

COUNCIL

19 MARCH 2014

At the meeting of Watford Borough Council held at the Town Hall, Watford on Wednesday, 19th March, 2014.

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, H Lynch, 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: Mavis Tyrwhitt and Norman Tyrwhitt, Freemen of the Borough

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

61 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Lovejoy.

Councillor Saffery had forwarded apologies stating that he had been delayed and would attend the meeting as soon as he could.

62 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

There were no disclosures of interest.

63 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 January 2014 were submitted and signed.

OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

Fairtrade Fortnight

The Chairman reported that he had attended the launch of the successful Fairtrade Fortnight, which had taken place in the Town Hall.

Chairman's Quiz

The Chairman informed Council that his quiz night would take place the following evening and he hoped to see as many as possible there.

Chairman's visit to the Colosseum with the Hertfordshire Mayors and Chairmen

The Chairman stated that he had hosted the Hertfordshire Mayors and Chairmen at the Canadian Carnival evening held at the Colosseum. The BBC Concert Orchestra had played a number of Commonwealth pieces. It had given him the opportunity to show them the wonderful Colosseum.

Related Party Transactions

The Chairman reminded Members that their Related Party Transactions needed to be returned to the Head of Democracy and Governance as soon as possible.

Members' Self-assessments

The Chairman advised Members to forward their completed self-assessments to the Democratic Services Manager or the Member Development and Civic Officer by 31 March.

Resignation

The Chairman announced that he would be resigning from the Council at the end of the following week, as he had been offered a full-time job managing a wildlife hospital in West Sussex.

The Mayor, on behalf of the Liberal Democrat Group, said that Councillor Rackett would be missed. She felt that all Members would agree he had not tried to score political points but had always strived to see the bigger picture. He had cared about his residents. She was sure that people would miss him.

Councillor Bell agreed that Councillor Rackett would be missed and he was well respected across the Chamber and in the Town. During debates in the Chamber his comments had been respected and he had taken a balanced view. He said that the Labour Group wished him well for the future.

Councillor Brandon stated that he wished to thank Councillor Rackett for leading the Green Group over the last few years. He had known Councillor Rackett since joining the local Watford Green Group in 2005. Councillor Rackett had helped him to grow as a person, a campaigner and eventually as a Councillor.

He had always respected Councillor Rackett's views; he had taught him very well. He added that he wished to thank him personally and on behalf of the Green Party.

65

MAYOR'S REPORT

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

- a) Councillor Joynes stated she was pleased about the resident who would be raising funds for Alzheimer's as it was a worthy cause. She advised that she had attended a dementia awareness day and had met an Admiral Nurse. She had discovered that there was only one Admiral Nurse in Hertfordshire who was based in Stevenage. She asked whether it would be possible to have one for this Council.

The Mayor replied that she did not believe it was the role of the Council to acquire an Admiral Nurse for the area. She said that she would willingly meet with a representative to discuss how the nurses were funded. The Council supported local charities through different events. There were health budgets managed by the County Council. She added that she was a member of the Health and Well-being Board and would be able to raise the matter at a meeting. She asked Councillor Joynes to provide her with contact details.

- b) Councillor Turmaine commented that it was great news that 77% of the responses to the Health Campus consultation had been in favour of the scheme. He considered that the most bogus recent political act was an email circulated by Councillor Martins, which had condemned Clause 119 to the Health and Social Care Bill. He considered it correct but a top-down reorganisation of the NHS would not have happened if the Liberal Democrats had not been part of the Government.

The Mayor responded that she was unclear of the question posed by the Councillor. She stated that every Government had decided to restructure the NHS, including Labour which had started the privatisation movement. The Mayor said that personally she considered there to be serious endemic problems with the NHS and feared that neither the Labour Party nor the Liberal Democrats had recognised the issues. Any criticisms of the NHS were seen as right wing and it was not possible to have an adult debate about the NHS. She considered this a barrier to serious improvements which were needed.

The Mayor said that the best way to support the NHS in Watford was to support the Health Campus.

- c) Councillor Meerabux asked the Mayor whether she considered it to be reasonable for those people attending funeral services to be worried about getting a parking ticket. He had recently attended a number of funerals in Brent where churches distributed free specially timed vouchers to residents

and those attending funeral services. He considered this to be a positive move by the Council and showed sympathy and sensitivity. He felt there needed to be more compassion rather than just collecting fees from parking machines.

The Mayor replied that she did have sympathy in this matter. She advised that she had received a parking ticket herself whilst attending a colleague's funeral in Dunstable. The Mayor said that in Watford there were many religious establishments affected by restricted parking, including the Town Centre Mosque and the Sikh Gurdwara. She was unsure how the Council could run a parking service and be able to know who was at a funeral service and who was not. Any scheme would be open to abuse and would be unworkable. She stressed that she did have sympathy in this matter.

- d) Councillor Brandon commented that following the last Council meeting he had met the Mayor to discuss some of the items in his budget speech, particularly the YMCA building, St Albans Road, long term financial planning and empty homes. He asked whether the Mayor had any further thoughts about the proposals and whether any progress had been made.

The Mayor said that she had given thought to the discussion but would prefer to give a considered response within the next couple of weeks. She felt that she needed to have a discussion with her colleagues. In respect of empty homes it would be necessary to review the exact problem. At their meeting she had said that she would prefer to clamp down on those landlords who were not good. She would prefer to look at this aspect further. With regard to St Albans Road, the Liberal Democrat group would want to review the recommendations in the St Albans Road Study, as it was felt the Council had done everything it could. However, the Group wanted to make sure that this was correct. The Mayor said that discussions had been held about the YMCA building. It had been suggested to the YMCA that they could relocate to the Health Campus, but it was not a straightforward matter. She assured Councillor Brandon that she would give him a considered response.

- e) Councillor Dhindsa noted that a working group had been set up to look at Watford Junction. He enquired who had set up the group and questioned whether it should have included representatives from other parties. He considered two major groups were missing from the list, users and taxi drivers; he asked whether it was an oversight and whether they could be involved in future.

The Mayor advised that it had not been an oversight. The group was meant to be quick and operational. It involved senior officers from Network Rail, London Midland, Transport for London, Hertfordshire Highways and officers from Watford Borough Council. It was not necessary to discuss it with users and find out what was wrong as the group knew the problems. The taxi drivers did not need to be included as a series of workshops had been held and they had stated their views. The group's role was to look at changes to the forecourt and make them happen.

The Mayor stated that the group was chaired by County Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst. Hertfordshire Highways were the main agent who needed to carry out the work. A video survey had been carried out to see exactly what was happening in that area. The buses had been moved from Woodford Road on a trial basis which had proved successful. The Mayor added that if it had been the type of group the Councillor had envisaged, then it would be appropriate to be a cross party group. This was a working group and its role was to change what was happening at the forecourt and implement the engineering decisions to resolve matters.

- f) Councillor Connal said that she wished to return to the Health Campus consultation. She noted the 77% positive responses; she asked if the Mayor could inform Council about the overall number of responses, as she envisaged there would have been thousands of replies. In addition Councillor Connal suggested that the boxing club might wish to consider Rembrandt House as a new location.

The Mayor said that there had not been hundreds of thousands of responses. She advised that 40,000 leaflets had been distributed; there had been three public exhibitions and an online survey which anyone in the country could have completed. The Mayor reported that there had been approximately 1,000 responses. She felt that the response rate showed that most people did not consider the Health Campus to be an issue. She had been surprised by the high number of positive responses given the Farm Terrace campaign. Those people who had attended the exhibitions and completed the survey were overwhelmingly positive. The vast majority of people in Watford told her to 'get on with it' and asked when they would see the improvements.

- g) Councillor Khan said that he also wanted to pay tribute to Councillor Rackett, who was his ward councillor. He added that Councillor Rackett had been one of the people to inspire him to get involved in local government. He had helped residents of all persuasions.

Councillor Khan said that his question related to the previous meeting and the fact that the Mayor had been unaware of the hospitality costs for the Liberal Democrat Group. He asked the Mayor if she was able to advise about the 'Liberal Democrat's propaganda piece About Watford', as referred to by the Watford Observer.

The Mayor said that she would not have described training, group days or away days as 'hospitality'. 'Hospitality' was when she had visitors from outside the Council. She had been surprised by the description in the budget. She said that there was a training budget which Groups could use to hold away days. She asked that the Labour Group Leader be informed about his group's entitlement to training and 'hospitality'.

The Mayor stated that she would defend the matter of 'About Watford'. Any person standing for election and running a council who did not tell their

residents what they were doing with their Council Tax, was not fit to stand for election. An elected person had to tell those who had elected them to run the Council exactly what was being done. There was a clear code that local government was required to follow in relation to publications. The code was strictly adhered to in this Council. She was shocked that any one would think that the Council should not tell its residents how it spent the Council Tax. She reminded Council that there had been more officers in the Communications Team than in accounts when the Labour Group controlled the Council. The Head of Communications had been paid the same as the Head of Finance. The accounts were disclaimed but there had been wonderful publications distributed to residents. She said that she would not apologise for reporting what the Council was doing with residents' money. She stressed that no political party should apologise for this action.

- h) Councillor D Scudder stated that he wished to apologise to the Chairman for his conduct at the previous meeting. Following the meeting he had been approached by some councillors about the words he had used to a fellow Councillor and he wished to provide an explanation. He had had concerns about evidence he had received indicating that the Councillor had lied to Internal Audit regarding an investigation into the expenditure of funds from the Neighbourhood Forum budget. He felt that the Council may have been the victim of fraud. He asked the Mayor whether she agreed that the Managing Director should be asked to refer the matter to the Police.

The Mayor responded that she understood Councillor Scudder had been concerned about this matter for some time. She considered that it was probably appropriate to share the information with the Managing Director and the Monitoring Officer to enable them to take the appropriate steps.

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

No questions had been received.

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

No questions had been received.

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

No petitions had been received.

69

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.

70

MOTIONS SUBMITTED UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 13.0

Council was informed that two motions had been received.

- 1) The following motion was proposed by Councillor Turmaine and seconded by Councillor Bell –

“That WBC deplores the illegal practice of ‘blacklisting’ within the construction industry and will ensure that any company known to have been involved in blacklisting practices and not to have indemnified their victims, will not be invited to tender for contracts by WBC until they have:

1. Identified the steps taken to remedy blacklisting for affected workers;
2. Identified the steps taken to ensure that blacklisting will not happen again;
3. Given assurances that they do not employ individuals who were named contacts for the Consulting Association.”

Councillor Sharpe moved the following amendment to the motion which was seconded by Councillor Watkin –

“That Watford Borough Council deplores the illegal practice of ‘blacklisting’ within the construction industry and will ensure that any company found to have been involved in blacklisting practices by a tribunal, court, or any other public body exercising similar functions shall be excluded from further participation in the procurement process for contracts tendered by Watford Borough Council unless they have (to the satisfaction of Watford Borough Council):

1. Identified the steps taken to remedy blacklisting for affected workers; and
2. Identified the steps taken to ensure that blacklisting will not happen again.”

Following clarification by Councillor Sharpe, Councillor Turmaine agreed in principle to the amendment.

Members debated the motion

On being put to Council the motion as amended was AGREED.

RESOLVED –

that Watford Borough Council deploras the illegal practice of ‘blacklisting’ within the construction industry and will ensure that any company found to have been involved in blacklisting practices by a tribunal, court, or any other public body exercising similar functions shall be excluded from further participation in the procurement process for contracts tendered by Watford Borough Council unless they have (to the satisfaction of Watford Borough Council):

1. Identified the steps taken to remedy blacklisting for affected workers; and
 2. Identified the steps taken to ensure that blacklisting will not happen again.”
- 2) The following motion was moved by Councillor Joynes and seconded by Councillor Dhindsa –

“That WBC undertakes to limit the sale of cheap, super-strength alcohol from off-licences and supermarkets Watford-wide.

1. This will mitigate the prevalence of street-drinkers;
2. Consequently lead to a reduction of ASB;
3. Thereby facilitating a more pleasurable shopping experience for people in local retail areas.”

Councillor J Brown, the Chair of the Licensing Committee (licensing Act 2003), responded to the motion. She suggested that the motion should be discussed at Licensing Committee (Licensing Act 2003).

Councillor Sharpe moved that, in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 15.12 a) i) and in view of the Chair of Licensing Committee’s undertaking that this matter could be discussed at Licensing Committee, which would be appropriate, Council proceeded to the next business. Councillor Watkin seconded the motion.

Councillor Joynes, the mover of the motion was granted a right of reply.

The procedural motion on being put to Council was AGREED.

RESOLVED –

that Council proceeds to the next business.

71 **CHIEF OFFICER PAY POLICY 2014**

Council received a report of the Head of Human Resources which sought approval for the Council's Pay Policy Statement for 2014/15.

RESOLVED –

that the Pay Policy Statement attached as Appendix 1 to the report be approved.

72 **LOCAL GOVERNMENT PENSION SCHEME 2014 - ADOPTION OF NEW PENSION DISCRETION**

Council received a report of the Head of Human Resources which sought Council's approval to exercise its discretion under Regulation 9 (3) of the Local Government Pension Scheme (Benefits, Membership and Contributions) regulations 2008.

RESOLVED –

that Council agrees to exercise its discretion under Regulation 9 (3) of the Local Government Pension Scheme (Benefits, Membership and Contributions) Regulations 2008 by determining the rate of each employee's contributions monthly.

73 **DRAFT CORPORATE PLAN 2014-18**

Council received a report of Cabinet, including the original report presented to Cabinet at its meeting on 10 March 2014. The report included the current draft of the Corporate Plan 2014-2018.

RESOLVED –

that the Corporate Plan 2014-18 be agreed.

74 **MOVING SHARED SERVICES TO A LEAD AUTHORITY MODEL**

Council received a report of Cabinet, including the original report presented to Cabinet at its meeting on 10 March 2014. The report included the proposed Lead Authority Model Agreement including Service Specifications.

RESOLVED –

that, subject to Three Rivers District Council also agreeing to resolutions 1 and 2 below before 31 March 2014

1. the Joint Committee Agreement for Shared Services with Three Rivers District Council dated 26 August 2008 be terminated with effect from midnight 31 March 2014.
2. Council enters into the Shared Services Agreement with Three Rivers District Council attached at Appendix 1 to the report with effect from 1 April 2014.
3. the addition of Procurement including sharing best practice on contract management to the services in the Agreement with Watford Borough Council being the Lead Authority be agreed.
4. the Shared Director of Finance be given delegated authority to agree any minor amendments to the agreement as may be necessary, including the service specification and charges for Procurement.

Chairman

The Meeting started at 7.30 pm
and finished at 8.40 pm