



**WATFORD
BOROUGH
COUNCIL**

COUNCIL MEETING

Item 6 – Questions by Members of the Council

24 January 2022

7.30 pm

Watford Colosseum, Watford

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For information about attending meetings please visit the [council's website](#).

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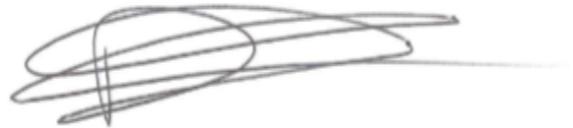
Town Hall
Watford

24 January 2022

Councillor

You are hereby summoned to attend a meeting of the Council of the Borough of Watford to be held on Monday, 24 January 2022 starting at 7.30 pm at the Watford Colosseum, Watford to take into consideration and determine upon the following subjects, namely: -

6. **Questions by Members of the Council under Council Procedure Rule 10.0** (Pages 3 - 6)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Donna Nolan', written in a cursive style with a vertical line through the middle.

Donna Nolan, Managing Director

Questions by Members of the Council under Procedure Rule 10.0

Council – 24 January 2022

Questions from Councillor Trebar Received on 18 January 2022

Question:

With regard to the new expenditure for the much needed allotment provision in Watford, please can the Mayor tell us how much of the funding (which the Council committed to in 2014) remains set aside for the re-provision of the lost Farm Terrace Allotments, which have not yet been fully delivered.

Answer:

Background

In January 2013, Watford BC gave approval for an investment of £750k to facilitate both the re-provision of Farm Terrace and the relocation of the tenants on the site at this time. In July 2014, the Council approved a comprehensive compensation package to support Farm Terrace allotment holders through the process of relocation and help establish them on new plots on alternative sites. This included financial compensation as well as help with relocation. Those who chose not to continue as Watford allotment holders were also entitled to financial compensation.

Use of budget

The £750k, therefore, was used to cover the cost of:

- 50 new allotment plots at Paddock Road – this proved to be more expensive than originally budgeted as the work needed to bring them up to allotment standard (such as bringing in topsoil) was more extensive than originally estimated
- Compensation to Farm Terrace allotment holders – payments to both those giving up their plots and those moving to new plots
- Relocation costs – all those moving to new plots were offered support in moving and relocating items as well as, in some cases, help in getting the new plots ready for cultivation

Allotment supply

The council has been managing allotment vacancies, which, until the recent increase in demand which arose during the pandemic, were more than sufficient to meet

requests for plots. With the rise in demand, we are now allocating additional budget (£550k over three years) to support exploring potential new provision and then, where feasible, to creating the plots for our residents looking to be part of our very vibrant and enthusiastic allotment community. We will continue to monitor applications to understand the demand for plots.

Questions by Members of the Council under Procedure Rule 10.0

Council – 24 January 2022

Questions from Councillor Bell Received on 18 January 2022

Question:

Can officers list the details of the figure for the 'Watford Riverwell Project' in the draft Budget 2022/23 of £10,699,000 in Appendix 6 of the Capital programme 2021 to 2025?

Answer:

The Riverwell project, formally known as Watford Health Campus is a complex project set to redevelop land behind the hospital at Vicarage Road in West Watford over a 10-15 year period. It involves the Council in joint venture with a private company (Kier Property) bringing forward development in phases. To date it has delivered a road connection to the hospital, an industrial zone, and a housing zone comprising 95 homes of which 29 are affordable. There are a significant number of homes under construction, including a family housing phase of 80 units including the delivery of another 23 affordable homes.

The Joint Venture prepares a business plan, which is updated each year which is brought to Cabinet, with a 12 month and 5 year cash flow forecast, which is examined by Cabinet and opposition members.

To take forward a zone, both the council and private sector partner invest monies. In addition, the joint venture raises external debt. The level of external debt is subject to change depending on the capital market conditions at the time. The financial budget referred to in the question is the council's estimated proportion of capital needed for the council's share of investment over the time period of the budget.

Due to the nature of timing changes inherent in development, the timing of this capital expenditure may change due to the rate of house sales, prices and costs. So annual projections are indicative. A proportion of the projection over the next 12 months is to convert a lease of the multi storey car park from West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust to a premium payment, which was discussed by Cabinet, as it reduces over time the Council's funding costs.

Question:

Please provide details of the 'surplus sites' in the draft Budget with a figure of £850,000 also in Appendix 6

Answer:

The surplus site programme generates funding for the council to support our residents and much needed housing, including affordable housing. The Croxley View development, which is part of this programme, is being developed in a joint venture with Watford Community Housing and has delivered 36 affordable homes and a 40 bed temporary housing unit. The second phase is well underway and is delivering 23 affordable homes and 63 private sale units.

The surplus site figure of £850k is to support the land assembly prior to disposal and redevelopment of one of the sites within the programme. This is still subject to commercial negotiations.