



COUNCIL MEETING

Wednesday, 14th October, 2015

7.30 pm

Town Hall, Watford

Publication date: 6 October 2015

CONTACT

If you require further information or you would like a copy of this agenda in another format, e.g. large print, please contact Caroline Harris on 01923 278372 or by email – legalanddemocratic@watford.gov.uk .

Welcome to this meeting. We hope you find these notes useful.

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The Council Chamber is on the mezzanine floor of the Town Hall and a lift is available.

Induction loops are available in the Council Chamber.

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6 October 2015

Councillor

You are hereby summoned to attend a meeting of the Council of the Borough of Watford to be held on Wednesday, 14th October, 2015 starting at 7.30 pm at the Town Hall, Watford to take into consideration and determine upon the following subjects, namely: -

- 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**
- 2. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**
- 3. MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 June 2015 to be submitted and signed.

Copies of the minutes of this meeting are usually available seven working days following the meeting.

(All minutes are available on the Council's [website](#).)

- 4. OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS**
- 5. MAYOR'S REPORT** (Pages 7 - 10)
- 6. QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 10.0**
- 7. QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 11.0**
- 8. PETITIONS PRESENTED UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 12.0**
- 9. 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.**
- 10. MOTIONS SUBMITTED UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 13.0**

The following motion has been proposed by Councillor Johnson and seconded by Councillor Collett

"Housing and the 2015 Emergency Budget

1. Council notes with concern the increasing pressure on housing in Watford, and the South East in general, with Private Rented Sector evictions now accounting for as many cases of homelessness as all other causes combined, and with market rents in Watford significantly exceeding the levels that housing benefit will cover.

2. Council further notes that the 2015 Emergency Budget will have a harmful effect on the housing situation in Watford and on those in housing need, particularly by:
 - a) reducing the Overall Benefits Cap, and designating Watford as an outside London area with an Overall Benefits Cap of £20,000;
 - b) freezing Local Housing Allowance rates for 4 years;
 - c) removing housing benefit for 18-21 year olds;
 - d) extending the 'right to buy' to assured tenants of social landlords; and
 - e) reducing social rents which will deprive housing associations of revenue and undermine their ability to build.

3. Council recognises that:
 - a) the housing market in Watford is closely linked to those of London, and median market rents in Watford exceed those of some London Boroughs;
 - b) private housing rent increases in Watford have substantially exceeded both the Consumer Price Index and the Retail Price Index;
 - c) remaining living at home is simply not an option for 18-21 year olds who are fleeing domestic abuse or estranged from their parents;
 - d) social landlords have questioned the legitimacy of legislating to allow the sale of assets owned by charities and not-for-profit companies; and that many stakeholders are concerned that the policy will result in a permanent loss of social housing for future generations; and
 - e) the National Housing Federation has stated that at least 27,000 homes will now not be built.

4. Council requests that the Elected Mayor writes to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions to:
 - a) make the case for Watford Borough residents to qualify for the London rate of Overall Benefit Cap;
 - b) explain that it is already difficult or impossible to find homes that are affordable with Local Housing Allowance, and that freezing the allowance against a general rise in rents is an unfair burden on claimants and the Council; and
 - c) request further information about what criteria the Department will use to define 18-21 year-old applicants for housing benefit as vulnerable.

5. Council further requests that the Elected Mayor writes to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government to ask for clarification on Government plans to extend the 'right to buy' homes in the ownership of registered social landlords, and to express concerns about the policy, both because of its negative impact on availability of affordable housing and its interference in the property rights of charitable bodies.

6. Council further requests the Housing Section Head to continue to work closely with housing providers such as Watford Community Housing Trust to
 - a) consider the effect that reducing social rents and extending the right to buy will have on the future supply of social housing; and
 - b) explore possible solutions to help mitigate any housing shortages these changes may cause."

The following motion has been proposed by Councillor Rindl and seconded by Councillor Martins

- 1) *“Council notes that over 6 million people have been displaced in Syria and over 3 million people have fled to other countries.*
- 2) *Council commends the efforts and generosity of many residents who have donated time, money, clothing and food to refugees both from Syria and other unstable areas.*
- 3) *Council especially recognises the hard work of volunteers at Watford and Three Rivers Refugee Partnership who give long-term practical support and befriending to refugees in Watford, and Council congratulates them on their new status as a registered charity.*
- 4) *Council further notes that Watford is already experiencing a significant shortage of social housing supply against unprecedented levels of homelessness in the Borough; and that housing costs in Watford are much higher than in other parts of the country, and often not completely covered by current housing benefit rates.*
- 5) *Council believes that the UK has a moral responsibility to take part in the international humanitarian effort to assist refugees.*
- 6) *Council welcomes the Government’s decision to expand the existing Syrian Vulnerable Person Scheme to resettle an additional 20,000 refugees.*
- 7) *Council therefore resolves to work with key bodies at national and county levels (such as Hertfordshire County Council and health partners) to support Syrian refugee resettlement if requested to do so by the Minister for Syrian Refugees.*
- 8) *Council further resolves to seek funding from all possible sources to help cover the cost of resettlement so that refugees receive the support they need and that local services are not put under unreasonable pressure.*
- 9) *Council thanks the Head of Community and Customer Services for liaising with partner organisations on this important issues, and requests that he continues this work.”*

The following motion has been proposed by Councillor Bell and seconded by Councillor Joynes

“Council notes the recent Care Quality Commissions damning report on the state of West Herts Health Trust, including Watford General Hospital.

In particular the Council notes that;

A and E patients at Watford General Hospital faced long delays before they are examined by a doctor,

That untrained staff were assessing and directing the care of A and E arrivals,

That facilities were in such a bad state of repair that they “caused a potential risk to staff and visitors, and

That there was a chronic lack of nurses so serious that it posed ‘a major risk’ to patients and major staff shortages in the maternity unit,

Although acknowledging that care in children’s and young people’s services is outstanding ,the report found that there was low morale across the hospital.

The Council recognises that;

The shocking state of the hospital is a major concern for Watford residents which is a result of the failure by the current Conservative Government and previous Tory/Lib Dem Government to properly fund our health service.

The current shortfall in funding at the West Herts Hospital Trust is £32.8million, a deficit that is worsening not improving in the current financial year (see Trust Board papers for 1st October 2015).

The vacancy rate at the hospital is 15.9% with major shortages amongst nursing staff contributing to reductions in service quality and poor staff morale (see Trust board papers 1st October 2015).

Staff have highlighted poor working facilities within the hospital (staff survey results 2014) that are in urgent need of investment and modernisation.

We, therefore, call on the Mayor,

To acknowledge that the Conservative/Liberal Democrat Government were severely mistaken to have scrapped the planned hospital modernisation plan under the last Labour Government and that the Health trust has been severely underfunded over the past 5-years.

To immediately write to the secretary of state for health demanding that the Government fully fund the rebuilding and modernisation of the hospital and provide sufficient funding to ensure the trust can deliver the level of staffing and facilities to create a safe level of service.”

The following motion has been proposed by Councillor Haley and seconded by Councillor Mauthoor

“This Council notes the totally inadequate response to the international humanitarian crisis resulting from the civil war in Syria.

Watford Council has a proud record welcoming refugees and our town’s residents have shown their decency and compassion towards the dispossessed over many years in response to war and natural disaster.

This Council resolves to show leadership in working with partners from across the voluntary sector, the Government, and the County Council to ensure that services

are co-ordinated in order to provide adequate resources and funding for any refugees that are settled in our area.

Further the Council resolves to establish a cross-sector working group of relevant Council and government departments to work with those voluntary groups, faith and non-faith groups who want to make any refugees who are re-settled in Watford safe and welcome.”

11. BOUNDARY REVIEW REPORT (Pages 11 - 60)

Report of Head of Democracy and Governance

12. ADDITION TO CAPITAL PROGRAMME - WATFORD BUSINESS PARK (Pages 61 - 66)

Report of Managing Director

13. ANNUAL REPORT OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY IN WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL 2014/15 (Pages 67 - 94)

Annual report of Overview and Scrutiny in Watford

14. NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM ANNUAL REPORT 2014/15 (Pages 95 - 126)

Report of Committee and Scrutiny Officer

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Manny Lewis', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Manny Lewis, Managing Director