

Public Document Pack

COUNCIL

28 JANUARY 2015

At the meeting of Watford Borough Council held at the Town Hall, Watford on Wednesday, 28th January, 2015.

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

Councillors J Aron, S Bashir, N Bell, S Bolton, I Brandon, 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, H Lynch, B Mauthoor, B Mehta, M Mills, G Saffery, D Scudder, N Shah, I Sharpe, P Taylor, D Walford, M Watkin, S Williams and T Williams

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

48 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Martins, McLeod and Turmaine.

49 **DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

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

50 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 November 2014 were submitted and signed.

OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENTSCivic Carol Service

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

Watford Lions

The Chairman explained that a presentation event was being held that evening by Watford Lions, when cheques would be presented to his nominated charities, Herts Inclusive Theatre and Arthritis Research UK. There would also be a presentation to the Elected Mayor's nominated charity, DEMAND. The Funds had been collected at the annual fireworks display in Cassiobury Park. He thanked everyone who had attended and to Watford Lions for organising the collection. In addition he wished to thank Norman and Mavis Tyrwhitt who were attending the presentation on behalf of the Council.

Chairman's Reception

The Chairman stated that he would be holding a reception at the Colosseum on Sunday 15 March to see a performance of 'La Traviata'. At the event he would be fundraising for his charities. He reminded Councillors that they should have received an invitation. He asked them to contact the Member Development and Civic Officer by Friday if they wished to attend.

Chairman's Quiz

The Chairman informed Council that he was proposing to hold the annual Chairman's Quiz on Thursday 19 March at the Colosseum. There were only a few tables left so Members should contact the Member Development and Civic Officer if they wished to enter a team.

Holocaust Memorial Day

The Chairman informed Council that he would be attending a Holocaust Memorial Day commemoration at Watford and District Synagogue. Pupils from local schools were invited to the Synagogue, where they would be informed of subsequent genocides in other parts of the world. This year there would be a talk given by a survivor of the Rwandan genocide.

MAYOR'S REPORT

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

- a) Councillor Taylor referred to pot holes in Watford. He had noted that the Mayor had met the Chamber of Commerce and asked whether the state of roads in Watford had been raised. Recently the RAC Foundation had

issued a report which had shown that Hertfordshire's roads were the seventh worst in the whole of the UK for pot holes. He urged the Mayor to raise the matter with the Conservative-run County Council, as her residents were fed up with the state of the roads.

The Mayor responded that she believed that all Members in the Chamber would not be surprised that Hertfordshire was the seventh worst in the whole country. Everyone was aware of how to report pot holes on the County Council's website. It was something raised by residents when Councillors knocked on doors. She regularly witnessed vehicles on Deacons Hill swerving to avoid parts of the road which were particularly bad. She added that the issue for her was that the poor roads undermined the other work being done by the Council in Watford. The Council's agenda was to improve Watford but the town was left with shoddy infrastructure.

The Mayor commented that it was often called the 'Cinderella' budget, because it was possible to cut this budget and the local authority would receive very little protest. However, it had been the 'Cinderella' budget for too long. The issues now were not just about funding, but based on comments from County colleagues, it was more about poor contract management and shoddy workmanship.

The Mayor urged Councillors to be tough when jobs were done. It was only when Members reported issues that a message would be sent to the County Council that it needed to do something about it. The County Council was currently paying for a contract that was inferior. She believed that Watford and Hertfordshire deserved better.

The Chairman invited the Mayor to speak further on her report.

The Mayor felt her report included in the agenda was self explanatory. She referred Council to the comments she had made about the Town at Christmas, which was good news, particularly in relation to the reduction in anti-social behaviour over that period. There had been good news from the Job Centre; there had not been the usual significant increase in unemployment after the temporary Christmas staff contracts had expired. This indicated that many of those people had been kept on.

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

No questions had been received.

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

No questions had been received.

PETITIONS PRESENTED UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 12.0

An e-petition and paper petition, containing 105 signatures from Watford residents, had been received in the following terms

“We the undersigned petition the council to: The brand new Watford Market has a 1st floor food court which brings existing and new traders to provide a wide range of excellent food. The first floor food court has a designated public seating area which is located next to the Exchange road flyover. As the food court public seating area only has a roof but has no side panel/walls to shield the visiting public from the wind/rain/low temperature, we petition the council to provide additional heating/side panels in the public seating area.”

Mr Jason Lee of Mandarin Kitchen was invited to present the petition to Council.

Mr Lee stated that he was attending as a trader in the new market and as a Watford resident. The petition was regarding the condition of the first floor food hall in the new Watford Market. He referred to the potential of the food hall; it being a vibrant place enjoyed by families, the young and old. However this was not the case because of its location and the design of the building. It was liable to the weather, noise and fumes from the traffic on the Exchange Road flyover, which was experienced by visitors and traders, particularly the designated seating area in the food court. For example today it had been very cold and miserable. This situation had contributed to the loss of business. The people of Watford had lost a vibrant market which many had cherished.

Mr Lee said that one trader, who had been in the market for a very long time had described the building as not ‘fit for purpose’ and had left. Many of the traders who moved from the old building felt let down by the initial artist’s impression of the new building, which appeared to be fully covered and not just with the current roof. The issue of side panels had been raised in previous communication from the Council, before the current building had been completed. Through discussion with various traders and customers there was a clear opinion of the issues. There was not a consensus how to shield people from the weather and noises in the food court.

Mr Lee referred to the petition and the speed in which he had gathered enough signatures to raise it at Council. Many people felt the Council had not done enough to address the current issue. There had recently been dialogue but no plan. He said that a clear action plan was needed which had scheduled deliverables, not just talk.

In conclusion Mr Lee questioned whether the current market was a work in progress or a broken promise. He petitioned the Council to show leadership to right what was wrong and heed the cry for help from the public; to help build a lasting legacy that contributed towards a sustainable economic growth for Watford and its people; making the food hall a place where people would be proud to visit and work.

Members were then invited to discuss the petition. Members thanked Mr Lee for presenting the petition. They commented on the current design of the first floor of the market and the decision making process leading up to its relocation.

The Chairman invited the Mayor to respond.

The Mayor informed Mr Lee that the market was a work in progress. She referred to the Labour Group's involvement in the development plans and Members' comments at the meeting, including possible solutions for the first floor. She said that contrary to comments made by some, the old market was a failure which had also been said by traders and members of the public. The new market would divide opinion. She commented that if she had one criticism it would be that the management company had not been strong enough about the offer they wanted to provide in the market; consideration should have been given to the location of certain stalls. The Council would need to address the issues within the time, money and resources it could afford and the capacity within the Council. She said that the matter was being taken seriously and being progressed.

56 **BUSINESS ESPECIALLY BROUGHT FORWARD BY THE CHAIRMAN OR THE HEAD OF PAID SERVICE WHICH IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIRMAN SHOULD BE CONSIDERED AS A MATTER OF URGENCY.**

There was no urgent business.

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

No motions had been received.

58 **FINANCIAL PLANNING - DRAFT REVENUE AND CAPITAL ESTIMATES 2015-18 AND THE TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2015-18 - RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CABINET 19 JANUARY 2015**

Council received a report of Cabinet, including the original report presented to Cabinet at its meeting on 19 January 2015 and an additional report from the Shared Director of Finance setting out the Council Tax Resolution for 2015/2016.

The Mayor moved the budget report incorporating the following amendments to the minutes from Cabinet, which was seconded by Councillor Watkin –

- £250,000 to be added to the Capital Programme for work to community centres;
- Saving of £1,650 would not be taken from the Democratic Services budget.

Councillor Bell moved the following amendment which was seconded by Councillor Khan –

- £30,000 for weekend burials (paid from the net revenue from fees and charges) in 2015/16, 2016/17 and 2017/18
- £40,000 for free graffiti and bulky waste removal in 2015/16, 2016/17 and 2017/18
- Cut the cost of the Mayor's office £70,198 – 2015/16; £120,190 – 2016/17; £120,190 – 2017/18
- Cut £1,680 for the cost of mobile phones for Cabinet in 2015/16, 2016/17 and 2017/18
- £50,000 from Reserves for Watford Women's Centre for three years, 2015/16, 2016/17 and 2017/18
- £1,500,000 from Reserves for St Albans Road 2015/16

Members debated the original motion and the amendment.

During the debate Councillor Sharpe raised a point of order following an allegation made by Councillor Dhindsa.

After consultation with the Head of Democracy and Governance and the Managing Director the Chairman invited Councillor Dhindsa to withdraw the allegation, which he did.

The amendment was then put to the vote

In accordance with the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 the votes were recorded as follows –

Those Members voting in favour of the amendment:

Councillors Bashir, Bell, Connal, Dhindsa, Joynes, Khan, Mauthoor, Mills, Shah and S Williams

Those Members voting against the amendment:

Mayor Thornhill, The Chairman Councillor Derbyshire, Councillors Aron, Bolton, I Brown, J Brown, Collett, Counter, Crout, Greenslade, Hastrick, Hofman, Jeffree, Johnson, Lynch, Mehta, Saffery, Scudder, Sharpe, Taylor, Walford, Watkin and T Williams

Those Members abstaining from voting

Councillor Brandon

The amendment was **LOST** by 10 votes to 23 and 1 abstention.

The original motion was then put to Council.

Those Members voting in favour of the original motion:

Mayor Thornhill, The Chairman Councillor Derbyshire, Councillors Aron, Bolton, I Brown, J Brown, Collett, Counter, Crout, Greenslade, Hastrick, Hofman, Jeffree, Johnson, Lynch, Saffery, Scudder, Sharpe, Taylor, Walford, Watkin and T Williams

Those Members voting against the original motion:

None

Those Members abstaining from voting

Councillors Bashir, Bell, Brandon, Connal, Dhindsa, Joynes, Khan, Mauthoor, Mehta, Mills, Shah and S Williams

The amendment was **CARRIED** by 22 votes to 0.

RESOLVED –

1. that the proposals recommended by Cabinet on 19 January 2015 be agreed:
 - a) that the Council's net General Fund expenditure for 2015/16 shall be £15,176,500.
 - b) that the Capital Programme shall be as set out in the Cabinet report with the addition of £250,000 for improvements to the community centres.

and in approving these recommendations

- c) has regard to the Director of Finance's assessment of financial risks and the level of balances and provisions required, as set out in the Cabinet report.
- d) the current Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme continues for financial year 2015/16 (paragraph 7.6.5 of the Cabinet report refers).
- e) the Treasury management Strategy for 2015-2018 as set out in Appendix 11 of the Cabinet report be agreed.
- f) that the Portfolio Holder, in consultation with the Director of Finance, be given the delegated authority to approve any variation to the Treasury Management Strategy during the year which may be brought about by investigating the opportunity to invest for greater than 1 year and to invest in other investment instruments i.e Government bonds, Gilts and property with a view of maximising the Councils returns without significantly increasing risk.

2. that Watford Borough Council's Council Tax Base for 2015/16 has been calculated at 30,805 in accordance with Regulation 3 of the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012 made under Section 31B (1) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended.
3. that the following amounts be now calculated by the Council for the year 2015/16 in accordance with Sections 31A to 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992:
- (A) *Being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A (2) of the Act.
(Effectively the gross expenditure and transfers to reserves)* **£65,150,020**
- (B) *Being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A (3) of the Act.
(Effectively the gross income and transfers from reserves)* **£57,453,800**
- (C) *Being the amount by which the aggregate at 2.3 (A) above exceeds the aggregate at 2.3 (B) above calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 31A (4) of the Act as its Council Tax Requirement for the year* **£7,696,220**
- (D) *Being the amount at paragraph 2.3 (C) divided by amount at 2.2 above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 33 (1) of the Act as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year (at Band D)* **£249.84**

(E)

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

Being the amounts given by multiplying the amount at paragraph 2.3 (D) above by the number which, in the proportion set out in Section 5 (1) of the Act, is applicable to dwellings listed in a particular valuation band divided by the number which in that proportion is applicable to dwellings listed in Valuation Band D, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 36 (1) of the Act, as the amounts to be taken into account for the year 2015/16

in respect of categories of dwellings listed in different valuation bands

4. that a report including the precepts of both the County Council and the Police and Crime Commissioner be presented to the Functions Committee on 26 February 2015 to set the total Council Tax.

59

BOUNDARY COMMISSION REVIEW

Council received a report of the Head of Democracy and Governance setting out the Boundary Review Group's recommendations on the optimum size for the Council, which would be put forward to Local Government Boundary Commission. The motion was moved by Councillor Sharpe and seconded by Councillor Bell.

On being put to Council the motion was unanimously **CARRIED**.

RESOLVED –

1. that Council recommends that the size of Watford Borough Council remains at 36 councillors.
2. that the draft submission attached as Appendix 1 to the report be approved for submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission to support the Council's recommendation.

Chairman

The Meeting started at 7.30 pm
and finished at 9.30 pm

This page is intentionally left blank