

## COUNCIL FUNCTIONS COMMITTEE

26 February 2018

Present: Councillor D Walford (Chair)  
Councillor M Watkin (Vice-Chair)  
Councillors N Bell, A Dychton, J Johnson, N Shah and N Steele

Officers: Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer (JK)  
Managing Director

### 9 **Apologies for absence/ committee membership**

There was a change of membership for this meeting: Councillor Bell replaced Councillor Mills.

### 10 **Disclosure of interests (if any)**

There were no disclosures of interest.

It was noted that all councillors had been given a dispensation by the Monitoring Officer in relation to agreeing the council tax.

### 11 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 November 2017 were submitted and signed.

### 12 **Voter ID Pilot**

The committee received a report of the Managing Director providing the committee with an overview of the voter ID pilot decision and requesting its formal ratification.

The report was introduced by the Managing Director. The committee was asked to ratify the decision to participate in the pilot scheme that had been taken under urgency powers. The Cabinet Office had been looking to test different ID requirements. There was no evidence of significant voter fraud in Watford but the council wanted to test the use of poll cards as the least obtrusive form of ID.

The Managing Director described the secondary forms of ID which would be acceptable and that replacement poll cards would be available until 9pm on election day. There was an extensive publicity campaign underway including on the bus shelters and in the council's partner organisations. The level of publicity meant that it was unlikely that any voters would be disenfranchised by the scheme. All the additional costs were being met by the Cabinet Office.

It was reported that the Labour Party, both nationally and locally, had expressed concerns about the pilot. A letter had been received from the Shadow Minister for Voter Engagement and Youth Affairs raising concerns that it would 'disproportionately impact on individuals with protected characteristics'. The council considered this was unlikely given the level of ID required in this pilot. An Equalities Impact Assessment had been prepared which demonstrated that there would not be a negative impact that was not mitigated.

The publicity of the pilot to those voters whose first language was not English was discussed; it was confirmed that a number of communication tools would be used to ensure all communities were aware and translation would be offered where required. It was further noted that some communities were used to bringing ID in order to vote.

Turning to the measures of success of the scheme, the committee was advised that performance indicators had been agreed for the pilot. The measures for success were:

- the election to run smoothly and efficiently.
- no evidence of reduced turnout. In particular, voters attending the polling station without ID and not returning.
- the Cabinet Office to see this scheme as a viable alternative nationally to more stringent forms of ID requirements.

RESOLVED –

that the committee ratifies the Managing Director's decision to participate in the Electoral Pilot for the May 2018 Mayoral and Borough Ward elections.

13

### **Setting the Council Tax for 2018/19**

The committee received a report of the Head of Finance consolidating the decisions of Watford Borough Council and the two precepting bodies to give the overall council tax for residents of Watford for 2018/9.

The Managing Director introduced the report. Council Functions Committee had the role of confirming the final level of council tax for Watford residents. The necessary agreements had been made by Cabinet and full Council. The decisions were in the context of government budget cuts and 95 percent of local authorities were increasing their council tax. Social care providers were generally increasing the social care precepts as well.

There were no questions.

In accordance with the Local Authorities (Standing orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, a recorded vote was taken.

Those voting in favour of the resolution:

Councillors Walford, Dychton, J Johnson, Steele and Watkin.

Those abstaining:

Councillors Bell and Shah.

There were no votes against the resolution.

RESOLVED –

that the committee formally sets the total Council Tax for Watford Borough Council, which includes the precepts for Hertfordshire County Council and the Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire, as set out in the report.

Chair

The Meeting started at 6.00 pm  
and finished at 6.20 pm