

Report to Council – 16 October 2018

Report of Cabinet 10 September 2018

Cabinet met on 10 September 2018. The minutes are published on the Council's website.

The following Members were present at the meeting:

Present: Mayor Taylor (Chair)
Councillor Collett (Deputy Mayor and Portfolio Holder for Community)
Councillor Williams (Portfolio Holder for Client Services)
Councillor Johnson (Portfolio Holder for Property and Housing)
Councillor Sharpe (Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Development)
Councillor Watkin (Portfolio Holder for Resources and Customer Service)
Councillor Bolton (Cabinet member without portfolio)

Non Cabinet Members: Councillor Rabi Martins

There was one recommendation to Council:

22. Opportunity to increase the provision of social rented housing

A report of the Deputy Managing Director was circulated. The Mayor had agreed the report could be received as an urgent item and the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee had also agreed the urgent decision. There was an appendix to the report which was Part B as it contained information relating to the financial and business affairs of the Council. A Part B Equalities Impact Assessment was also presented at the meeting by the Head of Corporate Strategy and Communications and considered by Cabinet.

The Mayor introduced the item and explained that it was part of his manifesto commitment to build social housing and it was good that, working together with Watford Community Housing, Hart Homes was now starting to see some tangible projects coming forward. The Mayor explained that the report had come as an urgent item to Cabinet as funding from Central Government had become available.

Councillor Johnson introduced the report and explained that Homes England had given an opportunity to bid for a grant for social housing. There were certain projects which the council wanted to bring forward and there could be a grant of up to £60,000 per unit. It would mean that the council could provide a commitment to 50+ social housing units. It was a very positive opportunity to contribute in conjunction with Watford Community Housing.

The Deputy Managing Director explained that responses had been given to questions from Homes England and that Watford Community Housing was also considering the report today.

The Managing Director commented that there may be a possibility of grant funding from the Local Enterprise Partnership towards social housing which would also add value to future social housing projects. Also, that following staff consultation, there would be joint communications with Watford Community Housing on the project.

The Head of Corporate Strategy and Communication drew members' attention to the tabled Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) and asked Cabinet to be mindful of the Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010. The EIA set out the positives and negatives of the decision and highlighted ways to mitigate any negative impacts.

Councillor Johnson confirmed that he had read and understood the EIA and the Mayor thanked the Head of Corporate Strategy and Communication for her work.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet:

1. Approves a joint proposal by Watford Borough Council (WBC) and Watford Community Housing (WCH) to provide 50+ socially rented properties in the Borough to be delivered over a 3 year period by WCH subject to agreeable nomination rights and subsidy being received from WCH on an equal basis with WBC and,
2. Subject to the approval of (5) below confirmation from an independent valuer that the Council is achieving best consideration the transfer of land as identified in 4.6 in the report from WBC to WCH at nil consideration and,
3. Approves the commencement of consultation on redevelopment of the

WBC sites where required (as identified in the Part B appendix to the report) followed by the submission of a planning application this financial year and,

4. Agrees that any amendments on the sites to be brought forward for socially rented homes including the scheme design (relating to overall numbers and mix of units) is delegated to the Deputy Managing Director in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Property and Housing.

And to recommend to Council:

5. That £2.65 million from the funds currently earmarked for the provision of new temporary accommodation are reallocated to support this project, the money being split between 2018/19 and 2019/20 financial years.