food Hygiene, Health and Safety and Licensing, Pre-application services and Pest control.

Supporting our wonderful Watford Museum events and celebrating our Heritage Lottery award which will help improve the museums displays and will also fund the refurbishment of the building- this will improve facilities to rival some of the bigger museums and galleries across the country.

I attend Council meetings and briefings which shape and inform our town and agree our budget for the year.

Supporting and welcoming local businesses who chose to come to Watford.

Are you a Cabinet member?

I am a Cabinet member and my Portfolio is Community.

How have you met these further objectives for those councillors in a leadership role?

Providing vision

I became a Cabinet member last June and my first priority was to understand the areas I was responsible for. I spent time with officers within my area and worked alongside them as they carried out their day to day running of their services. This was indeed informative and supported my understanding.

I work closely with my Cabinet colleagues on all matters of business and give information to other members of the Council.

I work with officers on developing policy and I am also engaged in other strategic decision making. I participate in regular meetings with senior leaders to implement the Council's policies and aims.

Helped deliver the program of free play activities for Easter across the borough, taking into account the varied and diverse needs of children between the ages of 5 to 15. A survey was filled in by young people at 2 local schools and Watford residents could take part on our website as to what activities they would like. We listened and so these activities have taken place. Furthermore, to look at the summer program focusing on evaluation data to plan for free events in wards where there is a greater need for a wide range of activities.

To ensure our delivery partners collect registration data, satisfaction surveys and evaluation data.

Opened the new play service at Harebreaks with its new play tower and benches and Harwoods in which incorporates a range of play equipment such as sensory play, towers and zip wire.

To set up a play Audit to make sure we deliver an inclusive play service.

To improve Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Services in Watford for customers with disabilities.

In order to familiarise myself with the Licensing and Environmental Health teams work it was important for me to become more involved and so I attended these areas below.

- The renewal of a Hackney Carriage Plate and new vehicle private hire booking.
- I attended a food hygiene inspection at a local food establishment in the town centre.
- I went out with the environmental team to investigate a report of fly tipping alongside an alley way and went with the officer to bring this to the attention of the person responsible.

To ensure we have a strong policies on regulation and are compliant with for all licensing functions.

I am a firm believer in a family friendly town and ensure that we provide a unique, inclusive and diverse Big Events Program. Most events are free with the exception of the Big Skate and some Wordfest activities. Those free are Big Screen on the Beach, Big dance, Imagine Watford, Watford Palace Theatre and our Museum events.

I also support and am proud of our town's diverse and multi-cultural community by attending the Diwali festival, Black History month, 'Eid celebrations and Chinese New Year events in the high street, Holywell and theatre. Moreover, attending the Hindu Navratri event at Watford Leisure Centre and visiting the Gaudiya Vaishnava temple at Bhaktivedanta Manor to celebrate the traditions and taking in the culture. I also attended the Kerala Community Foundation event at the Holywell Community Centre.

I along with the Mayor attended the Watford Muslim Youth Centre Project to hear of their plans and to meet those involved. Furthermore, I attended Picnic in the Park to bring communities together in memory of Jo Cox.

I attended the wonderful Watford Celebration 2016 event which marked our Queen's 90th Birthday and I was so happy to see such a high attendance bringing together all our cultures and faiths under one roof. Furthermore, I also spoke at the women's Ahmadiyya Muslim Association Peace Conference entitled 'United we stand' on the importance of communities coming together and the need to seek ways to bring about peace and acceptance.

Managing performance

I attend regular meetings with the Head of Service and quarterly reviews to monitor performance.

To challenge policy where necessary and create a dialogue in order to shape our town.

To make sure our services are sustainable and fit for purpose and can we improve on them.

To make sure that our plans and decisions are informed by the views of Watford residents and the local community.

Additional Information

I arranged our local Remembrance Service in Woodside and attended the Civic Remembrance Service in the town centre.

Attended the Lights of Love remembrance outside the Town Hall which is organised by the Peace Hospice.

Took part in the last Starlight Walk with my friend Sandra raising £2,000 for the Peace Hospice.

I attended the Chairman's Quiz to support his two worthy charities.

I attended Herts Inclusive Theatre AGM and performance- Brazil Rocks.

Spoke with the BID to fund Shopmobility- securing £5,000.

Visited Playskill with the Mayor and on another occasion to meet with parents, staff and children. The local charity works with pre-school children with special physical needs.

In this section, please write in the objectives you set yourself for 2016/17 and then provide an update on how successful you feel you have been in achieving each of them.

My objective was to engage with local schools in my ward. This was achieved.

As Ward Councilor's we have communicated with all our local schools, with visits to Garston Manor, Frances Combe Academy, Leavesden Green JMI School and Alban Wood Primary School and Nursery. We provided funding to Alban Wood Primary and Nursery to help with their farm community and pond. In addition, we provided funding for our local Cricket club to improve their toilet facilities which are used by club members. Park users and local football teams

Objectives 1. I continue to ensure that I do all I can for my local residents in relation to case work. I have worked closely with many officers in order to support this work to seek a solution.

Objective 2. I have supported residents in Chapel Close/Leavesden High Rd regarding a planning application. It is important to voice our concerns where there is over development and when unsatisfactory builds are put forward.

Setting your objectives for 2017/18

My objectives are to be

- To learn more and drive policies within my Portfolio.

- Maintain the towns Purple Flag.

- To continue to report and address Highways Issues.

- To continue to promote a diverse and thriving town.