

COUNCIL

21 March 2017

Present: Councillor D Walford (Chairman)
The Mayor (Dorothy Thornhill)
Councillors D Barks, S Bashir, N Bell, S Bolton, S Cavinder,
K Collett, J Connal, K Crout, J Dhindsa, A Dychton, A Grimston,
K Hastrick, M Hofman, J Johnson, S Johnson, P Kent, Ahsan Khan,
Asif Khan, R Laird, J Maestas, R Martins, B Mauthoor, A Rindl,
G Saffery, D Scudder, I Sharpe, N Steele, P Taylor, M Turmaine,
M Watkin and T Williams

Also present: Mavis Tyrwhitt and Norman Tyrwhitt, Freemen of the
Borough

Officers: Managing Director
Head of Democracy and Governance
Deputy Managing Director and Director of Place Shaping and
Corporate Performance
Communications and Engagement Section Head
Democratic Services Manager
Mayor's Political Assistant
Committee and Scrutiny Officer

61 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Fahmy, Mills and Shah.

62 **Disclosure of Interests**

There were no disclosures of interest.

63 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 January 2017 were submitted and signed.

64 **Official Announcements**

Chairman's Charity Quiz

The Chairman informed council that his charity quiz had been very successful. There had been 80 participants and they had raised over £700 for his charities.

Civic reception

The Chairman announced that he would be holding a civic reception on Friday 5 May at West Herts Golf Club. He advised that invitations would be sent out shortly.

65

Mayor's Report

First of all the Mayor wished to thank the Chairman, Councillor Walford, for being a great Chairman during the year. He had kept all members in order. She felt the tone of the chair helped set the tone of the meetings and this was appreciated. The number of fellow Mayors and Chairman at the quiz showed how popular the Chairman and his consort were with everyone.

The Chairman thanked the Mayor for her comments and added that he would not have been able to do the role without the support of his wife, Tanya.

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 Bell, Saffery, Turmaine, Laird and Asif Khan indicated that they wished to ask questions.

- a) Councillor Bell asked whether she agreed with him that with the cross party support for the Metropolitan Line Extension, the Conservative Government should find the extra money needed for this project. It was vitally important for the employment and growth in Watford.

The Mayor responded that there was a short answer which was 'yes'. There was another answer which was slightly longer. There had been a change of administration since the scheme had started. Boris Johnson had worked well with the government and she felt promises had been made that Transport for London would absorb any increased costs. She had thought this was good, but was unsure she could have made that commitment. She said it was important to give Mayor Khan his due, as he had come into office and questioned the commitment to pick up the extra costs. She added that it was not a secret the relationship between the Department of Transport and the London Mayor was not good.

The Mayor commented that she considered the amount of money in question was relatively small in comparison to the full cost of the scheme. She felt the scheme would continue.

The Mayor said it was essential that all parties put pressure on their respective contacts. The Mayor had met with Richard Harrington MP and he was doing everything he could for the scheme. She had also spoken to Caroline Pidgeon who was respected at Transport for London for her stance on transport. The Mayor informed council that a professional lobbying organisation had been commissioned to work on behalf of the funding partners who had put money into the scheme. All businesses were concerned about the delay in the scheme and she had received an email earlier that day from Travis Perkins, who expressed their concerns. The county council was also concerned. A coalition was being formed around the line to make sure that the London Mayor and Secretary of State for Transport Chris Grayling MP were clear that there should be no backtracking on the scheme.

- b) Councillor Saffery said that observers of social media may be aware that Watford Momentum had been encouraging its members to sign a petition to move the town's hospital from its current site at Vicarage Road. He asked the Mayor if she could reassure council that the hospital services were safe from this kind of threat, whether or not it was adopted by the opposition.

The Mayor stated that the Liberal Democrat Group was not sure where the opposition stood with regards to the hospital. When people saw Labour Momentum encouraging people to sign the Conservative MP for Hemel's petition, which required the hospital to be moved out of the town, there was a problem.

The Mayor informed council that the situation with regard to the hospital was clear. Acute services would be staying in Watford. More community services would be introduced in the localities. More services would be going to St Albans where there would be some rationalisation. She felt that it was time that all parties were behind the plans. The allotments were gone and the Mayor asked that everyone put this matter behind them. She asked that everyone acknowledged that the council had made land available for the hospital to enable the Trust's plans to be put in place. The Hospital Trust would not be able to say there was no land available to it.

The Mayor said that it was time everyone heard from Labour with their views about the hospital and that the past should be put behind everyone. It was important that everyone was behind the plans to ensure that the town did not have to wait another 10 years.

The Chairman agreed that on this particular occasion Councillor Bell, the Labour Group Leader, could respond to the Mayor.

Councillor Bell replied that he was unaware of the Momentum campaign. He was able to state that Watford Labour Party had always been supportive of the hospital staying in Watford. In 1998/99 the 'Save our hospital' campaign was started by Claire Ward, the MP at that time. He could not recall the Mayor or other Liberal Democrat councillors at that campaign. It had always been the Watford Labour Party's position that the Watford hospital should stay in West Watford.

The Mayor responded that a property in Westland Road still had a Liberal Democrat poster in their window for the 'Save our hospital' campaign.

- c) Councillor Turmaine stated that his question was about campaigning. He referred to Liberal Democrat leaflets that included comments on the Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn. He said that the same media sources also included references to the Liberal Democrat leader Tim Farron. He asked the Mayor what her party leader had against gay people.

The Mayor said that she would not respond by referring to any of the Labour members' previous political lives. People's religious convictions could change and evolve. Tim Farron had religious convictions. He had not faked it. He had always been honest about his views. She reminded councillors that it had been a Liberal Democrat MP, Lynne Featherstone, who had taken the equal marriage legislation through Parliament.

- d) Councillor Laird referred to the £6 million investment to build modular housing. Representatives in the housing industry said that this would be the future of housing; a way to develop affordable housing in volume. The first site would be in Balmoral Road. He asked the Mayor if she felt this would make a meaningful contribution towards solving the housing crisis.

The Mayor reminded council that there was a housing crisis, in particular a crisis in temporary accommodation. It was not good that families had to be put up in hotels or hostels and at the worst they could be placed outside the borough. In the past the council had approximately 50 or 54 families in temporary accommodation; the normal level now was in the region of 250 families. There was no sign of this decreasing. It would be remiss of the council if it was not preparing for an increase in supply. She was aware that some councillors questioned the building of modular housing rather than permanent houses. The reason was that the accommodation was quick and it was needed now. The sooner people could be moved from unsatisfactory temporary accommodation the better. She knew that some councillors were concerned about the quality of the buildings, however if they visited the Building Research Establishment they would see that the

quality had massively improved. She understood that Mayor Khan saw it as a massive contribution towards London's accommodation crisis. It was important to increase the supply now. They would not be built in large monolithic blocks. The council had opted for the best quality, which had a lifespan of 80 years. It was felt important to spend money on the accommodation. Families currently had to stay in temporary accommodation far longer than in the past.

The Mayor said that both parties on the council should be pushing the government for more affordable and social housing.

- e) Councillor Asif Khan referred to the repair of potholes by the county council and Hertfordshire Highways. He noted that the contractor appeared to have thrown tarmac over some potholes, including covering a drain in Vicarage Road. He asked the Mayor whether she would join him in asking Ringway and Hertfordshire Highways to 'get their act together'.

The Mayor responded that if he spoke to county officers, County Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst pressed them over this subject. The Liberal Democrat group had strongly opposed the continuation of the contract being awarded to Ringway. They had been shocked when the contract had been awarded to the company. The Mayor commented that the state of the roads were bad across the county and not just in Watford. Both parties may need to put pressure on the county council's administration. The Mayor referred to the county council's method of dividing up the highways budget amongst the county councillors. She was unsure if a review had been carried out to see if this was working or it had got worse. This was an area the county council should look at in the near future.

66 Questions by Members of the Council under Council Procedure Rule 10.0

No questions had been received.

67 Questions by Members of the Public under Council Procedure Rule 11.0

No questions had been received.

68 Petitions presented under Council Procedure Rule 12.0

No petitions had been received.

69 **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.

70 **To approve Watford Borough Council's Corporate Plan 2020 (update 2017)**

Council received a report that had been considered at Cabinet on 6 March 2017. The minutes of the meeting were attached.

Members debated the report.

RESOLVED –

1. that the Corporate Plan 2020 be approved.
2. that council notes the corporate work programme within the plan will underpin service plans and staff's individual work programmes as set out in their annual performance development reviews.
3. that council notes the corporate work programme set out in the plan will be monitored through the year.

71 **To submit the Local Plan Part 2 - Site Allocations and Development Management Policies for examination**

Councillor Sharpe informed members that he was asking council to agree to withdraw the item on the Local Plan Part 2. The council had to consider whether to continue with the Local Plan or move straight to a review of the Core Strategy. He outlined further reasons for suggesting that the council should not proceed with Local Plan 2, which included the government's proposed changes in the Housing White paper. There was also the potential cost of a planning inquiry, which would be a six-figure sum. The council needed to take stock of the best way forward. Cabinet and Planning Policy Advisory Group would be kept informed of any changes.

The Chairman stated that he was proposing that the item should not be debated. The matter would be monitored by Planning Policy Advisory Group.

RESOLVED –

that the item to consider the Local Plan Part 2 be withdrawn.

Motions submitted under Council Procedure Rule 13.0

Council was informed that three motions had been received.

1) The following motion was proposed by Councillor Rabi Martins and seconded by Councillor Jackie Connal

“Council recognises that this is the 10th Anniversary of the Town’s status as a Fairtrade Town and wishes to record its thanks to all those who have helped promote and ensure extensive access to products displaying the Fairtrade Mark in our local shops and other establishments

Council further notes that supporting Fairtrade helps Watford enhance its reputation as a place that actively seeks to ensure that producers of goods from developing countries sold in the town get a fair price for their goods and labour. Council believes this is not only the right thing to do but that it also enhances the town’s reputation as a family friendly town both here and abroad, particularly in the producer countries

The Council therefore resolves to:

- Continue to promote the sale and purchase of Fairtrade Products in the town
- Improve the awareness amongst local people of the impact on children, adults and families of producers around the world which results from unfair pricing for their goods and services
- Persuade those responsible for purchasing and supplying goods that Fairtrade creates significant opportunities for all and is good for sustainable development.
- Keep the Council’s procurement policies under review : and encourage the purchase and use of products from Fairtrade suppliers whenever possible
- Encourage its partners and other agencies it works closely with to promote the use of Fairtrade products by its suppliers and users of their services
- Continue to promote Watford as a Fairtrade Town through the Fairtrade Steering Committee and Support Group such that Fairtrade issues and practices remain high on the agenda all businesses, commercial organisations and voluntary organisations.

Council also calls on our local M.P. Richard Harrington to urge the Secretary of State for International Trade, Liam Fox to make it easier for developing countries who rely on Fairtrade to sell higher value products to the UK.”

Members debated the motion.

On being put to council the motion was AGREED.

RESOLVED –

that Council recognises that this is the 10th Anniversary of the Town's status as a Fairtrade Town and wishes to record its thanks to all those who have helped promote and ensure extensive access to products displaying the Fairtrade Mark in our local shops and other establishments

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Council also calls on our local M.P. Richard Harrington to urge the Secretary of State for International Trade, Liam Fox to make it easier for developing countries who rely on Fairtrade to sell higher value products to the UK.

2) The following motion was moved by Councillor Kareen Hastrick and seconded by Councillor Tim Williams.

“Council recognises that bus services are a lifeline to many residents in Watford without access to a car.

Council notes with concern plans by Mullany’s Buses to withdraw the R8 and 346 routes as of 1st April 2017.

Council further notes that the withdrawal of these services would leave residents of the Kingswood and Leavesden Green estates without a bus service at all. Residents in Nascot Village, Tudor and Meriden also face a reduction in service that would have a negative impact on elderly people, residents with disabilities, Watford UTC students and those on low incomes.

The Council therefore resolves that:

The Mayor will write to Cllr Derrick Ashley, portfolio holder for transport at Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) calling for:

- HCC to approach alternative operators with a view to continuing a service on both routes on a commercial basis.
- HCC to consider making these routes ‘socially necessary’ services and provide financial support if an operator is unwilling to take on these routes commercially.”

Members debated the motion.

On being put to council the motion was AGREED.

RESOLVED –

that Council recognises that bus services are a lifeline to many residents in Watford without access to a car.

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3) The following motion was proposed by Councillor Bilqees Mauthoor and seconded by Councillor Peter Taylor

"I would like to call on this council to help find strategic ways across party to help tackle loneliness.

This Council notes that being or living alone in total isolation can be a public health issue and risk that must be tackled starting at a local level.

It is estimated one in ten people of pensionable age living in our constituency are likely to be classed as lonely or severely lonely.

This Council must recognise that:

1. Loneliness is detrimental to our health and well-being, therefore increasing the risk of heart disease putting people at greater risk of certain medical complications. It is known that those who tend to be lonely are more likely to smoke 15 cigarettes a day. It can also cause depression and other mental health issues.
2. Loneliness makes people more likely to drink excessive intake of alcohol, eat more and exercise less this again causes huge implications to the health.
3. Raising awareness of the health impact of loneliness is important because it affects people across all ages, gender or culture but more so it can affect older people who are most vulnerable in society.

I am requesting that councillors and the local borough or relevant authority as a whole and cross party can play a key leadership role by being a beacon to ensuring Watford is the town in which people maintain and encourage social connections especially that Watford is proud to be so diverse in culture and ethnicity.

Council is asked to set up a scrutiny task group to investigate the prevalence of loneliness within the Borough. To invite all relevant stakeholders to come and give evidence and to make any necessary recommendations.”

Members debated the motion.

On being put to council the motion was AGREED.

RESOLVED –

that this council helps find strategic ways across party to help tackle loneliness.

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Chair

The Meeting started at 7.30 pm
and finished at 8.55 pm