

CABINET

16 FEBRUARY 2015

Present: Mayor (Chair)
Councillors D Scudder, K Crout, S Johnson, I Sharpe and M Watkin

Also present: Councillor N Bell (for Minute Numbers 57 to 60)
Councillor K Collett (Chair of Controlled Parking Zones Policies Task Group)

Officers: Managing Director
Shared Director of Finance
Head of Regeneration and Development (for Minute Numbers 53 to 56 and 58 to 60)
Legal and Democratic Section Head
Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer (RW)

53 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies were received

54 DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST (IF ANY)

There were no disclosures of interest.

55 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 January 2015 were submitted and signed.

56 CONDUCT OF MEETING

Councillor Bell spoke on behalf of the Labour Group at this meeting.

The Cabinet agreed some changes to the order of the agenda items.

57 DRAFT CORPORATE PLAN 2015-19

A report was received from the Managing Director presenting the draft Corporate Plan 2015-19. A significant review of priorities was undertaken in 2013 and although the plan was reviewed annually it would maintain a four-year perspective. This medium term approach allowed for effective planning and allocation of resources and provided continuity and resilience to the delivery of the corporate work programme.

The Managing Director outlined the Corporate Plan for 2015 to 2019 and advised that it would continue the steady progress and delivery of the existing plan.

He noted:

- The good progress in the Health Campus plans
- Good internal progress: excellent staff management with low sickness statistics and achievement of the IIP award.
- Sustainability: financial accountability was good with strong reserves
- The four core priorities were being achieved through detailed service plans and indications of how 'pressure points' should be addressed

The Managing Director concluded by advising that the Corporate Plan was more advanced than it had ever been in the past and asked that the plan be presented to Full Council.

The Chair noted that the Auditor had commended the strong financial reserve held by the Council. She said that it was important that residents were aware that the Council had achieved the goals they had set themselves; progress had been steady and the results were reassuring.

Councillor Sharpe drew attention to Core Priority 2 and advised that all aspects of the Plan were important and that the Council was working with other partners both private and public. There had been considerable focus on regeneration with a twin need to improve both job opportunities and the environment.

Councillor Sharpe added that it was also important to develop cultural and social occasions. He said that it was imperative that the Parade and 'top end' of the Town was not perceived as solely for retail use: it was intended that this area be used for social cohesion and to attract visitors for enjoyable events. He drew attention to the current work on the area abutting the Parade towards the ring road.

The Chair commended the considerable work achieved by all members of staff and the Council. She advised that the Council had many areas in which to play a part and that it was not possible to be involved in all of them: some were addressed and facilitated by Council staff, some areas were outsourced and in some the Council worked in co-operation with outside partners.

The Chair concluded by stating that it was important for staff to understand how they fitted into the Corporate Plan and asked the Managing Director to pass information on to all Council employees.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet:

- Notes the current draft of the Corporate Plan 2015-19, propose any amendments and **recommends it to Council** (Appendix 1)
- Notes the key performance indicators identified to support the monitoring of the Corporate Plan and ensure it contributes to the council's aim of continuous development and improvement
- Notes the current progress update for the work identified in the Corporate Plan 2014-18. This would be finalised at the end of the financial year (Appendix II)

58

CONTROLLED PARKING ZONES POLICIES

Cabinet received a report of the Controlled Parking Zones (CPZ) Policies Task Group. Councillor Collett, Chair of the Task Group, attended the meeting. The Task Group had been established following a scrutiny proposal from the Head of Regeneration and Development. The proposal related to a review of the operational aspects of policies relating to the CPZ.

Councillor Sharpe introduced this item and explained that street parking had become problematical for residents who had then raised this issue with councillors. Similar problems had been identified by officers and it had been decided that it would be wise to establish a task group to consider these matters.

Councillor Collett advised that the group had been asked to look at current parking policies in order to determine whether they were fit for purpose. Evidence and opinions were gathered from councillors who had CPZs sited in their wards, from the results of the 2013 survey of residents and from parking service officers. The conclusions and recommendations were summarised in the report as included in the agenda.

Councillor Collett explained salient points in the report and the recommendations.

Points raised at the meeting by members of the Cabinet:

Funerals:

Although hearses and limousines were exempt from parking restrictions there was no exemption for other mourners. It had been agreed that, whilst the policy would remain unchanged, the parking service would provide maps indicating parking facilities in the vicinity of churches and places of worship to be distributed to attendees at funeral services.

The Chair suggested that it would not be possible to ascertain whether parked cars were those of mourners or of other drivers taking advantage of the exemptions.

Councillor Collett agreed with this view and further noted that exemptions for all attendees would impact on nearby residents and businesses.

Doctor and Health Visitor Permits:

The Chair agreed that the needs of visiting medical personnel must be facilitated but that the vouchers should be used only in the course of health-related visits; the rules regarding this issue needed strengthening.

The Chair felt that, in general, the recommendations would strengthen the powers of the parking service. She asked, however, for more time to look at certain specifics in order to fine-tune the policies thus ensuring that they were sufficiently robust and fit for purpose.

Replying to the Legal and Democratic Services Section Head, the Chair advised that it would not be wise to accept all recommendations at the present time but that small changes might need to be made following further consideration and the recommendations presented at a subsequent meeting.

Councillor Collett expressed her thanks to the Task Group Members, the Transport and Infrastructure Section Head and Parking Service and Scrutiny officers. She added that she hoped the councillors had found the topic interesting and worthwhile.

RESOLVED

That Cabinet agrees:

that the recommendations be reviewed and the report to be re-presented to Cabinet at a later date.

59

WATFORD'S MONITORING REPORT 2014

A report of the Head of Regeneration and Development was received. Authorities' Monitoring Reports (AMR) must be prepared and published once a year in accordance with planning regulations which came into force in 2005. The AMR outlined the progress made on the local plan timetable and assessed the effectiveness of planning policies against various targets and indicators to see whether the Council was achieving local plan objectives. Watford's Monitoring Report 2014 covered the period 1 April 2013 - 31 March 2014.

Councillor Sharpe advised that, whilst there was no requirement for the report to be considered at Cabinet, the presentation provided the opportunity to review the planning situation in Watford and to determine whether the policies were good in general or whether they required any changes with regard to land, employment or other items addressed within the report.

Councillor Sharpe said that the report indicated that the Council's planning policies were fit for purpose. He noted that the town was currently in a transitional period with regard to employment issues and as a consequence

more homes would be required for the additional jobs planned. Councillor Sharpe pointed out that the Council had been proactive in planning terms and he noted the developments in both Ascot Road and Watford Junction and the economic development that these projects would provide.

Councillor Johnson advised that adequate provision of affordable housing was important; there had been an insufficient supply of such homes built over the previous year; requirements indicated that more affordable housing was needed. He considered that it was imperative that the Health Campus and the Watford Junction schemes deliver more affordable housing. Councillor Johnson assured the meeting that this would be achieved and that, in accordance with the Nomination Policy, the homes would then be offered to local people.

Councillor Watkin drew attention to the impressive results at Watford schools in the GCSE examinations; the results placed the town's schools at first or second place in the entire county. Parents, he said, felt that Watford was a good place for the education of their children.

The Chair concurred with Councillor Watkin's assessment and advised that the town was second highest in the County for achievements in higher education.

The Chair then addressed employment issues and drew attention to the chart on page 194 of the agenda, '% of Employee Jobs by Industry Groups' advised that a good 'mix' of jobs contributed to resilience for the borough. She noted that high median earnings by residence were the second highest in the county but emphasised that due regard must be accorded to the areas of deprivation in Watford. The Chair advised that there were ten areas of multiple deprivation in the town but that none of these were in the lowest 20% in the county; she added that benefit claims were decreasing.

Councillor Crout noted page 146 of the agenda and points regarding the Green Infrastructure. He commended the co-operation between the Council and residents throughout the borough. He confirmed that work in Cassiobury Park, funded through the Heritage Lottery Fund, would be completed by the end of Summer 2016.

Councillor Bell agreed that good results had been achieved in the GCSE examinations but highlighted problems associated with provision for Early Years Education. He advised that the borough needed to work closely with County in this respect and to use available land to provide new schools.

Councillor Bell noted loss of employment floor space and referred to the deficit caused by the Royal Mail's removal from the Ascot Road site to other premises.

The Chair said that office floor space was no longer as great a requirement in the current economic climate as it had been in past years. She advised that 'hot desking' and home working had relieved the pressure on office

space; a greater number of people could now be accommodated in far smaller spaces. The current need was to future-proof employment for the town.

The Managing Director advised that a high growth rate in employment was predicted: a further 7,000 additional jobs by 2031 and agreed that there was a need to maximise employment space. He explained that the planning team were working on this issue by increasing density whilst protecting the commercial spaces. He noted that this presented a challenge but assured the meeting that the Core Strategy would achieve a satisfactory solution.

The Chair advised that it was important to understand that the Council could not 'do it all' but needed to work with local enterprise partnerships. She added that, with regard to homes, the greatest current demand in Watford was for homes for single people: there was greatest need for one- and two-bedroom homes.

Councillor Sharpe said that through liaising with the education department at county the Council had facilitated a significant number of extra school places in Watford through both the building of new schools and extensions to existing school buildings.

The Chair asked the Head of Regeneration and Development if an analysis of current trends could be incorporated into the next report.

RESOLVED

That Cabinet notes the information provided by the AMR

60

WATFORD HEALTH CAMPUS - APPROPRIATION OF OXHEY PARK OPEN SPACE

A report of the Programme Manager was received by Cabinet. The land known as Oxhey Park lying to the north of the River Colne had been designated as Open Space since its acquisition by the Council in 1920 for the purposes of public walks and pleasure grounds. In order to facilitate the construction of the new Link Road for the Hospital following the granting of planning permission in December 2013, the land (edged in red on the plan) needed to be appropriated by the Council for Planning purposes.

Although the Council was the landowner, due to the land's designation as Open Space, the land required needed to be appropriated for planning purposes prior to any construction taking place. The land was previously included within the Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) boundary, however, on the advice of the Council's QC, this had been removed and instead the land would be appropriated under the Local Government Act 1972. The end result and programme would be the same as before only the procedure adopted to appropriate the land was different.

The Head of Regeneration and Development explained that the land under consideration would be used for construction purposes in the building of the new road and the plan was for it to be returned to the park as soon as possible after the road had been completed.

Councillor Sharpe said that the plan had his full support and advised that the construction through the park must be achieved with sensitivity for residents and interested parties. The construction work would be achieved with minimum disruption but was an integral part of the Health Campus scheme.

Replying to a query from Councillor Bell, the Head of Regeneration and Development drew attention to the plan of the part of the area used for construction work. She explained that this area would be used solely during construction; the road itself would appropriate as little of the park as possible.

The Chair noted that when permission for the road had been granted no formal objections had been received; it was agreed that a 'blue light' road was a necessity to provide access to the newly created town quarter. Concern had been expressed that the successful completion of the campus could not be achieved without adequate infrastructure; this project would significantly contribute to this aim.

The Chair then formally thanked the Friends of Oxhey Park for their patience and sensitivity and noted that the Irish Club building had no longer been fit for the required purposes. She concluded by drawing attention to the fact that the area under consideration would be used as a temporary compound for the construction work and would be contained on the side of the river away from the main body of the park.

Work would start in April 2015.

RESOLVED

That Cabinet agrees:

That the land identified edged in red on the Plan being land currently designated as Open Space that is required to facilitate the construction of the Link Road for Watford Hospital is appropriated for Planning Purposes under Section 122 of the Local Government Act 1972.

Mayor

The Meeting started at 7.00 pm
and finished at 8.00 pm