

CABINET

5 December 2016

- Present: Mayor (Chair)
Councillors P Taylor, K Collett, S Johnson, I Sharpe and M Watkin
- Also present: Councillor Bell (Labour)
Councillor Cavinder (agenda item 54)
Councillor Hastrick
- Officers: Managing Director
Shared Director of Finance
Head of Democracy and Governance
Client Manager - Waste and Recycling
Committee and Scrutiny Officer (agenda item 54)
Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer (IM)

50 **Apologies for Absence**

No apologies were received.

51 **Disclosure of Interest (if any)**

There were no disclosures of interest.

52 **Minutes of previous meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 November 2016 were submitted and signed.

53 **Conduct of meeting**

Councillor Bell spoke on behalf of the Labour group.

Neighbourhood Forum Task Group - Final report

Cabinet received a report of the Committee and Scrutiny Officer, including the final report and recommendations of the Neighbourhood Forum Task Group.

Councillor Cavinder, Chair of the task group, attended the meeting and introduced the report. Councillor Cavinder explained that the cross-party task group had been asked to review the operation of Neighbourhood Forums, particularly the use of Neighbourhood Forum budgets. During its investigations, the task group had sought information about historic spend since 2011, how other local authorities carried out similar schemes and had canvassed the views of all councillors using a survey.

Welcoming the task group's report, the Mayor questioned the rationale behind the recommendation to increase the funds available to each ward from £2,500 to £3,000 per annum. Councillor Cavinder explained that it had been felt that the amount had not been increased for some time and that the higher amount would be easier to distribute in split wards.

Councillor Watkin welcomed the proposal to introduce a more formal procedure for gaining feedback from funding recipients. In a further clarification from Councillor Cavinder, it was explained that this proposal had received strong support from the task group and could provide greater clarity about the benefits of the funds to local communities.

The meeting considered the proposal to pool funds at a certain point in the year. Councillor Bell commented that there were some reservations amongst councillors about this idea. Councillor Cavinder explained that the recommendation was only to consider the feasibility of the proposal at this stage. The driver had been to prevent funds being lost; under current arrangements, towards the end of the financial year wards sometimes opted to allocate tranches of money to, often larger, charities. Agreeing that it was important that the funds should benefit smaller, grass roots groups, the Mayor queried whether it might be possible for budgets to be carried over to the next financial year.

Councillor Sharpe considered that the task group had addressed a number of fundamental issues, and had agreed some useful recommendations, including the proposal to rename and relaunch Neighbourhood Forums. However, there remained some questions to be resolved, particularly around the information required from councillors in the processing and completion of funding applications. Concurring with this point, Councillor Taylor suggested that councillors should play a central part in deciding how to progress recommendations e, f and g of the officer's report [concerning the review of the

guidelines, the feasibility of pooling funds after a certain date and of requiring recipients to apply for funds directly].

Drawing discussions to a close, the Mayor thanked Councillor Cavinder for his chairmanship of the task group. She proposed that a small working group be convened to consider the task group's recommendations in more detail. This should comprise the Mayor, Councillor Collett and the Head of Democracy and Governance, together with the chair of the Neighbourhood Forum Task Group, Councillor Cavinder.

RESOLVED

That Cabinet approves the formation of a small working group, comprising the Mayor, Councillor Collett and the Head of Democracy and Governance, together with the chair of the Neighbourhood Forum Task Group, Councillor Cavinder, to consider the task group's recommendations.

55

Community Infrastructure Levy Annual Report 2015-16

Cabinet received a report of the Planning Policy Section Head detailing Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) receipts and expenditure from the previous financial year. CIL regulations required Watford Borough Council to prepare a report detailing this information, which should be published on the Council's website by 31 December each year.

Councillor Sharpe introduced the report, explaining that the receipts for the period 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016 were modest. Collections for the current year (2016-17) were expected to be higher. Councillor Sharpe drew Cabinet's attention to the proposal to transfer £8,013 towards the administrative costs of operating the CIL regime and retain the remaining sum of £152,262 for the Metropolitan Line Extension – a priority for the development of Watford.

The Managing Director confirmed that Watford Borough Council had made a commitment to use £5.85 million of CIL funds and other developer contributions to support delivery of the Metropolitan Line Extension. This decision had been approved by Cabinet previously.

The Mayor commented that there was a need to consider infrastructure provision and congestion issues across the town. This should inform HCC's Hertfordshire Transport Vision 2050 strategy.

RESOLVED

That Cabinet:

1. endorses the Regulation 62 (Community Infrastructure Regulations 2010 (as amended)) CIL Annual Report 2015-2016 contained in Appendix 1 and agrees for it to be published on the Council's website;
2. agrees that future Regulation 62 (Community Infrastructure Regulations 2010 (as amended)) CIL Annual reports be delegated for approval by the Deputy Managing Director in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Development;
3. endorses transfer of £8,012 towards the administrative costs of operating the CIL regime into the Regeneration and Development budget and that the Council retains the remaining sum of £152,262 to be set aside towards the Metropolitan Line Extension.

56

Ombudsman's Decision

Cabinet received the report of the Head of Democracy and Governance regarding a final Decision of the Local Government Ombudsman in a matter relating to incorrect information on the Council's website about small business rate relief. The Council's Monitoring Officer was legally obliged to make a report to Cabinet of any finding by the Local Government Ombudsman of maladministration.

The Head of Democracy and Governance introduced the report, explaining that the Council had accepted the Ombudsman's findings in full. The complainant was only required to pay the business rates sum as advertised erroneously on the Council's website.

It was confirmed that as a result of this incident, the process for publishing, changing and maintaining revenues and benefits information on the council's website had been reviewed and improved. This should ensure that a similar case would not be brought in the future.

RESOLVED

That Cabinet notes the Ombudsman's decision.

57

Exclusion of press & Public

RESOLVED

That under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business as it is likely, in the view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the public were present during consideration of the item there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in Section 100(1) Schedule 12A of the Act for the reasons stated in the report.

58 Update on Recyclable Material Consortium Contract

The Client Manager – Waste and Recycling introduced the report and responded to questions from Cabinet.

RESOLVED

That the recommendation be agreed.

Mayor

The Meeting started at 7.00 pm
and finished at 7.35 pm