

## **COUNCIL**

**14 OCTOBER 2015**

At the meeting of Watford Borough Council held at the Town Hall, Watford on Wednesday, 14th October, 2015.

Present: Chairman (Councillor K Hastrick)  
The Mayor (D Thornhill)

Councillors S Bashir, N Bell, S Bolton, I Brown, J Brown,  
K Collett, J Connal, S Counter, K Crout, G Derbyshire,  
J Dhindsa, F Ewudo, M Haley, S Johnson, A Joynes, A Khan,  
R Martins, B Mauthoor, B Mehta, A Rindl, T Rogers, N Shah,  
I Sharpe, S Silver, P Taylor, L Topping, M Turmaine, D Walford,  
M Watkin, M Whitman, S Williams and T Williams

Officers: Managing Director  
Head of Democracy and Governance  
Democratic Services Manager  
Committee and Scrutiny Officer  
Corporate and External Communications Section Head  
Member Development and Civic Officer  
Mayor's Political Assistant

### 33 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Hofman and Mills. The Chairman added that apologies had also been received for Councillor Scudder and asked Council to join her in sending him best wishes for a speedy recovery

### 34 **DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

There were no disclosures of interest.

### 35 **MINUTES**

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

### 36 **OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS**

#### Armed Forces Day

The Chairman informed Council that she had raised the flag for Armed Forces Day at the Town Hall on 22 June. She had also attended a Royal British Legion Gala event.

#### Merchant Navy Day

The Chairman advised that on 3 September she had raised the red ensign flag for the nation's first ever Merchant Navy Day.

#### Queen Elizabeth II Longest Reigning Monarch

The Chairman stated that she had attended an event at St John's Church to commemorate the Queen becoming the longest reigning monarch.

#### Audentior Awards

The Chairman said that the Audentior Awards had taken place on Friday 11 September. She thanked all those who had attended and was pleased to announce that £1,581 had been raised for her two charities.

#### Annual Carol Service

The Chairman gave advanced notice that Christ Church had invited Members to attend their annual Carol Service on Sunday 20 December, commencing at 6.30 pm.

37

### **MAYOR'S REPORT**

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

The Chairman invited Members to indicate whether they wished to ask a question of the Mayor. Councillors S Williams, Topping, Silver, Rogers, Bashir, Bell, Dhindsa, J Brown, Walford, Mehta, Haley indicated that they wished to ask questions.

- a) Councillor S Williams congratulated the Mayor on becoming a Baroness and her 'elevation' to the House of Lords. He asked the Mayor if, in her role as a member of the Liberal Democrat shadow team, she would apologise for her government's role in putting over a million people on foodbanks.

The Mayor said that she would not apologise for her party going into coalition with the Conservatives when the country needed it. It had been a strong coalition, which had been graciously admitted by the Conservatives. It had stabilised the economy and allowed the country to be in a better position five years later. She commented that not everything had been good in coalition for Liberal Democrats. In a coalition each side had to compromise. It had been the first coalition since the second world war.

The Mayor added that there were many things her party had not agreed with in the coalition. She stressed that foodbanks had not materialised during the coalition; this was a myth. If this had

been the case the Trussell Trust would not have existed, who had been present during Labour's administration. She was sorry that people found themselves in the position of needing to visit foodbanks.

- b) Councillor Topping stated that she was concerned about the visiting market booking the prime spaces on Watford High Street for the key Christmas period. Regular stallholders had contacted her with their worries. They had built up a trade over many months and would now be moved during a vital trading period. She asked the Mayor about the loyalty for the town's stallholders who had supported the market. She questioned whether it would be prudent to locate the Christmas market near the proposed ice rink; this would create a festive theme and allow the loyal stallholders to remain in their current location.

The Mayor clarified that it was the outdoor day stalls that had been asked to move. It was unfortunate that unintentionally the story in the Watford Observer read as though the disruption would affect the main market, located off The Parade. She emphasised that only the day stalls would be affected. She considered Mr Hickman, who ran the fruit and vegetable stall, to be the only one who could be considered as a loyal trader. His stall would be moving to the fly over where he had been at the beginning. She felt that the decision to allow him to trade outside the main market had been part of the reason the market had not been as successful as it could have been. Markets needed their fruit and vegetable stalls, fishmongers and the other regular stalls. Another trader had an indoor and outdoor stall. She did not recognise the other day stalls as loyal traders. They had only recently started coming; they were able to come as and when they wanted. They were all businesses. She had received letters complaining about the day stalls and that they paid less than the regular traders in the main market. She did not feel the Council had any loyalty to the day stalls other than the fruit and vegetable stall.

The Mayor referred to Councillor Topping's suggestion that the Christmas market should be located near the ice rink. The organisers of the German market knew their business. They had visited and had said they would come to the town on condition that they could be located in that part of The Parade. She reminded Council that a festive market was good and that there were other towns who would want the opportunity to host a festive market. The aim was to support the regular market and its loyal traders, who had stayed through 'thick and thin'. The market would be in the best place where it would get the best trade.

- c) Councillor Silver made reference to Charter Place, which was included in the Mayor's report. He understood that work was due to start imminently. However, he had heard through the press that there would be delays as the contract with the original developer had fallen through. He asked if the Mayor could give assurance that the development would start on schedule and if she was able to advise who had been awarded the contract.

The Mayor advised that Intu was responsible for the management of their contractors. The Council was aware that there had been issues. She asked officers to provide an update.

The Head of Democracy and Governance informed the Mayor and Council that on Tuesday she had sealed the general vesting declarations. They would be served on the requisite businesses and advised when they needed to vacate the premises. The documents would be available from Thursday in the Customer Service Centre for public inspection. The leaseholders and owner occupiers would be notified. Intu had given the Council clear instructions to progress the Compulsory Purchase Orders, as they intended to start the works by the middle of November. She had asked that Members were provided with an update on Charter Place.

The Managing Director confirmed that some of the demolition works would commence towards the end of the calendar year and major development would start in the Spring. Intu had appointed a new contractor to construct the new Charter Place, but due to commercial negotiations they were unable to make the details public.

The Mayor reminded Council that Major Projects Board would be monitoring progress. She said that people spoke to her about Charter Place and that it was 'in a mess'. She had to remind them that a new one was going to be built, sometimes they seemed to be unaware of the new scheme.

- d) Councillor Rogers stated he also wished to congratulate the Mayor on her peerage. In the future the town would have three prominent politicians in the House of Lords, the Mayor, Baroness Brinton and the Right Honourable Lord Garel-Jones.

Councillor Rogers stated that Woodside residents in Weall Green and Louvain Way had problems with mobile phone masts. In 2011 a large mast was erected and then in 2014 an illegal mast was placed next to the original. These were next to a children's play area. It showed a clear trend of an industry pushing for larger and more powerful masts regardless of local residents. He had noted it was proposed that the Council introduced a Tall Buildings Policy. He welcomed it and asked

that all masts should be referred to it. This would enable the Council to have more control over these tall and often inappropriately sited structures. He asked the Mayor to support this proposal.

The Mayor explained that although she wished she could support the suggestion, masts had permitted development rights. There had been a change in government guidance and operators were required to show they had considered other locations. She recalled being a member of Development Control when masts had been a major issue. There were not many more masts. The majority of people had a mobile phone and they were in use 24 hours of the day. In her opinion it was more about the location of the masts and whether they were in keeping with the neighbourhood. There was no proven evidence of harm to people caused by the masts. She felt it was necessary to consider the best location. In areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty they had been disguised as trees and other ingenious disguises. She wished the Council had more authority over their location. Some of the companies spoke to officers about intended locations for their masts.

The Mayor suggested that he should be more worried about some of the proposed legislation which extended permitted development rights. There were also plans to bypass local authorities in some planning decisions, including in the new Housing Bill. She assured Members that the Council did try to discuss masts with the operators and find the best location.

- e) Councillor Bashir also offered the Mayor his congratulations on her peerage and her appointment to the Liberal Democrat shadow front bench.

Councillor Bashir advised that his question related to the announcement of the permanent closure of the Watford Custody Suite. Detainees and suspects from Watford and surrounding areas would have to be taken to Hatfield or Stevenage. There would be a significant impact on the resources of front line officers, who would be diverted away from day time and night time duties in Watford, particularly the Town Centre in the evening. He asked the Mayor if she recognised the potential negative impact on law and order in Watford and whether she had spoken with partner agencies about this decision.

The Mayor responded that she was not aware that the decision was for the permanent closure. She suggested that the Community Safety Partnership Task Group made its views clear about the matter. She had made her views clear and was not aware it was a permanent decision. She advised that she would report back to Members with further information.

- f) Councillor Bell asked the Mayor if she agreed that all groups within the Council should send a united message to County Councillor Terry Douris, Executive member for Highways and Waste Management, and the County Council asking for the abandonment of the one-way trial in Vicarage Road. It affected the whole of Watford and not just his ward. At the recent Highways Liaison Meeting all those present agreed the scheme should be abandoned immediately. This would benefit the whole of Watford.

The Mayor commented that she could recall a similar scheme in her road. She said that any change to traffic threw everyone into chaos. She had spoken to County Councillor Douris on several occasions. She advised Council that the County Councillor had suggested it should be a trial as originally officers had wanted it to be a permanent scheme. Currently the County Council was trying to collect data. She had made her views clear. The situation appeared to have settled down since the initial problems. She had travelled to West Watford during this morning's rush hour and it had taken 17 minutes. The data was required for Croxley Rail Link and the station. She believed it was clear that this was not a permanent solution. County Councillor Douris had got the message. It had been anticipated that there would be problems, however officers wanted to see what the impact would be on the area. She said that it had been good to see all Councillors working together. She expected the trial would continue for a while longer, but not until February.

- g) Councillor Dhindsa commented that the hospital was in special measures which was due to the lack of funding from the coalition government and the current government. There was no funding in place for a new hospital. Watford might have a health campus without a new hospital. He asked if the Mayor thought it was still worth pursuing the use of the allotments or whether they should be allowed to remain.

The Mayor responded that the opposite was true. She strongly believed that when the hospital consultation had been completed, it would not only be desirable to include the allotments in the scheme, it would be necessary. The Council had not pursued this route because it was against allotments. The administration had looked at the hospital's real estate and the huge funding required to bring the hospital up to modern standards. It was recognised that the hospital would require land to decant and move.

The Mayor said she refuted Labour's utopia. Labour gave the impression that everything was wonderful during Labour's government. Watford Hospital had suffered from under-funding

for many years. The Labour Government had introduced Private Finance Initiative (PFI) and this was the only way hospitals could get funding. Hospitals had to have foundation status to be able to get PFI. The problems occurring in Watford Hospital did not happen over a few years; successive governments had been responsible. She refuted the initial premise and was sure that the allotments would be required for the hospital.

- h) Councillor J Brown asked the Mayor if she could explain the current progress of the market.

The Mayor stated that everyone was concerned about the market. She reminded Members that previously the town had had a failing market. It had been a difficult process understanding the right type of market for Watford and what people wanted. She thought the situation was improving and had advised the management company that the Council wanted to see improvements by Christmas. Occupancy rates were good. It had been Town and Country Markets' decision to allow some traders to use the units for storage, which meant the units were always closed. Currently there were eight empty units, of which five were under negotiation. Today there were more applicants than empty units. Most stallholders had been renewing their leases.

The Mayor informed Council that the footfall counters showed that there were 10,000 movements through the market every week. The wrap around the food court would be starting soon; providing a windshield effect. The colourful wrap would be installed after Christmas as it had been decided not to disrupt trade during the Christmas trading period. New graphics had been added to the containers making them brighter. The Council had asked the management company to get tougher with the day stalls, for example waste dispersal. The Mayor commented that she believed that the Council would never be able to please those people who wanted the old style market in its old location. She did receive correspondence from people who liked the New Watford Market. She recognised that she would not be able to please all of the people all of the time.

- i) Councillor Walford asked the Mayor if she could provide an update on the Business Improvement District (BID) ballot.

The Mayor commented that as Councillors they all knew what they had to do to get the electorate out to vote. The ballot had been a learning curve for staff. She had warned them at a Town Centre Partnership meeting that it would be like an election. They had learnt to canvass and had spoken to every business to try and persuade them of the value of a BID. All major towns and cities had a BID. They would be continuing to remind

businesses to vote. They had so far had a 30% response rate. This was on a par with a local election and they were hoping this would increase to nearer a general election turnout.

- j) Councillor Mehta congratulated the Mayor on her peerage and appointment to the Liberal Democrat's shadow Cabinet. She was proud of another lady from Watford sitting in the House of Lords.

Councillor Mehta said that she was on the Palace Theatre Committee, which was organising Diwali on the Parade and Diwali at the Palace, taking place next Sunday. She asked her fellow councillors to encourage their residents to attend and support the events.

Councillor Dhindsa stated that Diwali was celebrated by various faith groups.

The Mayor responded that it did not matter what faith people held, everyone would have a good time and they would enjoy the event. The event was community-led. Initially there was nervousness about taking the event out of the theatre and on to the street, as there was uncertainty how people would respond. The result was the public responded brilliantly. The nicest part was when the young people processed with their lanterns. After the event she had received the odd email questioning why the event had taken place. She had no hesitation in responding that it was a community event for all the community.

The Mayor added that if there were any other faith groups who wanted to use the space for a celebration they could approach the Council. It was a community space. It was also used by the Muslim group for the start of their march they held.

The Mayor informed Council that part of the conditions of the Palace Theatre grant was that they needed to provide more outreach work and to work with the ethnic minority communities.

- k) Councillor Haley said that his question was a follow up to the earlier question about the BID ballot. At the previous meeting he had asked whether the Council would provide extra support to the approach roads to the Town Centre, including Queens Road and Market Street. He asked whether the Mayor could provide any further information on any actions for those areas.

The Mayor advised that until the current BID had been secured there would not be any further work for the other areas. She added that Queens Road had been excluded for the first BID as it largely comprised independent retailers and if agreed they would be required to pay an additional sum. It was also

necessary to consider if the work being undertaken would encourage additional footfall into the town. In other places it had often been the case that the initial area had spread. When re-ballots had been held the original area had expanded. Queens Road was a neighbourhood centre and was recognised as that. She was aware of the Councillor's concerns for the area.

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

No questions had been received.

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

No questions had been received.

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

No petitions had been received.

41 **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.

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

Council was informed that four motions had been received.

- 1) The following motion was 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.”

Councillor S Williams moved the following amendment, seconded by Councillor Joynes –

“3f) Council also notes the negative impact that the bedroom tax has had on the most vulnerable in our society, including the young, elderly and the disabled.”

Councillor Johnson accepted the amendment for inclusion in the original motion.

Members debated the substantive motion.

On being put to Council the substantive motion was AGREED.

RESOLVED –

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.
  - f) Council also notes the negative impact that the bedroom tax has had on the most vulnerable in our society, including the young, elderly and the disabled.
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.
- 2) Prior to the meeting, Councillor Rindl, the mover of the motion printed in the agenda, and the Liberal Democrat Group agreed an amendment with Councillor Haley and the Labour Group.

The following motion was proposed by Councillor Rindl and seconded by Councillor Haley –

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

Watford 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.

- 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.”

Members then debated the motion.

On being put to Council the motion was AGREED.

RESOLVED –

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

Watford 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.

- 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.

3) The following motion was 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 ‘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 1<sup>st</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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.”

Councillor Sharpe moved the following motion, seconded by Mayor Thornhill –

“Delete all and insert

Council notes the recent Care Quality Commission’s 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
- untrained staff were assessing and directing the care of A and E arrivals,
- facilities were in such a bad state of repair that they “caused a potential risk to staff and visitors, and
- 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
- there was low morale across the hospital.

The Council recognises that:

- The shocking state of the hospital is a major concern for Watford residents and all local NHS patients.
- There have been ongoing problems with the management and finances of the Trust dating back at least as far as the ‘Weak’ rating in 2007 for the Trust’s use of resources and quality of service. 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 1<sup>st</sup> October 2015).
- Staff have highlighted poor working facilities within the hospital (staff survey results 2014) that are in urgent need of investment and modernisation.

- There has been significant investment over the last five years in improving facilities at the hospital, including:
  - £16 million committed to the new link road from Dalton Way to improve access to the hospital
  - the new birthing centre, ambulatory care unit, and elderly care unit
  - the new Tudor ward in Shrodells.

But there is still a significant shortfall in funding.

- The Care Quality Commission recognised outstanding care in children and young people's services, as well as 'many examples of kindness and compassion shown by staff across all the wards and department areas'.
- The Council has worked and will continue to work in partnership with the Trust to develop the Watford Health Campus to facilitate the Trust to be able to develop flexible plans for either new buildings or improvements to existing Trust premises on the Health Campus site.

Council reaffirms its support for and commitment to:

- the creation of a modern hospital in Watford, with first-class buildings and facilities, which is financially solvent, well-managed and provides consistently high-quality healthcare.
- working in partnership with the hospital trust's new management to provide assistance in improving the performance and facilities of the hospital.

Council:

Acknowledges that the Trust has been underfunded for many years

- and calls on the Mayor to write to the Secretary of State, requesting the government to fully fund the rebuilding and modernisation of Watford General Hospital within the health campus site, and to provide sufficient funding to ensure the trust can deliver the level of staffing and facilities to create a safe level of service, as detailed proposals emerge from West Herts Hospital Trust's clinical strategy."

Members then debated the original motion and amendment.

On being put to Council the amendment was AGREED.

On being put to Council the substantive motion was AGREED.

RESOLVED –

Council notes the recent Care Quality Commission's 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
- untrained staff were assessing and directing the care of A and E arrivals,
- facilities were in such a bad state of repair that they "caused a potential risk to staff and visitors, and
- 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
- there was low morale across the hospital.

The Council recognises that:

- The shocking state of the hospital is a major concern for Watford residents and all local NHS patients.
- There have been ongoing problems with the management and finances of the Trust dating back at least as far as the 'Weak' rating in 2007 for the Trust's use of resources and quality of service. 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 1<sup>st</sup> October 2015).
- Staff have highlighted poor working facilities within the hospital (staff survey results 2014) that are in urgent need of investment and modernisation.
- There has been significant investment over the last five years in improving facilities at the hospital, including:
  - £16 million committed to the new link road from Dalton Way to improve access to the hospital
  - the new birthing centre, ambulatory care unit, and elderly care unit

- the new Tudor ward in Shrodells.

But there is still a significant shortfall in funding.

- The Care Quality Commission recognised outstanding care in children and young people's services, as well as 'many examples of kindness and compassion shown by staff across all the wards and department areas'.
- The Council has worked and will continue to work in partnership with the Trust to develop the Watford Health Campus to facilitate the Trust to be able to develop flexible plans for either new buildings or improvements to existing Trust premises on the Health Campus site.

Council reaffirms its support for and commitment to:

- the creation of a modern hospital in Watford, with first-class buildings and facilities, which is financially solvent, well-managed and provides consistently high-quality healthcare.
- working in partnership with the hospital trust's new management to provide assistance in improving the performance and facilities of the hospital.

Council:

Acknowledges that the Trust has been underfunded for many years

- and calls on the Mayor to write to the Secretary of State, requesting the government to fully fund the rebuilding and modernisation of Watford General Hospital within the health campus site, and to provide sufficient funding to ensure the trust can deliver the level of staffing and facilities to create a safe level of service, as detailed proposals emerge from West Herts Hospital Trust's clinical strategy."

- 4) This motion was withdrawn as part of it had been incorporated in the second motion shown above, as moved by Councillor Rindl and seconded by Councillor Haley.

43

#### **WAIVING OF COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 8.0**

The Chairman moved that Council Procedure Rule 8.0 be waived to allow the meeting to finish at 11.00pm

On being put to the meeting the motion was declared to be  
CARRIED

44

#### **BOUNDARY REVIEW REPORT**

Council received a report of the Head of Democracy and Governance including Local Government Boundary Commission's draft proposals on warding patterns for Watford, the Council's earlier submission and details of the political groups' proposals.

A draft composite motion was circulated to Members prior to the start of the meeting. It replaced those put forward in appendices 3 (Proposal 1), 4 and 5 of the report attached to the agenda. It read as follows –

“Draft composite motion to replace those put forward in Appendices 3 (Proposal 1), 4 and 5

1. We have studied and looked at the proposals by the Local Government Boundary Commission into the changes of Watford Borough in detail.
2. We acknowledge that the report has put forward some proposals to deal with the inequality in the Stanborough ward. There was a proposal, by the Local Government Boundary Commission to move some areas from the Meriden ward to the Stanborough ward.
3. We disagree with the proposals put forward by the commission which stated;

“We note that it is not possible to transfer electors to Stanborough from any other wards because of the very strong boundary of North Western Avenue. We are therefore including the Kytes Drive area of Meriden ward in our Stanborough ward. Although there was some objection to this, our tour of the area suggested that this area has good access to Stanborough ward and would improve electoral equality in Stanborough. Including this area in the Stanborough ward would worsen electoral equality in the Meriden ward to 7% fewer electors than the borough average by 2020, but improve it to 4% fewer in Stanborough.” (p.13 Watford Draft Recommendations.)

4. In looking at the recommendation by the commission, we feel that this is not the right way of resolving any inequality within the Stanborough ward.
5. In our view the Commission's proposal of linking the Kytes Drive area to Stanborough ward is more problematic than other proposed alternatives. It leads to a very unusual configuration of Stanborough ward, in a figure of eight shape, linked only by the narrowest of corridors. There will be a strong sense of the Kytes Drive area being severed from the rest of Stanborough ward, virtually a separate enclave. This area has strong community

links to Meriden ward, most notably through the shared boundary onto Garston Park.

Given that it does not make sense based on community, geographical grounds nor having a logical boundary this proposal seems to be solely based on Electoral inequality. In this case the benefit (two wards being at a variance rather than one but the total variance remaining constant) seems to be outweighed by the costs.

6. Accordingly, we would encourage the Commission to amend its proposal in such a way as to retain the Kytes Drive/Coates Way area in Meriden ward. This might be done by:
  - retaining the current boundary between Meriden and Stanborough wards, or
  - adjusting the boundary to include some or all properties on the eastern side of St Albans Road as per the attached map and table (as shown in Appendix 3 proposal 1 of council agenda) or
  - other boundary adjustment identified by the Commission or proposed to them.

This proposal has the unanimous support of all three political groups represented on Watford Council.”

On being put to Council the composite motion was AGREED.

On being put to Council the Liberal Democrat’s Proposal 2, as shown in Appendix 3 to the report was AGREED.

RESOLVED –

1. We have studied and looked at the proposals by the Local Government Boundary Commission into the changes of Watford Borough in detail.
2. We acknowledge that the report has put forward some proposals to deal with the inequality in the Stanborough ward. There was a proposal, by the Local Government Boundary Commission to move some areas from the Meriden ward to the Stanborough ward.
3. We disagree with the proposals put forward by the commission which stated;

“We note that it is not possible to transfer electors to Stanborough from any other wards because of the very strong boundary of North Western Avenue. We are therefore including the Kytes Drive area of Meriden ward in our Stanborough ward. Although there was some objection to this, our tour of the area

suggested that this area has good access to Stanborough ward and would improve electoral equality in Stanborough. Including this area in the Stanborough ward would worsen electoral equality in the Meriden ward to 7% fewer electors than the borough average by 2020, but improve it to 4% fewer in Stanborough.” (p.13 Watford Draft Recommendations.)

4. In looking at the recommendation by the commission, we feel that this is not the right way of resolving any inequality within the Stanborough ward.
5. In our view the Commission’s proposal of linking the Kytes Drive area to Stanborough ward is more problematic than other proposed alternatives. It leads to a very unusual configuration of Stanborough ward, in a figure of eight shape, linked only by the narrowest of corridors. There will be a strong sense of the Kytes Drive area being severed from the rest of Stanborough ward, virtually a separate enclave. This area has strong community links to Meriden ward, most notably through the shared boundary onto Garston Park.

Given that it does not make sense based on community, geographical grounds nor having a logical boundary this proposal seems to be solely based on Electoral inequality. In this case the benefit (two wards being at a variance rather than one but the total variance remaining constant) seems to be outweighed by the costs.

6. Accordingly, we would encourage the Commission to amend its proposal in such a way as to retain the Kytes Drive/Coates Way area in Meriden ward. This might be done by:
  - retaining the current boundary between Meriden and Stanborough wards, or
  - adjusting the boundary to include some or all properties on the eastern side of St Albans Road as per the attached map and table (as shown in Appendix 3 proposal 1 of council agenda) or
  - other boundary adjustment identified by the Commission or proposed to them.'
7. Retain all of Greenbank Road in Nascot ward. (proposal 2 in Appendix 3)

45

## **ADDITION TO CAPITAL PROGRAMME - WATFORD BUSINESS PARK**

Council received a report of the Managing Director seeking approval for an addition to the capital investment programme of £800,000 for the next phase of implementing the Watford Business Park redevelopment.

RESOLVED –

that an addition of £800,000 to the capital investment programme for 2015/16, subject to business cases being made for each lease acquisition, be approved.

46 **ANNUAL REPORT OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY IN WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL 2014/15**

Council received a report of the Committee and Scrutiny Officer including the Annual Report of Overview and Scrutiny Committee in Watford Borough Council 2014/15.

RESOLVED –

that the Annual Report of Overview and Scrutiny in Watford Borough Council 2014/15 be noted.

47 **NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM ANNUAL REPORT 2014/15**

Council received a report of the Committee and Scrutiny Officer including the annual reports for 11 Neighbourhood Forums.

RESOLVED –

that the annual report, provided as Appendix 2 to the report, be noted.

Chairman

The Meeting started at 7.30 pm  
and finished at 10.50 pm