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## COUNCIL

**20 NOVEMBER 2013**

At the meeting of Watford Borough Council held at the Town Hall, Watford on Wednesday, 20th November, 2013.

Present: Chairman (Councillor S Rackett)  
The Mayor (D Thornhill)

Councillors J Aron, L Ayre, N Bell, I Brandon, I Brown, J Brown, K Collett, J Connal, S Counter, K Crout, G Derbyshire, J Dhindsa, S Greenslade, K Hastrick, M Hofman, P Jeffree, S Johnson, A Joynes, A Khan, A Lovejoy, R Martins, K McLeod, M Meerabux, M Mills, G Saffery, D Scudder, L Scudder, N Shah, I Sharpe, P Taylor, M Turmaine, D Walford, M Watkin and T Williams

Also present: Freemen of the Borough, Mavis Tyrwhitt and Norman Tyrwhitt

Officers: Managing Director  
Head of Democracy and Governance  
Head of Community and Customer Services  
Committee and Scrutiny Officer  
Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer (JK)

35 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Lynch.

36 **DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

There were no disclosures of interest.

37 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 July 2013 were submitted and signed.

38 **OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Audentior Awards

The Chairman stated that the Audentior Awards had been very successful, celebrating the excellent volunteer service in Watford. He added that the event had raised £1,470 for his charities.

Civic Carol Service

The Chairman reminded Council that the Civic Carol Service would take place at Christ Church in St Albans Road on 15 December, commencing at 6.30 p.m.

**MAYOR'S REPORT**

A report of the Mayor had been circulated with the agenda.

- a) Councillor Turmaine asked the Mayor for clarification of the composition of the Town Centre partnership and the outputs that would be derived from the meetings.

The Mayor responded that it was important the Town Centre Partnership was a partnership of all groups involved and not dominated by the local authority. The Council would facilitate it. Previously there had been a Town Centre Partnership but it had been based on an 'old-fashioned' model. The new one would be based on current best practice. In order to meet this, the Partnership would comprise representatives from a cross-section of stakeholders in the Town Centre, including the night time economy, retail businesses, the Chamber of Commerce and the Police. This would create an active dynamic partnership. The Council was proposing to appoint a new Town Centre Manager who would have a very proactive role and the post had recently been advertised. The Mayor added that in the future she hoped the Partnership would attain financial autonomy; not dependent on the Council. There had been high interest from businesses wishing to be involved. She asked Members to let her know if there were any organisations or businesses they felt should be involved.

- b) Councillor Khan asked the Mayor whether she had decided if she would run for Parliament.

The Mayor stated that when she knew then the Councillor would know.

- c) Councillor Brandon referred to a recent Public Health England report, which he stated showed that Watford had the highest percentage of mortality attributed to air pollution in 2011. The last Air Quality action plan produced by the Council was in April 2011. There had been a partial review in 2012. In light of the recent Public Health England report, he asked the Mayor whether the action plan needed to be reviewed further.

The Mayor responded that the legislation was already in place. There was rigorous testing of air quality. Once a certain level had been reached it was necessary to have an action plan in place. She advised that there were a few areas which were borderline; these tended to be near major traffic 'pinchpoints'. She was not aware of any areas that had breached the set levels. She advised that if Members required further details they could contact the Head of Community and Customer Services who would be able to provide the latest information. The Council would do what was necessary to reduce levels.

- d) Councillor Meerabux commented on the recent results of the consultation to introduce parking charges on Watford Business Park. He asked whether this was the start of seeking parking charges in other parts of the town.

The Mayor responded that there was always a lack of support when it was proposed to introduce parking charges. Officers would advise that the best way to manage parking was to charge. With regards to the Business Park, the main concern had been safety due to poor parking. The County Council had wanted to do some works in the area and had contacted the Borough Council to improve the parking arrangements. There had been two rounds of consultation; officers had also visited the park and spoken to tenants. The lack of response to the consultation was in part due to the fact that many of the tenants on the Business Park had on-site parking facilities, however there were some who did not have large parking sites available. There had been 68 responses to the consultation and 62 of these had been from people connected to one company. At the end of the consultation it had been decided it was legitimate to tidy up the parking on the Business Park. This would involve double yellow lines being placed on corners and parking bays marked out; this would enable lorries to turn into roads. It was not proposed to introduce on-street parking charges, but charges would be introduced in the main car park. The arrangements would need to be revisited once the Croxley Rail Link was operational in order to protect tenants' parking.

- e) Councillor Dhindsa said that there had recently been a report in the Watford Observer about a civic reception held in the Council Chamber for an MP from Pakistan. He asked the Mayor whether the Chairman or other Councillors were invited. If they were not invited, he asked for the reason it had been called a civic reception.

The Mayor stated that the event the Councillor referred to had taken place some time ago. It was an error to describe it as a civic reception and this had been explained at the time.

- f) Councillor Bell referred to the External Auditors report and the comments about Housing Benefits overpayments. The report had indicated that Watford had the worst figures not only for Hertfordshire but Kent and Surrey as well. The Council was unable to get any subsidy back for local authority errors. He asked the Mayor whether she was proud on this subject.

The Mayor informed Council that even if it was not possible for the Council to receive subsidy from the Government, it was still possible to recover the overpayment from the claimant. She explained that the Government accepted it was not always possible to reclaim the full amount which was why the Government granted up to 40 % subsidy. In effect if an authority was good at reclaiming the overpayment and received a subsidy there could be a profit.

The Mayor said that the comments inferred that there were concerns over the performance of staff. She said that all Councillors on the Shared Services Joint Committee had some responsibility for staffing issues and looking at staff training. She reminded Members that this Shared Service

was led by Three Rivers. The service had massively improved since the joint Director of Finance had begun working for the authorities. If there were incidents of staff making mistakes this would need to be addressed with improved training. The Mayor added that the Council had the second best recovery rate in the county.

40 **QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL UNDER COUNCIL  
PROCEDURE RULE 10.0**

The Chairman reported that two questions had been received from Councillor Bell.

The questions and responses were circulated at the meeting and are attached as Appendix 1 to these minutes.

41 **QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC UNDER COUNCIL  
PROCEDURE RULE 11.0**

No questions had been received.

42 **PETITIONS PRESENTED UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 12.0**

No petitions had been received.

43 **BUSINESS ESPECIALLY BROUGHT FORWARD BY THE CHAIRMAN OR  
THE HEAD OF PAID SERVICE WHICH IN THE OPINION OF THE  
CHAIRMAN SHOULD BE CONSIDERED AS A MATTER OF URGENCY.**

There was no urgent business.

44 **MOTIONS SUBMITTED UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 13.0**

Council was informed that a motion had been received.

- (1) The following motion was proposed by Councillor Jeffree and seconded by Councillor Sharpe –

“Council

Welcomes the recent Herts County scrutiny of 20mph speed limits and the public consultation on a revised draft Speed Management Strategy

Notes that adoption of the revised draft speed management strategy would align county policy with current Government guidance on local speed limits.

Reaffirms its belief that implementation of a town-wide speed limit of 20mph on all non-major residential roads, combined with a public information campaign would have an immediate and beneficial impact on accidents and fatalities in Watford.

Resolves

1. That the Mayor should invite Hertfordshire County Council to work with Watford Borough Council on the feasibility, consultation, planning and implementation of 20mph limits on all residential roads in Watford, excluding major roads.
2. That Hertfordshire County Council be informed of this motion as part of Watford's response to the consultation.

Members debated the motion.

On being put to Council the motion was agreed.

RESOLVED –

Council

Welcomes the recent Herts County scrutiny of 20mph speed limits and the public consultation on a revised draft Speed Management Strategy

Notes that adoption of the revised draft speed management strategy would align county policy with current Government guidance on local speed limits.

Reaffirms its belief that implementation of a town-wide speed limit of 20mph on all non-major residential roads, combined with a public information campaign would have an immediate and beneficial impact on accidents and fatalities in Watford.

Resolves

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  2. That Hertfordshire County Council be informed of this motion as part of Watford's response to the consultation.
- (2) The following motion, amended from that printed in the agenda, was proposed by Councillor Turmaine and seconded by Councillor Connal –

“This council notes that:

More than 200,000 children under the age of 16 take up smoking every year, around 570 every single day. Half of lifetime smokers will die from the habit and the proportion of smokers (adults and children) is higher in vulnerable groups. Smoking kills 100,000 people every year, the equivalent of nearly two full Airbus A320 planes every day.

Notes that successive governments have implemented measures to encourage people to stop and discourage people from starting smoking, based on expert evidence and willingness of the public to support such measures.

Evidence is clear that among both children and adults, standardised, unbranded packaging make tobacco products less attractive and will reduce smoking rates.

The tobacco lobby wants to delay legislation, to 'wait and see what happens in Australia' (which has passed standardised packaging law). Waiting for the results of the implementation of the policy in Australia will mean that 500,000 under 16 year olds in the UK will have taken up smoking.

This council resolves to:

Write to the Secretary of State for Health to add its support to the drive to introduce standardised packaging.

Write to Watford's MP to do the same."

Members debated the motion.

On being put to Council the motion was AGREED.

RESOLVED –

This council notes that:

More than 200,000 children under the age of 16 take up smoking every year, around 570 every single day. Half of lifetime smokers will die from the habit and the proportion of smokers (adults and children) is higher in vulnerable groups. Smoking kills 100,000 people every year, the equivalent of nearly two full Airbus A320 planes every day.

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Write to the Secretary of State for Health to add its support to the drive to introduce standardised packaging.

Write to Watford's MP to do the same.

**45 REVIEW OF THE STATEMENT OF LICENSING POLICY**

Council received a report of the Licensing Committee including the original report presented to the Committee at its meeting on 22 October 2013.

RESOLVED –

that Council, acting as the Licensing Authority for the Borough of Watford, adopts the amended Statement of Licensing Policy as set out in Appendix 1 to the report.

**46 FINANCIAL PROCEDURE RULES**

Council received a report of the Head of Democracy and Governance including an updated Financial Procedure Rules for inclusion in the Council's Constitution.

RESOLVED –

that the Financial Procedure Rules set out in Appendix 1 to the report be approved for inclusion in the Constitution.

**47 NEW WATFORD MARKET UPDATE**

Council received a report of Cabinet, including the original report presented to Cabinet at its meeting on 11 November 2013.

RESOLVED –

that the change to the Capital Programme to reflect a revised capital budget estimate of £2.65 million be approved.

Chairman

The Meeting started at 8.15 pm  
and finished at 9.45 pm

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## QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL UNDER PROCEDURAL RULE 10.0 COUNCIL – 20 November 2013

### QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLOR BELL

Received on 15 November 2013

#### 1. **Question**

Can Officers confirm the cost to Watford Council taxpayers of the departure of former Head of Revenues and Benefits, Mr Phil Adlard on 30<sup>th</sup> September?

#### *Answer*

Mr Adlard, the former Head of Revenues and Benefits left the employment of Three Rivers District Council on the 30th of September 2013 for personal reasons.

The terms, if any, on which Mr Adlard left his employment with Three Rivers is a matter between them. The Council would be in breach of the Data Protection Act to reveal any information regarding the Head of Revenue and Benefits' departure without his express permission, which the Council does not have.

*For more information please contact Cathy Watson, Head of Human Resources  
Ext: 8133*

#### 2. **Question**

I would like to know why the minutes of the Watford Health Campus partnership Board or (LABV) are not subject to Freedom of Information legislation?  
Surely if Watford Borough Council Officers are attending the meetings and decisions are being taken on behalf of Watford's Council taxpayers involving public money that is being invested in a public/private scheme residents have a right to know what decisions are being made?

#### *Answer*

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 places a duty on public authorities as defined in the Act to reply to requests for information within their possession made under the Act. That duty is subject to a number of exemptions and exceptions.

The Watford Health Campus Partnership LLP (LABV) is a separate legal entity to Watford Council and is not within the definition of public authority under the 2000 Act and thus it is not subject to the provisions of the Act.

*For more information please contact: Carol Chen, Head of Democracy and Governance  
Ext: 8350*

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