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COUNCIL

18 MARCH 2015

At the meeting of Watford Borough Council held at the Town Hall, Watford on Wednesday, 18th March, 2015.

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

Officers: Managing Director
Legal and Democratic Section Head
Head of Community and Customer Services
Environmental Health and Licensing Section Head
Environmental Health Manager (Commercial)
Interim Communications Section Head
Democratic Services Manager
Member Development and Civic Officer
Committee and Scrutiny Officer

60 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

61 **DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

There were no disclosures of interest.

62 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 January 2015 were submitted and signed.

OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

Fly a Flag for the Commonwealth and the Single Commemorative Act

The Chairman informed Council that on Monday 9 March he had led the Fly a Flag for the Commonwealth ceremony and the Elected Mayor led the Single Commemorative Act to remember World War One. He added that Members may have noticed the candle in the cabinet outside the Council Chamber. This candle would remain throughout the year.

Chairman's Reception at Watford Colosseum

The Chairman stated that he had hosted a charity reception at Watford Colosseum to see a performance of La Traviata. The reception raised £360 from a raffle, for his charities.

Jamaican High Commission Visit

The Chairman announced that the previous day he had welcomed the Jamaican High Commissioner and her guests to the Town Hall.

Chairman's Charity Quiz

The Chairman informed Council that he was holding the annual Chairman's Quiz the following day, Thursday 19 March at the Colosseum. He looked forward to seeing those who would be taking part.

Members' Self-Assessments

The Chairman reminded Members to return their self-assessments to the Member Development and Civic Officer by Tuesday 31 March.

Members' Related Party Transactions

The Chairman also reminded Members to return their Related Party Transaction forms to the Head of Democracy and Governance as soon as possible.

Managing Director's Letter to Councillors

The Chairman referred to the Managing Director's letter which had been sent to the Mayor and all Councillors. He asked Members to note the contents.

MAYOR'S REPORT

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

- a) Councillor Mehta referred to her previous questions to the Mayor about required actions for the New Watford Market that would now be taking place in April. She then referred to the Dome roundabout and commented

that she was confused as to why the mayor was asking for something that was already happening. The County Council had already agreed to review the situation regarding the traffic lights at the roundabout. The MP had carried out a survey and presented the results to the County Council. She asked the Mayor why she was pressing for action.

The Mayor responded to Councillor Mehta's statement regarding the market. The Mayor stated that the town had previously had a failing market in a failing location, which meant that a failing market had been transferred to the new location. She felt that issues about the tenant mix and the public's requirements were still in question. The public did not go to the market before and they were still not visiting it. It was necessary to find out what kind of market Watford wanted and the types of stalls that would attract people. The Mayor said that markets across the country were located in different types of locations and had different styles. If the market had the items people wanted to buy they would visit it. She added that she regretted that it had taken longer than she had hoped to have the problems resolved. She said that there was an urgency and a meeting would shortly take place with Town and Country Markets to discuss their plans for the future. The Council needed to note the main issue was about the tenant mix.

The Mayor then referred to Councillor Mehta's comments about the Dome roundabout. She stated that the review would only be happening because County Councillor Derek Scudder had asked for it to take place. The Mayor mentioned that there had been Section 106 funding for the alleviation of the Dome roundabout following the planning permission granted to MEPC for its Leavesden development. Due to the lack of development on the site the funding did not come through. The administration had always placed emphasis on the need for action at the Dome roundabout. She was delighted that County Councillor Scudder's recent efforts had been echoed by the MP.

- b) Councillor Bashir also posed a question to the Mayor on the market. He asked the Mayor whether she accepted that the project was ill-prepared, not thought through and had been amateurish in its organisation, planning and delivery. In addition he asked the Mayor whether she would accept personal responsibility for the debacle.

The Mayor responded that she would not accept personal responsibility. She did not personally manage the Project Team. If Members asked the Project Team about the scheme, they would state that certain things should have happened differently and the Council would learn from it. She referred to her response to Councillor Mehta and said that the market was probably the only thing that since 2002 had not been fully delivered according to the plan and budget.

- c) Councillor Mills noted that in the Mayor's report reference had been made to the work starting on the new road to the hospital. She asked the Mayor whether an independent assessment or an environmental impact

assessment had been carried out. If the report had been completed she enquired whether it was in the public domain. She said that the area included a variety of wildlife, including muntjac deer, roe deer, bats and great crested newts. She asked whether any provisions had been put in place for the wildlife, for example tunnels under the road enabling them to move around safely. She commented that people should be protecting wildlife before they completely disappeared. She questioned whether the Mayor was aware that bats were a protected species that were currently in hibernation. These were all animals that lived in the town's semi-suburban environment.

The Mayor thanked Councillor Mills for her question. She advised that any planning application for a major development had to produce an environmental impact assessment. The road was no exception. All the information was in the public domain. She suggested that the Councillor could have had a briefing from the team carrying out the development of the road.

The Mayor advised all Councillors that they should not wait for the Mayor's report at Council to raise issues of concern. If there was concern about the impact of wildlife as a result of a project taking place then these concerns should have been raised earlier. This particular project had been in the planning stage for a considerable amount of time. The Mayor wished to assure Councillor Mills that she was unaware of any outstanding matters relating to wildlife and animals.

The Mayor reminded Council that this infrastructure was key to retaining an acute A and E hospital in Watford; improving blue light times to the hospital; relief for Vicarage Road and that part of West Watford. She stressed that it was not a through road. It had been made clear at meetings with the hospital that it should not be a through road going through the centre of the hospital campus. The road was for blue light vehicles and those people accessing the hospital, the homes and jobs in that area.

- d) Councillor Counter asked the Mayor whether she could update Council following the recent announcement regarding Croxley Rail Link.

The Mayor said that it was important to put on public record on the day of the announcement about Croxley Rail Link and how it had generally had cross party support for the scheme.

The Mayor informed Council that Croxley Rail Link had been with the Department for Transport for a number of years. It had been the subject of the first letter she had written to the first Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone. It had also been the subject of the first meeting she had had with the Liberal Democrat Coalition Minister, Norman Baker, from the Department for Transport. The Minister, a railway enthusiast, saw the benefits of the scheme and it was revived due to successful lobbying from all parties. It was important as a person with a senior leadership role in the town to

recognise the support from all parties. The County Council understood the value of the scheme and had continued to support it. Watford Borough Council had remained committed to the project throughout. Due to additional funding being awarded the scheme would proceed. The Mayor explained that the scheme had been agreed some time ago, but following the case being re-examined it was realised there would be a significant shortfall in funding. Various groups then started lobbying again. The Council led a delegation to the Department for Transport. The delegation had included senior business people from the town, all of whom were investing in the area due to the Croxley Rail Link scheme. She was delighted to state that the funding would be available. The next significant step was that at the end of March Transport for London would formally take on the lead responsibility for delivering the project. The scheme would be in the work programme and trains should be operational from the summer of 2018.

- e) Councillor T Williams stated that as a Watford fan and a human being he had been shocked and saddened to hear of the vicious attack by teenagers on Watford fan, Nic Cruwys, as he left the Molineux Stadium on 8 March. He asked the Mayor if she could highlight the partnership work the Council, Police and Football Club did to ensure that incidents of this nature did not occur in Watford.

Councillor Williams added that on behalf of all Councillors, he wished Nic a speedy recovery and that everyone's thoughts were with him and his family.

The Mayor informed Council that it had been very moving to be at the home game on Saturday when two minutes of applause had taken place in support of Mr Cruwys. She added that this was a wonderful tradition which had been started to compliment the minute's silence, which was usually held when someone had died.

The Mayor said that it was important to reassure Councillors and to put on public record exactly what happened with regard to the security of football matches. At the beginning of the season the Police and Football Club assessed every match. As the date of the match became closer, the Police contacted the away team's local police force. Football liaison officers visited the away team's home to discuss the risks. They discussed any known troublemakers. If the situation was expected to be bad the other police force would send their own team to Watford, known as spotters. All parties worked very closely together.

The Mayor commented that the good news was that there were very few high risk matches at Watford. The Wolves v Watford match had been categorised as the lowest risk rating. This meant there would be no extra policing presence needed and the security would be managed by stewards. This was the normal risk rating for most matches. She could recall witnessing football hooliganism in 1973. Things had changed since then. However, the Police were unable to account for tensions that arose

following the match. The Mayor commented on the brilliant reaction of the Wolves supporters since the attack.

The Mayor referred to the first two weeks of the current season and the matches against Brentford and Bolton. She explained that a small number of Watford people had been determined to cause trouble. The Police and the Football Club worked together and there were 25 arrests. These cases would be proceeding through the courts in due course. The Football Club did not wait for the court cases or banning orders to be issued. The Club made it clear that if there was any trouble those people would be banned from games. The Police showed that this type of behaviour would not be tolerated. The actions were based on intelligence and risk; officers monitored social media; officers were positioned on the trains with fans and then the fans were met at the station and escorted to the ground. She added that no strategy could guarantee that this type of incident would not happen on Watford's streets. It was important that all Members were aware of the procedures.

The Mayor finished by stating that she felt it was important to assure everyone that the Police and Football Club were doing everything possible to stop it happening in Watford. She wished to echo everyone's thoughts and said that she would be writing to the family on behalf of the Council.

- f) Councillor Turmaine said that he had read the Mayor's report and that it did make the role of Mayor appear to be a full-time position. He asked the Mayor if she would agree with him that whoever was elected as MP on 8 May, from day one should only have one job with no directorships or consultancies.

The Mayor said that if she were opportunistic and irresponsible her response would be 'yes', but she was neither. If she were elected as MP and an immediate by-election was held, it would be hoped that whoever was the Liberal Democrat candidate may benefit from the situation; this would be an opportunistic action. However, if she were elected there would be a by-election, but all parties needed to be able to choose their candidate and ensure the public were aware of them. This would allow the candidates to be at meetings and events. When the electorate chose their new Mayor they could do so in the full confidence of knowing all of the people concerned.

The Mayor commented that the issue of directorships was not pertinent to her but she was sure it would be to a number of the Councillor's colleagues in Parliament. She referred to Claire Ward's declarations whilst she had been the MP for Watford. She advised that she would not be taking two full-time salaries and that there would be a by-election.

- g) Councillor S Williams referred to comments made by Councillor Jeffree at the previous Council meeting when Members had been discussing the market. He said that Council should not be hearing excuses but should be hearing good news. He commented that if the Mayor was unable to

organise the market or organise and manage the reconstruction of the Parade, he asked how the taxpayer could trust her to run the town for a further four years.

The Mayor said that in respect of the market there had been an inclusive process. She felt that the Council may have been trying to please too many people and had learnt from this. However, she considered the Parade to be one of the biggest successes. It was frequently praised. The MP had recently been photographed on the bridge and commenting on Watford's progress. She stated that she had spoken to businesses who were planning on relocating to the Parade due to the improvements. People felt that previously it had been letting the town down; it was ugly, a concrete monstrosity and dead. This could not be said now.

- h) Councillor Connal noted that an Italian market would be taking place on 20 and 21 March. She asked whether there would be facilities for local Italian traders to participate.

The Mayor responded that this was a constructive idea and acknowledged there were some fantastic shops in the town. She was unsure how it might work but she would ask if it were possible. She advised that in addition to the Italian markets there would be at least two specialist markets including a monthly farmer's market. She reminded Members that there would be day stalls available on the day, enabling others to join in. She asked Councillor Connal to email her with details and she would look into the matter.

- i) Councillor McLeod informed Council that this would be her last full Council meeting. She wished to thank the Council officers and Members of all parties for a wonderful eight years. She had enjoyed her time.

Councillor McLeod referred to the Big Events and asked whether Imagine Watford would continue, as it had not been listed in the Mayor's report.

The Mayor responded that Imagine Watford would still be continuing but it had been renamed Big Festival, which kept the same format as the other events within the programme. Following the improvements to the Parade there were bigger and better spaces for the events and more space for spectators. The same standards of performance would be maintained. The Mayor added that Watford Live would be running in parallel, enabling local performers to benefit from the improved marketing.

- j) Councillor Bell commented that he had noted the replies to his written questions on Farm Terrace Allotments. Three years had passed since the Mayor had proposed the inclusion of Farm Terrace Allotments in the Health Campus scheme. He referred to her appearances on television and comments in Liberal Democrat leaflets. He asked the Mayor whether she had any regrets about some of her comments.

The Mayor said that she was unaware of any of her statements that were not factually truthful and from her perspective it was never personal. If it had been personal, it had been very challenging and very difficult not to respond to the personal nature of some aspects of the campaign. She regretted the fact that a group of people had been upset by the Council's plans to try and make the best neighbourhood possible in that part of West Watford. She added that it would be wonderful to please all of the people all of the time. The Mayor stated that she had said on numerous occasions that the development would not be taking place if it was not thought to be the right thing to do. With respect of the reference to television, the Mayor commented that she had learnt that it was possible to stand in front of a television camera for one hour and 10 minutes and the editing could then be misleading and cruel. The Mayor stated she had no control over that and that was why she had declined any further requests for television appearances.

- k) Councillor Dhindsa said that Watford Football Club were top of the Championship and he hoped that they would go up to the Premiership. He asked the Mayor whether she could inform Council about any contingency plans that would be put in place if the team were promoted, as this would have a major impact on the town particularly his ward, Vicarage. He also asked if she could explain about any partnership working that had been done and any contingency plans.

The Mayor commented that she had thought the Councillor was going to ask whether the Council would hold a civic event if the team were promoted. She confirmed that an event would be held as it was appropriate to honour the football team's success.

The Mayor said that promotion to the Premiership would mean more crowds and away support would be greater. The same partnerships that had worked together on the previous occasion would do so again. The previous experience would be of benefit on this occasion. If the team were to be promoted it would provide significant benefit to the town. The town would be busy, more than it was for current key matches. Match day parking enforcement would have to be strictly enforced, demonstrating that the town took parking enforcement seriously and that people could not park wherever they wanted. She finished by saying that she hoped that it would be a problem the town had.

65

QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 10.0

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

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

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

No questions had been received.

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

No petitions had been received.

68 **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.

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

No motions had been received.

70 **REVIEWED AND UPDATED CORPORATE PLAN 2015-19**

Council received a report of Cabinet, including the original report presented to Cabinet at its meeting on 16 February 2015.

RESOLVED –

that the current draft of the Corporate Plan 2015-19 be approved.

71 **FOOD SAFETY LAW ENFORCEMENT SERVICE PLAN 2015-17**

Council received a report of the Licensing Committee, including the original report presented to the Committee on 4 March 2015.

RESOLVED –

that the Food Safety Law Enforcement Plan be approved subject to the following amendments suggested by the Licensing Committee

1. In item 2.4 under 'Access to the Food Service' the times where customers can use the Environmental Health service be amended to read '8.45 a.m. to 5.15 p.m. (4.45 p.m. on Fridays).'
2. In item 3.1 under 'Risk Based Inspection Programme' the wording in category 'E' be amended to read 'A well run newsagent selling only pre-packed drinks, crisps and sweets.'

Chairman

The Meeting started at 7.30 pm
and finished at 8.55 pm

QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL UNDER PROCEDURAL RULE 10.0 COUNCIL – 18 March 2015

QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLOR NIGEL BELL

Received on 13.03.15

1. Can you tell me how many complaints and objections the Council have made to the media (various papers, Television, radio, etc) when those organisations have proposed programmes and features on the Farm Terrace story?

None. The council has never objected or complained when an organisation has proposed programmes and features on the Farm Terrace story. It is of course completely appropriate for news issues to be covered in Watford and the Communications team deal with these positively regularly. Like many other organisations featured in the media though we do complain where there has been misrepresentation or inaccuracies. The most recent example was the Daily Telegraph using a picture of an idyllic Scottish allotment plot to illustrate a story on Farm Terrace – they acknowledged it had misled their online readers and broke the editors code of practice.

For more information please contact Interim Communications & Engagement Section
Head Milly Camley
Ext: 8388

2. I note the latest promotion leaflet and photo for the Borough's allotments with the caption, "Join our growing community of allotment holders".

"How can the Council justify using this statement when it is at best misleading if not an untruth?-bearing in mind that the information the Council has provided on applications since 2008 has shown a steady decline in applications, hitting the lowest point of only 128 applications last year compared to a peak of 340 applications in 2009. This is in contrast to the national trend which is of an increasing demand for allotments for the same period from 2009 to 2014."

The number of applications varies year on year, but there has not been a steady decline in applications during that period.

The key measure of allotment activity is the % of allotments that are occupied and these figures are 23% higher than 2002 peaking at 91% in 2011. The current % of occupied active allotments as of 16th March 2015 is 89%.

The poster promotional campaign is also a play on words as the activity undertaken on allotments is the "growing" of fruit and vegetables thus a "growing community".

For more information please contact: Paul Rabbitts
Ext: 8250

3. I would like to know the amount of money spent by the Council on Consultants in the financial year 2014/15 and comparing this to the years 2010/11, 2011/12, 2012/13 and 2013/14

The figures are as follows.

2010/11 £234,960
2011/12 £68,240
2012/13 £205,269
2013/14 £42,556
2014/15 £130,736

For more information please contact: Manny Lewis
Ext: 8186

QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLOR SEAMUS WILLIAMS

Received on: 13.03.15

1. Does the council recognize the destructive nature that unfair zero hour contracts have on working people and working families?

This council should be actively seeking to reward companies and organizations that do not use unfair zero hour contracts. These Contracts deny mothers and fathers access to ante natal classes. They do not allow people to take care of their dependents and they also mean people cannot join a trade union.

Does this council and its leadership recognize that zero-hour contracts put a huge strain on young people's ability to seek home ownership as-well as the strain it puts on students in work.

Does this council also understand that as we become a more "Metropolitan" town with more bars restaurants and coffee show we will see the number of people on these zero hour contracts increase?

If so can council officers explain the lack of action within the town's administration to tackle something that fundamentally undermines workers' rights and will have medium and long term implications for Watford and its population.

This Council does not support zero hours contracts. None of its employees are engaged in this way. However the Council has no control over the employment flexibility that private sector employers may wish to operate. The Council has no powers to direct employers in this area.

The Council's policy has always been to promote a balanced economy in Watford and members will have seen from the Core Strategy and the Local Plan Part 2 consultation that economic growth in the town reflects a desire for new homes, increased commercial space and where appropriate increased retail and leisure provision. Watford has a thriving retail and leisure economy and this is a positive position to be in.

For more information please contact Manny Lewis
Ext: 8186