

Public Document Pack

COUNCIL

29 JANUARY 2014

At the meeting of Watford Borough Council held at the Town Hall, Watford on Watford Borough Council Wednesday, 29th January, 2014.

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

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

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

Officers: Managing Director
Head of Democracy and Governance
Shared Director of Finance
Head of Finance (Shared Services)
Corporate and External Communications Section Head
Democratic Services Manager
Member Development and Civic Officer
Committee and Scrutiny Officer

48 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Connal, Derbyshire, Lovejoy and Mills.

No apologies were received from Councillors Ayre and McLeod.

49 **DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

Council was informed that, under the Council's Code of Conduct, all Councillors had been given a dispensation by the Monitoring Officer to consider and vote on minute numbers 58 and 60 as all Members had pecuniary interests in those items.

50 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 November 2013 were submitted and signed.

OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENTSCivic Carol Service

The Chairman thanked all the Members who had attended the Civic Carol service and Christ Church for their donation to the Chairman's charities from the collection taken at the service.

Chairman's Quiz

The Chairman informed Council that he was proposing to hold the annual Chairman's Quiz and that the details would be circulated soon.

Holocaust Memorial Day

The Chairman informed Council that Holocaust Memorial Day had been held this week. He had accepted an invitation from a local synagogue to attend a Holocaust Memorial event. He referred to holocaust and genocide events in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia; it was therefore an important event to mark. He asked Members to take a few moments to reflect on this country's democracy and values and this week's events.

MAYOR'S REPORT

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

- a) Councillor Bell referred to the proposed charges for the Gade Avenue car park in Cassiobury Park and asked whether there were plans to introduce parking charges to any other similar car parks in the Borough.

The Mayor responded that parking charges were introduced to regulate a situation. In Gade Avenue the majority of people using the car park were commuters; it had become a long stay car park for people using Watford Met Station. This was not acceptable. She advised that the car park had a high usage. People drove along residential roads hoping to park free of charge but when they arrived they would find it full and would then have to drive back through the residential streets and park in the Town Centre. The rationale behind the charges was to stop commuter parking. If people knew that there was a charge for parking, instead of driving through the estate they would go directly to the Gade Car Park in Rosslyn Road.

The Mayor stated that Cassiobury Park was a wonderful free entertainment place for everybody. Many other authorities charged people to park and to use paddling pools. It had always been free to use the latter facilities and it would continue to be free. She advised that Cassiobury Park was a high maintenance site. If it was possible to generate some income from those who travelled by car to the park and this would help the Council to continue to provide other park facilities free of charge. She referred to the report later in the agenda, the Heritage Lottery Fund project for Cassiobury Park.

The details of the scheme for the car park had still to be finalised and they would be listening to people's views.

In response to the second part of Councillor Bell's question, the Mayor informed Council that there was a similar problem at the Timberlake car park, next to Watford Rugby Club. This car park was used by people who parked all day whilst at work. It had been provided for people going to the allotments and the park. The charge for this site would be to ensure the right people could use it. She was unaware of any specific proposals for any other sites.

- b) Councillor Joynes asked for information about any plans for 4 August to commemorate the outbreak of the first world war.

The Mayor advised that discussions had taken place. An internal group had been set up and was headed by the Museum and Heritage Manager. They were looking at all different suggestions. The Mayor said that if Councillors had any ideas they should contact the group. She confirmed that Watford would be marking the commemoration in a number of ways.

- c) Councillor Turmaine said that he was fascinated to note that Watford Junction forecourt appeared to be uniting all political parties. All parties agreed it needed to be resolved. He referred to the meeting detailed in the Mayor's report and asked if the Mayor could advise who had attended the meeting and the timeframe for any actions.

The Mayor responded that one of the attendees was Chief Executive of London Midland; others included senior staff from Network Rail. She felt this was the first meeting she had attended with London Midland where people were listening and wanted to make a difference. It had been a positive meeting. Discussions had taken place about the 'blockade' and the impact it would have on the town. It had been announced today that the closure had been reduced to six weekends, which was welcome news. Businesses had been very concerned about the original proposals. It was recognised that the work needed to be done.

The Mayor said that with regard to the forecourt, initially she had hoped that the problems would reduce as people became used to the arrangements and signage was in place. County Councillor Giles-Medhurst had told her that this would not be the case, as he had continually questioned the lack of a proper drop off point. The taxi rank was in a difficult location. The Mayor said she had decided to speak to senior officers in the companies as she felt they would not be happy with the current scheme. They had agreed that it fell below their expectations. A small group had been formed and the Transport and Infrastructure Section Head represented the Council. Members could contact him for further information. Senior representatives from London Midland and Network Rail had been empowered to come to a solution. She hoped that Hertfordshire Highways would participate with a positive attitude. The Mayor stated that the current arrangement did not work and people took

risks. She did not want it to reach a point where someone was injured or killed. The long term solution would be to have access from the rear of the station which was part of the ongoing plans for Watford Junction, but this was some time away.

- d) Councillor Brandon referred to recent meetings which had taken place between the MP, residents and businesses regarding the Callowland parking survey. He said that both he and the Council had been quite clear that the consultation was genuine. He asked whether, once the results of the second stage had been analysed, it would be possible for the local Councillors, MP, traders and residents' association representatives to meet with officers to discuss any proposals if a third stage to the consultation was to take place.

The Mayor informed Council that parking schemes were introduced for residents to ensure quality of life. Nothing would be carried out without significant resident support. Parking issues were not easy. It was likely that in the same road some residents would support a scheme and others would not. A recent survey of all residents with a Controlled Parking Zone scheme had shown a high percentage wanted their scheme to remain. In Cassiobury a scheme had been introduced and residents were very pleased, whereas in Oxhey the majority of residents preferred not to have a scheme implemented. The Mayor referred to the comments she was receiving from Callowland residents and it was possible it would be the same as in Oxhey. The Mayor said that she felt the scheme was anti-business and pro-residents. The scheme had been set up under the previous administration and was for residents. St Albans Road was a secondary shopping area and it would be necessary to consider any potential scheme's impact on businesses.

The Mayor said that she was disappointed that residents felt a decision had already been made. Consultations had always been open and proposals could be changed. If there were to be a next stage it may be about the current arrangements in St Albans Road, which was the scheme the shop owners wanted when it had been introduced several years ago. She reiterated that it was not possible to 'win' when the issue was about parking. She assured Councillor Brandon that residents and the Ward Councillors would be included if there was any further action required.

- e) Councillor Williams said that he understood that there had been some controversy about the funding of the new hospital and whether the hospital would be built in Watford. He asked the Mayor if she could elaborate further.

The Mayor responded that the provision of health care was probably the most challenging issue facing the town. The Hospitals Trust had difficult financial decisions to resolve. The Trust's Board was almost completely new and there was a new clinical management team. It caused the Council some uncertainty, as it was felt there had been a plan under the previous Board and management team. She said that it was understandable that

the new Board wanted to re-visit the earlier plans. It wanted to make sure that the Trust would not be judicially reviewed. She added that she had been reassured by the recent letter from the Trust's Chief Executive to the Watford Observer. The Mayor had also met the Chief Executive and had been advised that there would be some improvements or enhancements to the Watford site.

The Mayor said that one claim disturbing her was that funding for the hospital had been guaranteed under the previous government. This claim was wrong. She would challenge people to prove to her and the Trust's Chief Executive about this funding. It misled people. To date, however, £16 million for upgrading sites, £9 million for upgrading equipment, £3.9 million for new nurses and a significant contribution towards the £18 million cost of the new road had been awarded by the Coalition Government.

- f) Councillor Khan asked the Mayor whether she had decided if she wanted to stand for Parliament.

The Mayor replied that her answer was the same as at the last meeting. She was fighting a Mayoral election and that was her priority.

- g) Councillor Dhindsa referred to the Watford Health Campus. He stated that he had attended the recent stakeholders' event at the Football Club. He had noted that the plans showed that between 30% and 40% of the allotment land had been allocated to the hospital. The remaining 60% or 70% had been allocated to car parking and housing. He referred to improvements to the hospital which had been carried out under the previous government. He asked the Mayor whether she would approach the current government for more funding for the Health Campus.

The Mayor stated that this had already happened and that the funding for the road had been granted. The key to funding was not about which party was in government but about the clinical strategy for the Hospitals Trust. The strategy would set out the plans for the three hospitals in South West Herts. Once that strategy had been agreed the Trust would approach the government for funding. No government would guarantee funding for a hospital whose Trust was not in a good state. The Mayor referred to her visit earlier in the week to the Harpenden Hospital site, a £43 million state of the art Mental Health provision for people in this part of Hertfordshire. It was a Foundation Trust, which gave it freedom to do things. The Council had believed that the West Herts Hospitals Trust was in the same place as under the previous Chief Executive and Board but this was not the case, which was disappointing. The Council remained committed to the original vision and would always support the hospital. A key thing was that the works would soon begin on the road and the Trust had contributed to those costs. It would not contribute costs unless it thought the site would be extensively used.

- h) Councillor Meerabux said that he was pleased to see the sharp fall in crime figures. He asked whether the Mayor felt that people could have

confidence in the figures given the decision taken by UKSA and the changes to statistics recorded by the Police. He referred to changes in policing in Watford and the closure of the North Watford Police Station. PCSOs had to walk further to their areas which reduced their effectiveness in those wards.

The Mayor referred to a quote about statistics. She said that when they were bad people tended to believe them but when they were good people assumed there was a problem. She advised that she shared the Councillor's concerns about statistics and how they were presented. She was aware how they could be changed by changing policing strategies. It was important to compare like with like. The correspondence she received indicated that people did feel safer. She reminded Members that if people had concerns they should report them to the Police and Crime Commissioner who should be held to account.

53 QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 10.0

No questions had been received.

54 QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 11.0

No questions had been received.

55 PETITIONS PRESENTED UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 12.0

No petitions had been received.

56 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.

57 MOTIONS SUBMITTED UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 13.0

No motions had been received.

58 MEMBERS' REMUNERATION 2014-2018

Council received a report of the Democratic Services Manager including the Independent Members' Remuneration Panel's report.

Councillor Dhindsa moved the following amendment which was seconded by Councillor Joynes:

"The salary of the position of the Mayor is far too high for a council structure of Watford. The Mayor's salary must reflect the reality of a non-metropolitan district

council, with limited powers, lower budgets to manage, and smaller populations than other comparable authorities. As the table below illustrates that Watford has the most expensive Mayor, as compared to similar authorities. In fact it is well above the other non-metropolitan district.

Therefore I propose that the salary should be reduced by 20% from £65,738 to **£52590.4** a saving of £13,147.6

Local Authority	Post	Type	Current Mayor	Party	Established	Salary	
Watford Borough Council	Mayor of Watford	Non-metropolitan District	Dorothy Thornhill	Liberal Democrat	2002	£65,738	
Bristol City Council	Mayor of Bristol	Unitary authority	George Ferguson	Independent	2012	£65,738	
Tower Hamlets London Borough Council	Mayor of Tower Hamlets	London borough	Lutfur Rahman	Independent	2010	£65,000	£1 Billion Budget
Salford City Council	Mayor of Salford	Metropolitan borough	Ian Stewart	Labour	2012	£62,694	
North Tyneside Council	Mayor of North Tyneside	Metropolitan borough	Norma Redfearn	Labour	2002	£61,734	
Bedford Borough Council	Mayor of Bedford	Unitary authority	Dave Hodgson	Liberal Democrat	2002	£60,000	
Mansfield District Council	Mayor of Mansfield	Non-metropolitan district	Tony Egginton	Independent	2002	£53,151	
Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council	Mayor of Doncaster	Metropolitan borough	Ros Jones	Labour	2002	£48,480	
Torbay Council	Mayor of Torbay	Unitary authority	Gordon Oliver	Conservative	2005	£25,714	

In accordance with paragraph 18.4, Part 4 Rules of Procedures of the Council's Constitution, the requisite number of Councillors demanded a named vote.

Those Members voting in favour of the amendment:

Councillors Bell, Brandon, Dhindsa, Joynes, Khan, Shah and Turmaine

Those Members voting against the amendment:

Mayor Thornhill, Councillors Aron, I Brown, J Brown, Collett, Counter, Crout, Hastrick, Hofman, Jeffree, Johnson, Lynch, Martins, Meerabux, Saffery, D Scudder, L Scudder, Sharpe, Taylor, Walford, Watkin and Williams

Those Members abstaining from voting

The Chairman Councillor Rackett and Councillor Greenslade

The amendment was **LOST** by 7 votes to 22.

RESOLVED –

1. that the Remuneration Panel's recommendations set out in Appendix 2 to the report and detailed in paragraph 5.0 of the report be approved.
2. that a Scheme for 2014-2018 be agreed subject to the Council being able to request an interim review before the end of the four year period should the economic climate change significantly.
3. that each Panel member be paid £800 and that the Chair be paid £1,200 as a one off payment to cover the four year period 2013-2017.

59

UPDATE ON THE PROGRESS OF CASSIOBURY PARK HLF (HERITAGE LOTTERY FUND) PROJECT AND TO APPROVE FINAL STAGE 2 SUBMISSION & BUDGET

Council received a report of Cabinet, including the original report presented to Cabinet at its meeting on 20 January 2014, which incorporated one recommendation for Council.

RESOLVED –

that approval be granted to increase the capital allocation to this project of £294,311, which has arisen through progress of the development stage from unallocated S106 funds.

60

FINANCIAL PLANNING - DRAFT REVENUE AND CAPITAL ESTIMATES 2014-2018 AND THE TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2014-17 - RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CABINET 20 JANUARY 2014

Council received a report of Cabinet, including the original report presented to Cabinet at its meeting on 20 January 2014 and an additional report from the Shared Director of Finance setting out the Council Tax Resolution for 2014/2015.

The Mayor moved the budget report incorporating the following amendment to recommendation 2.1 b) in the Council Tax Resolution 2014/2015, which was seconded by Councillor Watkin:

“that the capital programme shall be set out in the Cabinet report with an addition of £80k added to the community and leisure services capital budget to fund approved improvements in non Council owned community centres where the need for support is established.”

Councillor Bell moved the following amendment which was seconded by Councillor Dhindsa:

“Economic Impact Reserve – Proposed forecast balance 31/3/14 £1,836,900–
We propose to draw down this reserve by **£1,200,000** (Remained unchanged since 2010/11)

Future Pension Funding Reserve – Proposed forecast £1,375,000

We propose to draw down the reserve by **£507,800** (Remained unchanged since 2005/6)

Therefore we propose to use a very modest amount of **£1,707,800** of the reserves on new expenditure

We would fund projects related to combatting and addressing domestic violence with the Women’s Centre.

2014/15 £44,000

2015/16 £44,000

2016/17 £44,000

2017/18 £44,000 – Fund the project for 4 years (£44,000x4= £176,000 funded from drawing down on reserves)

Anti-social behaviour officer.

Anti-social behaviour officer – £40,000

2014/15 £40,000

2015/16 £40,000

2016/17 £40,000

2017/18 £40,000 – Fund the project for 4 years (£40,000x4=£160,000 drawing down from the reserves)

St Albans Road Regeneration Investment

2014/15 £1,500,000

The Mayor’s Office

The office costs £158,500 (p102-Budget Book)– on top of this a salary of £65,738 it comes to £224,238. We propose a cut of 20% to the office costs – saving of £31,700

We propose a cut of a Budget to pay for the Lib Dem Group hospitality involved in their meetings which comes to £350. (p103 Budget Book).

We propose a freeze to the CPZ for this year.

Proposals	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	Total cost of proposals
Womens Centre	44,000	44,000	44,000	44,000	176,000
Anti Social Behaviour	40,000	40,000	40,000	40,000	160,000
St Albans Road	1,500,000				1,500,000
Mayors Office	-31,700	-31,700	-31,700	-31,700	-126,800
Liberal Democrats Group					
Hospitality	-350	-350	-350	-350	-1,400
CPZ Freeze	0	0	0	0	0
					1,707,800
	1,584,000	84,000	84,000	84,000	1,836,000
	-32,050	-32,050	-32,050	-32,050	-128,200

Use of Reserves	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	Total cost of proposals
Economic Impact Reserve	1,200,000				1,200,000
Pension Fund Reserve	351,950	51,950	51,950	51,950	507,800
Revenue Reserves Balance	-8,413,437	6,561,427	6,353,557	6,503,347	1,707,800
Total Reserves Balance	13,327,258	9,916,924	9,828,554	9,978,344	

CPZ Freeze Assumptions

Assume no other changes to number of permits issued etc.

In the fees and charges report there was an assumption that if the price goes up then the demand will decrease, therefore no additional income was assumed
Due to this I have not made any changes to income as it can be assumed that demand and income will remain as it currently is if this proposal is implemented.”

On being put to Council the amendment was **LOST**.

RESOLVED –

1. that the proposals recommended by Cabinet on 20 January 2014 be agreed:
 - a) that the Council's net General Fund expenditure for 2014/15 shall be £14,592,960.
 - b) that the Capital Programme shall be as set out in the Cabinet report with an addition of £80k added to the community and leisure services capital budget to fund approved improvements in non Council owned community centres where the need for support is established.

and in approving these recommendations

 - c) has regard to the Director of Finance's assessment of financial risks and the level of balances and provisions required, as set out in the Cabinet report.

- d) agrees the existing Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme continues from 1 April 2014 (paragraph 7.6.4 of the Cabinet report refers)
- e) agrees the Treasury management Strategy for 2014-2017 as set out in Appendix 11 of the Cabinet report
2. that Watford Borough Council's Council Tax Base for 2014/15 has been calculated at 30,112 in accordance with Regulation 3 of the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012 made under Section 31B (1) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended.
3. that the following amounts be now calculated by the Council for the year 2014/15 in accordance with Sections 31A to 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992:
- (A) *Being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A (2) of the Act.
(Effectively the gross expenditure and transfers to reserves)* **£67,367,020**
- (B) *Being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A (3) of the Act.
(Effectively the gross income and transfers from reserves)* **£59,843,840**
- (C) *Being the amount by which the aggregate at 2.3 (A) above exceeds the aggregate at 2.3 (B) above calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 31A (4) of the Act as its Council Tax Requirement for the year* **£7,523,180**
- (D) *Being the amount at paragraph 2.3 (C) divided by amount at 2.2 above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 33 (1) of the Act as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year (at Band D)* **£249.84**

(E)

Council Tax Valuation Bands	Conversion Factor to Band D	Watford's Share (£)
A	6 / 9	166.56
B	7 / 9	194.32
C	8 / 9	222.08
D	1	249.84
E	11 / 9	305.36
F	13 / 9	360.88
G	15 / 9	416.40
H	2	499.68

Being the amounts given by multiplying the amount at

paragraph 2.3 (D) above by the number which, in the proportion set out in Section 5 (1) of the Act, is applicable to dwellings listed in a particular valuation band divided by the number which in that proportion is applicable to dwellings listed in Valuation Band D, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 36 (1) of the Act, as the amounts to be taken into account for the year 2014/15 in respect of categories of dwellings listed in different valuation bands

4. that a report including the precepts of both the Police Authority and Hertfordshire County Council be presented to the Functions Committee on 27 February 2014 to set the total Council Tax.

Chairman

The Meeting started at 7.30 pm
and finished at 9.30 pm

Proposed Amendment to Mayors Salary Recommendation.

The salary of the position of the Mayor is far too high for a council structure of Watford. The Mayor's salary must reflect the reality of a non-metropolitan district council, with limited powers, lower budgets to manage, and smaller populations than other comparable authorities. As the table below illustrates that Watford has the most expensive Mayor, as compared to similar authorities. In fact it is well above the other non-metropolitan district.

Therefore I propose that the salary should be reduced by 20% from £65,738 to **£52590.4** a saving of £13,147.6

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Proposed by Councillor Dhindsa

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Labour's Proposed Amendments

Economic Impact Reserve – Proposed forecast balance 31/3/14 £1,836,900–

We propose to draw down this reserve by **£1,200,000** (Remained unchanged since 2010/11)

Future Pension Funding Reserve – Proposed forecast £1,375,000

We propose to draw down the reserve by **£507,800** (Remained unchanged since 2005/6)

Therefore we propose to use a very modest amount of **£1,707,800** of the reserves on new expenditure

We would fund projects related to combatting and addressing domestic violence with the Women’s Centre.

2014/15 £44,000

2015/16 £44,000

2016/17 £44,000

2017/18 £44,000 – Fund the project for 4 years (£44,000x4= £176,000 funded from – drawing down on reserves)

Anti-social behaviour officer.

Anti-social behaviour officer - £40,000

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We propose a cut of a Budget to pay for the Lib Dem Group hospitality involved in their meetings which comes to £350. (p103 Budget Book).

We propose a freeze to the CPZ for this year.

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Anti Social Behaviour	40,000	40,000	40,000	40,000	160,000
St Albans Road	1,500,000				1,500,000
Mayors Office	(31,700)	(31,700)	(31,700)	(31,700)	(126,800)
Liberal Democrats Group Hospitality	(350)	(350)	(350)	(350)	(1,400)
CPZ Freeze	0	0	0	0	0
					1,707,800
	1,584,000	84,000	84,000	84,000	1,836,000
	(32,050)	(32,050)	(32,050)	(32,050)	(128,200)

Use of Reserves	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	Total cost of proposals
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