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COUNCIL

19 NOVEMBER 2014

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

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

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

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

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

35 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Brandon and Lynch.

36 **DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

There were no disclosures of interest.

37 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 July 2014 were submitted and signed.

38 **OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Audentior Awards

The Chairman reported that the Audentior Awards were held on 24 October. The event was very successful and raised over £1,500 for his nominated

charities. One of his charities, Herts Inclusive Theatre, gave an excellent performance on the night.

Remembrance Sunday

The Chairman advised Council that the Remembrance Service on Sunday 9 November had been well attended. Watford Museum had provided its World War One centenary exhibition at the Town Hall, which had been appreciated by the visitors.

Civic Carol Service

The Chairman informed Council that the annual invitation to attend a Civic Carol Service at Christ Church, St Albans Road had been received. The service would be held on Sunday 21 December at 6.30 p.m.

Mrs Jill Greenstreet

The Chairman said that the Council had been sorry to hear that Mrs Jill Greenstreet had passed away on Friday 26 September. Mrs Greenstreet had been the Mayoress from 1983 to 1984.

Geoff O'Connell

The Chairman stated that he was sorry to announce that Mr Geoff O'Connell had passed away on 1 November. Mr O'Connell had been a Councillor from 1999 to 2006.

The Chairman invited all those present to stand and observe a minute's silence in memory of Mrs Jill Greenstreet and Mr Geoff O'Connell.

The Chairman invited Councillor Bell, Leader of the Labour Group, and Councillor Sharpe, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, to say a few words about Geoff O'Connell.

39

MAYOR'S REPORT

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

- a) Councillor S Williams referred to the positive news about empty properties contained within the Mayor's report. He noted it mentioned the Parade and High Street. He asked the Mayor when the focus would shift from the Town Centre to other parts of the town including St Albans Road and Queens Road. He considered it to be important to spread the economy rather than in one area.

The Mayor responded that the aspect of empty properties was dependent on the market. The Council was unable to influence individuals or companies to take an office or shop in St Albans Road. The Council had

no means to influence people unless a decision was made to use taxpayers money to grant rate relief to businesses.

The Mayor stated that the investment in the Town Centre had encouraged people to create ventures in that area. This had been the point she had been trying to make in her report.

The Mayor advised Councillors that if there were projects or things they felt could be done in St Albans Road, within the remit of the Council and benefiting traders, she would be willing to listen to ideas. It was important to do things that directly impacted on their trade. She believed that people thought that the Council was able to find tenants for the many properties in St Albans Road. She added that having looked at some of the properties, some of them were in an atrocious state. Significant amounts of money would need to be invested in the properties. She advised that many of the premises were owned by pension companies; the properties being one of many in their portfolio. The companies did not reply to letters from the Council asking what action was being taken with their premises or attempts to improve them.

In closing the Mayor said that where the Council was able to do something it would and the Town Centre was direct evidence of the Council's work.

- b) Councillor Bashir stated that his question related to the new Watford Market. He said that he accepted the old market needed significant investment. He asked the Mayor whether she accepted that the new Watford Market, in respect of traders and patrons, faced significant difficulties. He also sought assurances that the current problems and difficulties were being addressed.

The Mayor commented that she did not fully accept the premise of the Councillor's question. She acknowledged that change was always unsettling, particularly for people as they got older. She had made a point of visiting the market locality more. She regularly received good and bad views about the market. The idea of the new market was to appeal to new and different people. She accepted that some of the regulars of the old market would find it different.

The Mayor agreed that there had been teething problems and that there were still some matters that needed to be resolved. She asked the Managing Director to provide Members with an update on these matters. She informed Members that there had been an impetus from the traders to move across sooner rather than waiting until a later date. The Mayor added that she had made a point of visiting the traders. There were some traders who were happy with the new market and there were others who were not doing as well as they had hoped they would.

The Mayor commented that there was likely to be a review after Christmas to assess how the new market was progressing. She felt that

once all the units were let, a difference would be noticed. People had to get used to the changes and this took time. She added that when the old market moved to Charter Place similar comments had been made in the Watford Observer and in the Council Chamber.

The Mayor summed up by stating that the market had been unable to stay in Charter Place and the Council had taken a chance on the new location. It was acknowledged that not all of the traders would be happy with the new location and some would not stay. The remaining issues would be addressed.

- c) Councillor Dhindsa said that his question also related to the market. He had spoken to traders on several occasions. He had met one trader who was happy with the move and others had given him a list of issues. He asked the Mayor whether anyone was consulted about the lift, for example the Disability Group. In addition he enquired why the launch had not taken place within the market rather than outside in The Parade and how much the launch had cost. Traders had felt left out of the launch event.

The Mayor responded that she hoped members would agree that the food on offer in the market was diverse and an excellent quality. It showed a real cosmopolitan Watford at its best. She reported that the lift was DDA compliant. It would not have been possible to install the lift unless it had met the DDA requirements.

In response to the enquiry about the opening, the Mayor advised that Town and Country Markets were only going to have the 'Wheel of Fortune'. The Council made the decision to invite Rosemary Shrager in order to attract more footfall to that area. Rosemary Shrager had specified her requirements for her demonstrations. During her cookery demonstrations she made the point of telling people about the market, which was next to the demonstration area. She had understood her role for the day. The aim of the day was to get people in to that area. The Mayor said that she was unsure what could have been done in the market with the space available to attract people to the area. The Mayor felt that the event had worked in attracting people. The Mayor asked the Managing Director to provide Members with details of the launch costs. She felt that because the Council had wanted the grand opening to be a success and it mattered to the traders, it was money well spent. It had given a buzz to the day and people enjoyed it. The town had received a lot of national publicity in a positive way. It gave the right impression of Watford. There were numerous retweets on the day from people, including Mary Portas. The Mayor considered it to have been worth every penny.

- d) Councillor Bell said that the Mayor often commented that Farm Terrace Allotments were vital for the Health Campus. He asked, if the Council were unable to include the allotments in the scheme, would the development still go ahead.

The Mayor noted that Council would have a debate on this matter later as there was a motion on the agenda. She said she was sure the Councillor knew the answer to his question. The inclusion of the allotments gave additional benefits to the whole of the scheme. It made it more financially viable and in the future a Mayor would be standing in the Council Chamber thanking this Council for its decision on the Health Campus. The taxpayers would also thank the Council, especially as things became harder financially. The people who lived in the houses would feel the benefit of the public open space and the quality of the surrounding environment. Once the hospital's clinical strategy is announced next year, the hospital and anyone associated with it would feel the benefit. The Mayor said that she did not want to even consider going ahead with the scheme, without the allotments included, as the impact would be too great to contemplate.

- e) Councillor Turmaine commented that he had noted the announcement of occupancy rates in the Town Centre. He asked if Members could have details of the companies that would be moving into the High Street, ensuring they were not a further succession of pound shops, pay day lenders and betting shops.

The Mayor reported that the Town Centre Manager had compiled a list and it would be circulated to Members. She said that it was wrong to give the public the impression that the Council could control who occupied premises. If the new occupier was within the relevant planning class for the premises the Council would be unable to restrict the type of occupant moving into the property. The Council was able to restrict clusters of betting shops due to powers granted to it by central government; this was included in the Local Plan. Change of use was more beneficial to the owner than the Council. When questioned by the public she often posed the question whether they would prefer an empty shop or occupied possibly by another take-away. The common response was that they did not want another take-away but neither did they want an empty shop. The Mayor agreed that she would not want to see a proliferation of the types of shops outlined by Councillor Turmaine.

- f) Councillor Mills asked the Mayor, following the results of the judicial review of Farm Terrace Allotments, if the list for plot holders would be reopened enabling people to use the plots. If the list were not to be opened she asked for further explanation.

The Mayor said that the list would not be reopened. It would be a foolish move as the Council would be resubmitting its application to the Secretary of State. In addition that area would become a building site in the next 12 months. The area would be fenced off. The allotments were within an area that would be a major regeneration site. There would be heavy goods vehicles moving around. The new road would be in the process of being built. The road would be running close by the end of the allotments. The Mayor commented that she would not want to suggest that this was

the right place to have an allotment. The site would not be the same as the current allotment holders enjoy.

- g) Councillor Mehta stated that she wanted the new Watford Market to be a success, but believed it to be fitted with an inadequate staircase and lift. This was denying people access to the upper floor. She had noted that a new lift was on order but it was similar to the current one. In addition she asked whether adequate screening and heating was to be installed on the first floor.

The Mayor suggested that a full update was circulated to all Members. She thanked everyone for their concerns and their desires for the market to be the best it could be.

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

The Chairman reported that questions had been received from Councillors Bell, Khan and S Williams.

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 three motions had been received.

44a **MOTION 1**

The following motion was proposed by Councillor Bell and seconded by Councillor Dhindsa –

“This Council resolves that after the Judgment in the High Court on 31st. October, that the Mayor and her Cabinet work constructively with the tenants of Farm Terrace allotments to preserve the historic site and provide the extra resources needed for a popular new Community facility.”

Members debated the motion.

On being put to Council the motion was LOST.

44b **MOTION 2**

The following motion was proposed by Councillor Joynes and seconded by Councillor Bashir –

“Domestic Violence occurs behind closed doors. Once a victim feels able to report what is happening they need to be helped with a series of strategies in order to be able to extricate themselves from danger. This Council, therefore, should provide and maintain a current directory of the services available to victims of Domestic Violence on its website under the aegis of a council officer, as not every victim has the freedom to gain access to these services outside of their home.”

Mayor Thornhill moved the following amendment, which was seconded by Councillor Collett –

“Delete all after ‘danger’ and replace with

This council takes the need to stop domestic violence very seriously, and has made this a high priority in its Homelessness Strategy Action Plan 2014-15, which is due to be approved on Friday by the Cabinet Member for Housing.

Council undertakes a range of activities aimed at tackling domestic violence, including:

- a statutory duty to assist households who become homeless due to domestic violence, including arranging temporary accommodation.
- attending the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Committee (MARAC) for Watford, Three Rivers and Dacorum which deals with the needs of individuals in cases of domestic violence.
- providing information on its web pages reflecting the key help, advice and support that is available for victims of and those affected by domestic

violence.

- co-operating with and supporting other agencies such as Watford & Three Rivers Domestic Abuse Forum, Watford Women's Centre and Watford Women's Refuge.
- working as part of the Safer Watford partnership, which recently agreed to fund the Watford Women's Centre Domestic Abuse Service to December 2014 pending the outcome of the HCC commissioned review and subsequent report on the provision of Domestic Abuse Services across the Country.

Council resolves

- To ensure that action against domestic violence is given high priority in line with the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan 2014-15.
- To continue providing services and information including on its website to those affected by domestic violence to enable them to access available help and support.
- To engage positively with the outcomes of the Hertfordshire County Council review of Domestic Abuse Services and with any opportunities for district councils to contribute to implementing its outcomes."

The full amended motion therefore read –

Domestic Violence occurs behind closed doors. Once a victim feels able to report what is happening they need to be helped with a series of strategies in order to be able to extricate themselves from danger.

This council takes the need to stop domestic violence very seriously, and has made this a high priority in its Homelessness Strategy Action Plan 2014-15, which is due to be approved on Friday by the Cabinet Member for Housing.

Council undertakes a range of activities aimed at tackling domestic violence, including:

- a statutory duty to assist households who become homeless due to domestic violence, including arranging temporary accommodation.
- attending the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Committee (MARAC) for Watford, Three Rivers and Dacorum which deals with the needs of individuals in cases of domestic violence.
- providing information on its web pages reflecting the key help, advice and support that is available for victims of and those affected by domestic violence.
- co-operating with and supporting other agencies such as Watford & Three Rivers Domestic Abuse Forum, Watford Women's Centre and Watford

Women's Refuge.

- working as part of the Safer Watford partnership, which recently agreed to fund the Watford Women's Centre Domestic Abuse Service to December 2014 pending the outcome of the HCC commissioned review and subsequent report on the provision of Domestic Abuse Services across the Country.

Council resolves

- To ensure that action against domestic violence is given high priority in line with the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan 2014-15.
- To continue providing services and information including on its website to those affected by domestic violence to enable them to access available help and support.
- To engage positively with the outcomes of the Hertfordshire County Council review of Domestic Abuse Services and with any opportunities for district councils to contribute to implementing its outcomes.

Council discussed the substantive motion and the amendment.

On being put to Council the amendment was AGREED.

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

RESOLVED –

Domestic Violence occurs behind closed doors. Once a victim feels able to report what is happening they need to be helped with a series of strategies in order to be able to extricate themselves from danger.

This council takes the need to stop domestic violence very seriously, and has made this a high priority in its Homelessness Strategy Action Plan 2014-15, which is due to be approved on Friday by the Cabinet Member for Housing.

Council undertakes a range of activities aimed at tackling domestic violence, including:

- a statutory duty to assist households who become homeless due to domestic violence, including arranging temporary accommodation.
- attending the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Committee (MARAC) for Watford, Three Rivers and Dacorum which deals with the needs of individuals in cases of domestic violence.
- providing information on its web pages reflecting the key help, advice and support that is available for victims of and those affected by domestic violence.

- co-operating with and supporting other agencies such as Watford & Three Rivers Domestic Abuse Forum, Watford Women's Centre and Watford Women's Refuge.
- working as part of the Safer Watford partnership, which recently agreed to fund the Watford Women's Centre Domestic Abuse Service to December 2014 pending the outcome of the HCC commissioned review and subsequent report on the provision of Domestic Abuse Services across the Country.

Council resolves

- To ensure that action against domestic violence is given high priority in line with the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan 2014-15.
- To continue providing services and information including on its website to those affected by domestic violence to enable them to access available help and support.
- To engage positively with the outcomes of the Hertfordshire County Council review of Domestic Abuse Services and with any opportunities for district councils to contribute to implementing its outcomes.

44c

MOTION 3

At the meeting an amendment, proposed by Councillor Sharpe, to the original motion printed in the agenda was circulated. Councillor Turmaine, the mover of the original printed motion accepted the amendment.

Councillor Turmaine moved the following revised substantive motion, which was seconded by Councillor S Williams –

“Council notes:

1. The outcome of the Hertfordshire County Council Highways and Waste Panel on 4 November which proposed:
 - Withdrawing funding from subsidised bus services after 7.30pm Monday to Saturdays.
 - Withdrawing funding from subsidised services that operate on a Sunday.
 - Limiting the amount of subsidy per passenger journey across all subsidised services meaning that 39 routes could be cut totally.
 - A total cut of £1.5 million per annum in subsidised bus services.
2. That these additional proposals are not actually required given that the county council now has “found” £753,000 of savings on the bus budget without reducing services and the original aim of the consultation

published in June was to save “at least £700,000” and that this has been exceeded.

3. That this was in defiance of the 12,000 residents who signed petitions opposing bus cuts and the official consultation with 4,548 replies showed only 30 in support of the reductions proposed.
4. That Watford’s MP Richard Harrington failed to support local bus passengers by objecting to the proposals.

Council believes

1. In line with its resolution passed at full council on 30 July that cuts to bus services will hit the most vulnerable in our community, have an unacceptable impact on bus passengers and undermine attempts to cut car use and reduce congestion.
2. That the county has already made significant savings in its budget for bus routes to make cuts in services unnecessary.

Council resolves

1. To write immediately to the county council requesting that its cabinet does not proceed with the proposals of the Highways and Waste panel.
2. To respond to any formal consultation opposing the proposed cuts and to encourage a high response from Watford residents.”

On being put to Council the substantive motion was AGREED.

RESOLVED –

Council notes:

1. The outcome of the Hertfordshire County Council Highways and Waste Panel on 4 November which proposed:
 - Withdrawing funding from subsidised bus services after 7.30pm Monday to Saturdays.
 - Withdrawing funding from subsidised services that operate on a Sunday.
 - Limiting the amount of subsidy per passenger journey across all subsidised services meaning that 39 routes could be cut totally.
 - A total cut of £1.5 million per annum in subsidised bus services.
2. That these additional proposals are not actually required given that the county council now has “found” £753,000 of savings on the bus budget without reducing services and the original aim of the consultation

published in June was to save “at least £700,000” and that this has been exceeded.

3. That this was in defiance of the 12,000 residents who signed petitions opposing bus cuts and the official consultation with 4548 replies showed only 30 in support of the reductions proposed.
4. That Watford’s MP Richard Harrington failed to support local bus passengers by objecting to the proposals.

Council believes

1. In line with its resolution passed at full council on 30 July that cuts to bus services will hit the most vulnerable in our community, have an unacceptable impact on bus passengers and undermine attempts to cut car use and reduce congestion.
2. That the county has already made significant savings in its budget for bus routes to make cuts in services unnecessary.

Council resolves

1. To write immediately to the county council requesting that its cabinet does not proceed with the proposals of the Highways and Waste panel.
2. To respond to any formal consultation opposing the proposed cuts and to encourage a high response from Watford residents.

45 **CHAIR OF HIGHWAYS PANEL**

Council received a report of the Democratic Services Manager seeking the appointment of a Chair for the Highways Forum.

RESOLVED –

that Councillor Sharpe be appointed as Chair of the Highways Forum for remainder of the Municipal Year.

46 **COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL)**

Council received a report of the Head of Regeneration and Development setting out the proposed Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule for implementation from 1 April 2015.

RESOLVED –

1. that the CIL Charging Schedule for implementation from 1 April 2015 be adopted.

2. that the CIL supporting policies documents be approved.
3. that final approval of the CIL Charging Schedule and supporting policies to reflect graphics, formatting and any grammatical updates be delegated to the Portfolio Holder for Planning.

47

BOUNDARY COMMISSION REVIEW

Council received a report of the Head of Democracy and Governance informing Members of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's intention to carry out a review of the Borough of Watford's boundaries during 2015.

RESOLVED –

1. that a working group of 5 members be set up to consider how many councillors the Council should propose to the Local Government Boundary Commission to consider when conducting its review to report back to Council on 28 January 2015, and that this working group then go on to look at potential ward boundaries and ward names, reporting back to Council in June/July 2015.
2. that the working group comprises the following five councillors –
 - Councillor Derek Scudder
 - Councillor Iain Sharpe
 - Councillor Stephen Johnson
 - Councillor Asif Khan
 - Councillor Nigel Bell

Chairman

The Meeting started at 8.00 pm
and finished at 10.15 pm

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QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL UNDER PROCEDURAL RULE 10.0 COUNCIL – 19th November 2014

QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLOR NIGEL BELL

Received on 14.11.14

1. Question: How much Council taxpayers money has been spent on the Legal costs on the Farm Terrace case?

This is not just the Counsels fees for the 2-Judicial Reviews but the overall costs since the start of the preparations including of course 'Officer time' and what amount is the Council likely to have to pay if costs are awarded against it?

Answer

To date the Council has spent £18,560 on counsels fees. The time spent to date by members of the legal department is 216 hours.

All parties were required to make their submissions regarding costs to Mr Justice Ouseley by 4:00 pm on Friday 14 November.

If the Judge orders the Council to pay any of the claimants costs the Council will receive a detailed bill from the claimants.

Until we get to such a point I am unable to answer the last part of this question.

For more information please contact Carol Chen Head of Democracy and Governance

Ext: 8350

QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLOR ASIF KHAN

Received on: 14.11.14

1. Question: How much money is spent on paper and how much is spent on printing during the last 3 years?

Answer

The In-house print service has been focused on reducing print costs year on year.

They actively seek best prices from external suppliers and have recently implemented a more efficient, cost effective and sustainable council wide print and copy solution.

Since changing to these new arrangements there has also been a 15% (approximately) reduction in A4 copier paper usage.

Below are the figures for paper purchases for three years. This includes all envelopes/laminates/labels and combs purchased by the Print Section for the Council:

2012/13 - £25,023.43

2013/14 - £21,942.35

2014/15 - £12,350.81

Below are the figures for costs of printing and stationery for three years. This will include all stationery and printing costs – external printing, stationery items (i.e., pens etc), paper (a breakdown of costs is above), print consumable items, publications, print and copy internal recharges from the in-house print department:

2012/13 - £257,381.60

2013/14 - £258,905.53

2014/15 - £142,040.00

*For more information please contact: Jago Durant/Tracy Langley
Ext: 8075/727429*

QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLOR SEAMUS WILLIAMS

Received on: 14.11.14

1. What is current status of the PSN accreditation does it look like the council will meet this criteria.

If it does not meet the criteria what are the implications if it does not meet this accreditation in terms of financial implications.

Further on a report into the IT systems said that council data had been lost from a server and the back-up of that data was lost. Was there an investigation to what data was lost and if not why?

Answer

What is current status of the PSN accreditation does it look like the council will meet this criteria.

Watford Borough Council currently hold PSN accreditation. Submissions for Watford Borough Council for 2014 are required by 31st Dec 2014. There is a project (within ModerniseIT) in progress to address all requirements for the 2014 submission. The IT Health check, a requirement for the PSN submission has already been undertaken by a third party and Capita are currently working through all remedial actions required. Officers are confident of meeting the submission timeline and all associated requirements with ModerniseIT continuing to programme.

If it does not meet the criteria what are the implications if it does not meet this accreditation in terms of financial implications.

If Watford Borough Council failed to achieve PSN accreditation then ultimately there is the risk of being disconnected from using PSN services. This would mean the Council would not be able to transfer data securely to other public sector bodies such as DWP. However it should be noted that other local authorities have failed to meet their accreditation status in the last year and this has not resulted in disconnection. In addition to this failure to meet accreditation does not result in an immediate disconnection. Based on the experience of 2013, the authority would fall into an escalation procedure where we would work with the Cabinet Office to agree appropriate remedial works within an agreed timeframe.

Further on a report into the IT systems said that council data had been lost from a server and the back-up of that data was lost. Was there an investigation to what data was lost and if not why?

I am not aware of any formal investigation by the Internal IT service into this incident at that time. This references the executive summary of the IT Strategy paper written by Actica Consulting Ltd in May 2011, which was initiated by Watford and Three Rivers due to significant issues with the internal IT service delivery. The particular area referenced failing backup hardware infrastructure. This was the paper that was used overall by Joint Committee and Joint Management Board to support and progress the investigation into outsourcing the internal IT service.

*For more information please contact Emma Tiernan
Tel: 727457*

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