

# Public Document Pack

## COUNCIL

**30 JULY 2014**

At the meeting of Watford Borough Council held at the Town Hall, Watford on Wednesday, 30th July, 2014.

Present: Chairman (Councillor G Derbyshire)  
The Mayor (D Thornhill)

Councillors J Aron, S Bashir, N Bell, I Brandon, I Brown,  
J Brown, J Connal, S Counter, K Crout, J Dhindsa,  
S Greenslade, K Hastrick, M Hofman, P Jeffree, S Johnson,  
A Joynes, A Khan, H Lynch, R Martins, B Mauthoor, K McLeod,  
B Mehta, M Mills, G Saffery, D Scudder, N Shah, I Sharpe,  
M Turmaine, D Walford, M Watkin, S Williams and T Williams

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

Officers: Managing Director  
Head of Democracy and Governance  
Democratic Services Manager  
Committee and Scrutiny Officer

### 21 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bolton, Collett and Taylor.

### 22 **DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

There were no disclosures of interest.

### 23 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 June 2014 were submitted and signed.

### 24 **OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS**

#### Audentior Awards

The Chairman reported that the nomination period for the Audentior Awards was open. It would close on 8 August. He reminded Members that they had been given a nomination form and that additional forms were available from

Democratic Services. It was also possible to nominate online through the Council's website.

### Bruce McMillan

The Chairman informed Council that Bruce McMillan, who had been Chief Executive and Town Clerk from 1974 to 1990 had died on 9 July 2014. Condolences had been sent to Mr McMillan's family on behalf of the Council.

### World War One Centenary

The Chairman advised Council that commemorations would be taking place in Watford at the weekend to mark 100 years since the start of World War One. He reminded Members that they had been invited to attend a service at St Mary's Church and the launch of the Watford Museum's exhibition 'The Great War: Watford 1914' on Sunday. The Museum exhibition, which had been funded by the Heritage Lottery, would be open to the public from 7 August to 27 September..

The Chairman informed Council that there would be a 'Lights Out' event on Monday 4 August, when nationally people would be invited to turn out their lights between 10.00 pm and 11.00 pm. In Watford there would be church services taking place during this time and there would be a vigil at the Peace Memorial outside the Town Hall.

### World's Biggest Coffee Morning

The Chairman informed Council that a Coffee Morning in aid of Macmillan Cancer Support would be held on Saturday 27 September between 10.30 am and 1.00 pm at Cheslyn Gardens. It was being held in memory of Terri Martins, the wife of Councillor Martins.

25

## **MAYOR'S REPORT**

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

- a) Councillor Brandon noted that Cabinet had confirmed the proposal to introduce Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ) in Callowland would not be going ahead. He said that he was pleased to see the Council had listened to residents, but it did not remove the problem. He hoped that ideas for any small restrictions in the area were from residents. He asked the Council to look at the matter more holistically, including the reduction in the number of flat conversions and ensuring sufficient parking spaces were available in new developments. In addition the Council needed to look at wider issues, for example Park and Ride schemes. He requested that discussions were held before any further decisions were made.

The Mayor said that she understood the concerns for his residents. Residents had identified that there were too many residents' cars and not

sufficient road space for them. It had been recognised that a CPZ would not resolve the issues. Those residents in two or three roads closer to Watford Junction had some desire for a scheme due to commuter parking, but the displaced cars would move on to the next roads. She explained that the suggestions within the Cabinet report had come through the consultation process with residents. She agreed that there would have to be discussions about any further proposals and there would be a formal consultation. She suggested that the Callowland Ward Councillors should appraise themselves of the proposals and ensure that the residents had their voices heard and submitted their suggestions.

The Mayor referred to Councillor Brandon's comments about flat conversions, she explained that the Council inherited planning policies from the previous Government which had set out maximum parking standards. The Council had been unable to reject a planning application on the grounds of parking provision. The planning committee had tried on a number of occasions but the decision was always turned over on appeal. The current Government had changed the rules and the Council could now insist on minimum parking standards. The Council's policies would be changing to reflect this. The planning committee had already used this as a reason for refusing an application in Diamond Road.

- b) Councillor McLeod referred to a tweet the Mayor had made about the allotment improvement programme. She asked if the Mayor could explain what was happening.

The Mayor responded that whilst a lot of attention was quite rightly on Farm Terrace allotments, it was important not to forget that the Council had committed £800,000 for improvements to all allotments across the whole town. She explained some of the improvements that would be taking place, including new toilet facilities, footpaths and access to water. Discussions took place with each allotment site and detailed proposals were produced for each site. She understood that the site hut had already appeared at Callowland and that works would be commencing soon.

- c) Councillor S Williams commented that the Mayor's report mentioned plans to upgrade the Town Centre. He asked if this was the same plan that was reported in the Watford Observer on 11 June and whether it included investment in North Watford.

The Mayor advised that the investment for the Town Centre was specifically for the Town Centre. She explained that it was not possible to invest it in other areas, for example St Albans Road. Works had been carried out in St Albans Road and as mentioned in the budget process it was suggested that the Labour Group looked at the St Albans Road Study. The proposals that had been suggested by the Labour Group could not be carried out by the Council as it did not have the relevant powers. The Council had different authority in the Town Centre and was therefore able to carry out any work. In St Albans Road the Council was

circumscribed by Highways. She stated that if the Labour Group was aware of things that would improve footfall, encouraging people to stop at the shops, they should put them forward. The Mayor added that the Council would be talking to businesses to discuss the parking arrangements and how they might be tweaked. The current parking regime had been implemented a few years ago at the request of the shops; making it easier for people to stop and shop. Currently though the Council felt it had done everything it could do in St Albans Road that was within its powers.

- d) Councillor Mauthoor asked the Mayor if she could elaborate on the local issues raised by pupils when she had visited the schools.

The Mayor informed Council that one issue raised by pupils was about Leavesden Green Centre and Leavesden Green Park. They had asked for different equipment in the park to suit different ages. They had explained how they felt about the presence of a group of young people wearing 'hoodies' walking on to the park. The pupils wanted to be involved in selecting new equipment. They were appreciative of the new centre in the middle of the estate. They wanted the area around it to be brought up to the same standard.

The Mayor said that an issue raised by another school was parents' parking badly outside the school. They wanted to talk about how they could get 'pester power' to make the area outside their school safer. She explained that her assembly was about being proud of Watford and the pupils are then invited to talk about matters that bother them. She said the assemblies were always interesting.

- e) Councillor Joynes said that she was pleased to see the fall in the unemployment figures. She asked how many people were on zero hours contracts or self-employed.

The Mayor replied that she was unsure whether that information was available and whether it was collected by the Department for Work and Pensions. She would however try and find out for the Councillor. She advised that zero hours contracts suited some people. She had recently spoken to a young man who worked in a care home. He had explained that he had a zero hours contract and that it suited him, as he was also studying and trying to do other things. She agreed with the Councillor's concerns about these contracts, for example whether it was a substitute for paying someone properly; but there were also benefits to it. She said that she would try to find the answer to the Councillor's question.

- f) Councillor Mills referred to Farm Terrace allotments and that the Council had engaged with willing tenants. She asked how many were there and how long would they get free rent.

The Mayor said that she recognised that most people would have preferred to stay, but it was right to say that some people had already

made the decision to move. One person had made the decision to move when she had seen the plans and the new road which would have ambulances going back and forth and that the site would be a building site for many years. It was noted that the details of the rent free period were contained in the Cabinet report which was available online. She added that she would ensure the report was forwarded to Councillor Mills.

- g) Councillor Turmaine said that he had noted the Mayor's comments about the link road plans. He asked whether she agreed with him that the best way to relieve traffic congestion in West Watford was the construction of the West Watford Relief Road.

The Mayor suggested that the Councillor should speak to his County Council colleagues, as she believed there had been all party agreement that the West Watford Relief Road would not do what was expected of it and should be deleted from the list of schemes. There were also concerns that there could be serious ramifications. She recommended that he speak to the relevant officer at the County Council. The view by environmentalists, and now through proof, was that more road building led to more traffic. This was the reason the link road was the lowest grade road possible. She added that Members would not want all the traffic from the link road going on to Vicarage Road.

- h) Councillor Mehta asked the Mayor whether Richard Harrington MP's initiative of the Watford Jobs Fair should be applauded.

The Mayor said that any effort to get jobs was good. She would also want to applaud this Council for attracting companies into the town, bringing hundreds of jobs. The Council had invested in an Inward Investment Officer. She received regular updates on which companies were moving into the town and those who were not moving out. She said that a jobs fair could be held, advertising jobs that were already available and being advertised. She said a jobs fair did pull all the companies together into one place. It was more important to ensure that when companies looked at the town, they considered it to be a place they could relocate to.

- i) Councillor Lynch commented that the planning condition requirements imposed by the Environment Agency, the County Council and others had substantially increased the costs of the relocation of the Glen Rovers Hurling Club to the Radlett Road Playing Fields. She asked the Mayor whether she was able to give assurance that officers would look at alternative sites both inside and outside the Borough. She requested a report was prepared detailing a full comparative cost benefit analysis and other related information for consideration by the Major Projects Board or another relevant committee, prior to the works starting at the Radlett Road site. She also asked that, given public safety concerns about big match day parking arrangements on the fields next to the site, proposals were discussed with local ward members.

The Mayor congratulated the Councillor on being fully informed. It was important that Members listened to their residents and then apprised themselves of the circumstances.

The Mayor explained that the requirements had been imposed by Section 106 obligations for the Health Campus and the new link road. Sport England had required the relocation of the sports club and the Council had the responsibility to do this. The Council would be writing to Sport England to ask for financial support in the relocation if the organisation felt it was important the Gaelic Football Club was located in the town. The Council would also be writing to the Gaelic Football Association to seek funding. She informed Council that the Radlett Road Playing Fields had been playing fields, but had been disused for a few years.

The Mayor said that Glen Rovers were one of the unsung treasures of Watford. They were a top class club and were one of the few that worked with young people in the town. They had several hundred young people on their books from Watford and attracted others from a wider area. They were a club that the Council should want to have in its area and keep in the town.

The Mayor acknowledged that local Councillors had gained concessions on parking and enforcement. The Council had to make sure that this was followed through. She added that the Councillor was right to raise the issue of value for money. She was sure that officers would have already considered other uses. She noted the Councillor had suggested outside the Borough. She agreed that there would be further work carried out which would then be presented to the most appropriate committee and placed in the public domain. Match day parking would also be reviewed.

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

The Chairman reported that a question had been received from Councillor S Williams.

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

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

No questions had been received.

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

No petitions had been received.

29 **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.

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

Council was informed that four motions had been received.

- 1) At the meeting Motion 1 was amended and as a result of that amendment the Proposer of Motion 2 agreed to withdraw that motion.

The following motion was proposed by Councillor Sharpe and seconded by Councillor S Williams –

“Council notes that:

According to information made available to Hertfordshire County Council’s Highways and Waste Panel, the county council is intent on reducing support for bus routes so that it only supports bus services starting before 6.30 pm and withdraws funding for non-commercial Sunday services.

Such a reduction would affect 39 services across the county, including several directly serving Watford, and approximately 200,000 passenger trips.

While this council recognises that the County Council faces budgetary pressures, it believes that such a blanket approach to cutting bus services is unacceptable, and will adversely affect local bus passengers.

This Council believes the County Council should be showing support for a vital public service like the bus service, especially to encourage non car use to combat congestion in and around Watford to improve the quality of life and health of our residents.

This council therefore resolves to request formally that the county not proceed with these cuts.”

Members debated the motion.

On being put to Council the motion was AGREED.

## RESOLVED –

Council notes that:

According to information made available to Hertfordshire County Council's Highways and Waste Panel, the county council is intent on reducing support for bus routes so that it only supports bus services starting before 6.30 pm and withdraws funding for non-commercial Sunday services.

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This council therefore resolves to request formally that the county not proceed with these cuts.

- 2) The motion was withdrawn by the Proposer.
- 3) The following motion was moved by Councillor Scudder and seconded by Councillor T Williams –

“This council notes with concern the proposals outlined as part of Hertfordshire County Council's current consultation on household waste sites.

These include:

- a 44% reduction in opening hours at Waterdale, including reduced hours at weekends and closure on Thursdays and Fridays.
- complete closure of the Elstree site.

This council notes that when the county council closed the Wighenhall Road household waste site, its cabinet member for waste claimed that Watford would remain 'well-provided for' due to the facilities at Waterdale and Elstree.

The proposed cuts and closure make a mockery of this assurance.

This council notes the Mayor wrote to the leader of Herts County Council on 14<sup>th</sup> July expressing her concern over the changes. Council endorses the mayor's action and resolves to respond formally to the consultation, opposing these proposals."

The following amendment was moved by Councillor Shah and seconded by Councillor Mills –

"This Council resolves to reinstate the 'FREE' bulky item collections that were cut by this administration years ago.

At a time when the County Council is proposing to cut the hours of opening of our recycling centres, which could lead to even more 'fly-tipping', Watford Council should lead by example in reinstating this service to ease the pressure not only on the streets of West Watford but across our Town."

Members debated the motion and the amendment.

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

On being put to Council the original motion was AGREED.

RESOLVED –

This council notes with concern the proposals outlined as part of Hertfordshire County Council's current consultation on household waste sites.

These include:

- a 44% reduction in opening hours at Waterdale, including reduced hours at weekends and closure on Thursdays and Fridays.
- complete closure of the Elstree site.

This council notes that when the county council closed the Wiggshall Road household waste site, its cabinet member for waste claimed that Watford would remain 'well-provided for' due to the facilities at Waterdale and Elstree.

The proposed cuts and closure make a mockery of this assurance.

This council notes the Mayor wrote to the leader of Herts County Council on 14<sup>th</sup> July expressing her concern over the changes. Council endorses the mayor's action and resolves to respond formally to the consultation, opposing these proposals.

- 4) The following motion was moved by Councillor Turmaine and seconded by Councillor Bell –

“This Council resolves to write to the Coalition Government calling on them to repeal the “Bedroom Tax or spare room subsidy” at the earliest opportunity.

Last week the Department of Work and Pensions published a report revealing the Bedroom Tax has been a disaster.

It found that half of affected tenants have cut back on essentials, that more than half have racked up debts, and that not much more than 1 in 20 have ‘downsized’ or moved into private accommodation.

The DWPs own analysis showed only 19% of those affected had applied to move and even fewer were able to find a smaller property.

Many disabled people and their families have had the stress of having to cope with this so-called ‘spare room’ tax.

It is the right time for Watford Council to join the many other Councils and Campaigners to show a United front in calling for the repeal of this hated and unnecessary Tax. “

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

“Delete

This Council resolves...disaster’ and replace with:

This Council resolves to write to the Coalition Government calling on them to repeal or reform at the earliest opportunity elements of the ‘spare room subsidy’ that were identified as problematic by a Department of Work and Pensions Report published last week.’

Delete ‘so-called ‘spare room’ tax’ and replace with ‘loss of housing benefit for spare room(s).’ Then insert

‘Council recognises that:

There are **1.7 million households waiting for housing** in the social rented sector and 240,000 households already in the social rented sector are overcrowded.

There are **almost 1 million spare rooms being paid for by Housing Benefit** for working-age, social rented sector tenants, which isn’t affordable when others are living in overcrowded accommodation.

Under-occupancy is therefore a serious problem which needs to be tackled, for example through incentives for housing providers.

Therefore council calls on the government to change the rules so that:

- existing tenants are not penalised when they cannot move into smaller accommodation (i.e. unless they have turned down at least one reasonable offer of smaller accommodation).
- there is a permanent exemption in both Housing Benefit and Local Housing Allowance to exempt people with specially adapted properties or those who need a spare bedroom for medical reasons. This would mirror the existing exemption for severely disabled children who need an extra room due to their disability.'

Delete 'It is the right time... tax' "

Councillor Khan raised a point of order following the amendment being moved and seconded. He said that he considered the amendment substantially changed the original motion and therefore should not be accepted.

The Chairman responded that he had discussed the matter with the Monitoring Officer and it was considered that the amendment did not negate the motion. He stated that he would accept the amendment as being valid.

Members debated the motion and amendment.

On being put to Council the amendment was AGREED.

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

RESOLVED –

This Council resolves to write to the Coalition Government calling on them to repeal or reform at the earliest opportunity elements of the 'spare room subsidy' that were identified as problematic by the Department of Work and Pensions report published last week.

It found that half of affected tenants have cut back on essentials, that more than half have racked up debts and that not much more than 1 in 20 have 'downsized' or moved into private accommodation.

The DWP's own analysis showed only 19% of those affected had applied to move and even fewer were able to find a smaller property.

May disabled people and their families have had the stress of having to cope with this loss of housing benefit for spare rooms.

‘Council recognises that:

There are **1.7 million households waiting for housing** in the social rented sector and 240,000 households already in the social rented sector are overcrowded.

There are **almost 1 million spare rooms being paid for by Housing Benefit** for working-age, social rented sector tenants, which isn’t affordable when others are living in overcrowded accommodation.

Under-occupancy is therefore a serious problem which needs to be tackled, for example through incentives for housing providers.

Therefore council calls on the government to change the rules so that:

- existing tenants are not penalised when they cannot move into smaller accommodation (i.e. unless they have turned down at least one reasonable offer of smaller accommodation).

- there is a permanent exemption in both Housing benefit and Local Housing Allowance to exempt people with specially adapted properties or those who need a spare bedroom for medical reasons. This would mirror the existing exemption for severely disabled children who need an extra room due to their disability.

### 31 **ANNUAL SCRUTINY REPORT**

Council received a report of the Committee and Scrutiny Officer and Scrutiny Chairs including the Annual Scrutiny Report for 2013/14.

RESOLVED –

that the Annual Report of Overview and Scrutiny in Watford Borough Council 2013/14 be noted.

### 32 **NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM ANNUAL REPORT**

Council received a report of the Committee and Scrutiny Officer and Ward Councillors including the Annual reports for eleven of the Neighbourhood Forum.

RESOLVED –

that the annual report be noted.

33

**ICT ROADMAP**

Council received a report of Cabinet, including the original report presented to Cabinet at its meeting on 23 July 2014.

RESOLVED –

that the increase of £906,917 to the capital programme be approved.

34

**MUNICIPAL BONDS**

Council received a report of Cabinet, including the original report presented to Cabinet at its meeting on 23 July 2014.

RESOLVED –

1. that Council agrees to support the Local Government Agency in developing a Municipal Bonds Agency.
2. that Council agrees to invest £20,000 into the Agency subject to the approval of the final terms and conditions.

Chairman

The Meeting started at 7.30 pm  
and finished at 10.28 pm

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## Appendix 1

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

COUNCIL – 30<sup>th</sup> July 2014

#### QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR S WILLIAMS

Received on 25.07.14

**Question:** Can the council explain the rational behind cutting funding for disability training, and will they work with disability Watford to provide disability training to any organisation that has been granted a licence in the borough.

#### ***Answer***

We understand the context of this question is in relation to disability awareness training for taxi and private hire drivers. The Council has not cut funding for disability awareness training; the Council completed provision of compulsory disability awareness training for all existing hackney carriage and private hire drivers between 2007 and 2012. For all new applicants since then, they are required to undertake training as part of their licence conditions. Due to the limited number of new drivers entering the trade this training is now provided annually. The Council is happy to discuss with Disability Watford how they could participate/provide this annual training but it will need to meet certain requirements and standards. This may include winning a procurement process should they wish to charge for it.

To keep all drivers up to date, since 2013, they are also required to attend compulsory refresher training when renewing their licences every 6 years. This training includes viewing and discussion about a disability awareness DVD that has been specifically produced for licensed drivers by the Sector Skills Council for Passenger Transport.

Recognising the ongoing issues being faced by taxi and private hire customers in Watford, in December 2012, officers held a workshop with private hire operators to help them compile disability assistance policies in line with their own licensing obligations and to comply with their duties under the (then) Disability Discrimination Act 2005. The Council also organises and undertakes “test purchases” in relation to compliance with licensing conditions that may undermine equalities and demonstrate discrimination – such as charging additional fare to carry a wheelchair user.

Licences are issued by the Council for various different activities, and of course the majority of businesses within Watford do not undertake licensable activities. Most of the licences issued do not allow for the inclusion of licence conditions relating to disability awareness and so it is not the case that the Council could require licensed businesses to undertake training.

All organisations and businesses (including small businesses such as taxis and private hire vehicles) are under a legal duty not to discriminate against and to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate people with disabilities. Whilst the Council certainly has a role, and takes this role seriously, in promoting equalities within our community, we are not able to provide training to all businesses. The responsibility is upon them to ensure they are complying with the legal requirements in the same way that they would comply with health and safety, employment, data protection and other legislation. However, if Disability Watford were to develop and provide its own training course for local businesses we could explore what support, in terms of venue or promotion, we might be able to offer.

*For more information please contact: Jeffrey Leib (Licensing Manager) on 278476 or email [jeffrey.leib@watford.gov.uk](mailto:jeffrey.leib@watford.gov.uk)*