

CABINET

5 March 2018

Present: Mayor (Chair)
Councillors P Taylor, K Collett, S Johnson, I Sharpe and
M Watkin

Also present: Councillor B Mauthoor, Chair of Tackling Loneliness Task
Group (for minute number 70)

Officers: Managing Director
Deputy Managing Director and Director of Place Shaping and
Corporate Performance
Shared Director of Finance
Legal and Democratic Section Head
Environmental Health and Licensing Section Head
Head of Housing
Communications and Engagement Manager
Mayor's Political Assistant
Democratic Services Manager

61 **Apologies for absence**

No apologies were received.

62 **Disclosure of interests (if any)**

There were no disclosures of interest.

63 **Minutes of previous meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 January 2018 were submitted and signed.

64 **Conduct of meeting**

The Mayor made some changes to the order of items on the agenda.

Review of Corporate Plan 2020: revised for 2018/19

A report was received from the Managing Director and would also be going to Council on 13 March 2018.

The Mayor commented that the Corporate Plan was the council's way ahead for the future. It was timely with a new mayoral term and had endorsement from the Local Government Association peer review.

The Managing Director highlighted the corporate planning framework (on page 7 of the Corporate Plan) which set out the five priorities and how the council operated with effective engagement, high performance, its values and culture. The graphic was a clear way to present the council's ethos and convey the council's approach. The Corporate Plan then went into detail on all the major priorities, themes and ways of working and set out what would be achieved over the medium term.

The Managing Director also drew Cabinet's attention to the community survey which had received over 1,000 responses. The findings were very satisfactory with 80% of respondents agreeing that the council was working for a better place to live, 82% thought that the council provided value for money and 85% agreed that the council was working to make Watford economically successful.

Following a question by the Mayor, the Communications and Engagement Manager agreed to discuss the results at a county communications meeting to see how they compared with other local authorities.

The Managing Director explained that the areas for improvement which had come from the residents survey had been picked up in the Corporate Plan e.g., new homes to be supported with good infrastructure, keeping local people informed about decisions and explaining why well-planned growth was important to the town.

Councillor Taylor welcomed the focus on sustainable transport opportunities within the Corporate Plan.

The Mayor praised the Corporate Plan and its clarity.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet:

1. Notes the revised draft Corporate Plan 2020 and proposes any amendments and recommends it to Council.
2. Notes that the 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. Notes the work programme set out in the plan will be monitored through the year.

66

South West Herts Joint Strategic Plan

A report of the Deputy Managing Director was received which would also be going to Council on 13 March 2018.

Councillor Sharpe introduced the report and explained that reforms in planning policy in recent years had replaced strategic planning with a 'duty to cooperate'. The government had announced today changes in the National Planning Policy Framework to make councils deliver housing targets. There was, therefore, a need to recognise that problems did not start and end at district council boundaries but there were shared problems in this part of Hertfordshire. There was recognition of the need to cooperate and the report before Cabinet was the start of work on a joint strategic plan and a statement of common ground.

The Deputy Managing Director commented that there were a number of authorities now adopting a similar approach. Housing was a key feature but the joint strategic plans would cover a wider scope. With regards to funding, there had been a bid to central government which had been successful and the council had been awarded £250,000. The memorandum of understanding was being worked on presently.

RESOLVED

That Cabinet recommends to Council:

1. To agree to work with the other South West Herts Authorities (Three Rivers, Dacorum, Hertsmere and St Albans Councils) to prepare a Joint Strategic Plan. Details of working arrangements and governance structures will be included in a Memorandum of Understanding which is currently being worked on. A timetable and the relationship with individual local plans will

be set out in a Statement of Common Ground, to be agreed by all partners.

2. To agree to progress a Memorandum of Understanding as the framework for governing future joint working arrangements and for the final terms of the Memorandum of Understanding to be delegated to the Deputy Managing Director for agreement.
3. To agree to officers progressing work on the joint plan and to note that this will come back to Council for final approval.
4. To note the support of Hertfordshire County Council and the Hertfordshire LEP for this process.

67

Resolution in principle to promote a Compulsory Purchase Order for Watford Business Park

Cabinet received a report of the Property Development Project Manager.

The Managing Director introduced the report and explained that it was asking for Cabinet's approval in principle for a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) process. The report was not asking Cabinet to make the order just to give authority to make preparations. The CPO related to Zone A which was at the front of the Business Park where the council had been acquiring assets. Most acquisitions had been done by agreement, however, there were some rights and interests where there may be a need to acquire by CPO.

The Mayor commented that the decision regarding the Metropolitan Line Extension would have an impact, but that the council still wanted to make improvements to the Business Park.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet:

1. Supports the comprehensive redevelopment of Watford Business Park Zone A (indicatively edged red in the plan attached as appendix 1 to the report) for the reasons outlined in the report.

2. Notes that officers are carrying out an options appraisal with regard to the delivery mechanism for the redevelopment of Zone A. The details of which are contained within the report.
3. Agrees in principle to the use of Section 226(1)(a) Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) compulsory purchase powers, if necessary, to acquire outstanding land interests and existing rights (which may be extinguished or overridden) in the proposed Watford Business Park Zone A development site (indicatively edged red in the plan attached at appendix 1 of the report) where acquisition by agreement is not possible.
4. Agrees to authorise officers to take all necessary steps to commence the process for the making, confirmation and implementation of a Compulsory Purchase Order, including securing the appointment of suitable external advisors and preparing all necessary CPO documentation.
5. Notes that a further report will be presented to the Cabinet to approve the making of the order and confirm the extent of the order lands to be acquired following the finalisation of the necessary preparatory work and delivery option appraisal.

68

Update to the Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy

Cabinet received a report of the Energy and Renewal Surveyor.

Councillor Collett introduced the report and explained that it was seeking approval for an update to the Private Sector Housing Renewal policy. The policy incorporated information from research carried out by the Building Research Establishment (BRE). With data received from BRE it would be possible for the council to bid for new projects to enhance some of those already done e.g., Boundary Way insulation installation. The policy had been brought up to date with more current information and would target vulnerable people and disadvantaged communities. Councillor Collett praised the officers involved for their great work.

Councillor Johnson commented that it was important to use the report productively and suggested inviting ward councillors to discuss individual wards. The report also highlighted that 28% of properties in the town were now private sector rented which was an increased proportion.

Following a question from the Mayor, the Head of Housing explained that there was a landlords' forum and a database. The Mayor also suggested finding private sector rental residents who would be willing to be consulted by the council.

The Head of Environmental Health and Licensing stated that a new Environmental Crime Officer had started and would be working with Veolia to tackle hotspots. There would be regular walk-throughs and pro-active work. Following questions regarding Watford Community Housing (WCH) the Head of Environmental Health and Licensing explained that whilst WCH had a contract with Veolia they did not have enforcement powers, however, they were able to use their tenancy powers and the council was working with them on this.

The Head of Housing commented that the report had highlighted private sector rented accommodation was the biggest growth area which was a national issue as the amount of social housing had declined.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet:

1. Approves the new policy for publication and implementation from 1 April 2018. Note that the changes to the Policy do not apply retrospectively to any applicants currently progressing through the grant/loan process.
2. Approves the delegation to the Head of Community and Environmental Services to take decisions in relation to changes in government policy and definitions. This enables the policy to stay aligned with any changes to the Affordable Warmth group, Housing Benefit and Watford's Council Tax Reduction Scheme definitions, subject to these changes still delivering the principles and aims of the policy. To be clear this delegation does not allow for changes in provision/services.

69

Ombudsman's Decision

Cabinet received a report of the Head of Democracy and Governance.

Councillor Watkin explained that the council was obliged to report the decision to Cabinet. The complaint was regarding a one-off issue it was not a systemic problem.

Officers commented that the council was disappointed with the Ombudsman's overall decision; however the Ombudsman had commended the measures put in place by the council.

RESOLVED

That Cabinet notes the decision

70

Tackling Loneliness Task Group

A report of the Committee and Scrutiny Officer was presented to Cabinet. The Chair of the Tackling Loneliness Task Group, Councillor Bilqees Mauthoor, was in attendance for this item.

The Mayor welcomed the report and thanked Councillor Mauthoor. She agreed with the recommendations that the website should be used more for signposting and that the council should also be telling residents about Herts Help. The Mayor commended the best practice guidance recommendation as councillors were likely to meet residents who were vulnerable. She also commented that the Safer Streets initiative recognised vulnerable people as part of their work.

Following a suggestion from Councillor Mauthoor that loneliness training was covered within safeguarding, Councillor Collett commented that the Member Development Group would be discussing safeguarding training including an e-learning module. Councillor Collett also commended the work of the task group and stated that with regards to small grants the Watford and Three Rivers Trust (W3RT) had been asked to bring forward any applications which involved vulnerable groups and particularly groups which were less well known. Following the work of the task group, councillors were more aware of the importance of working with local residents associations. Councillor Collett gave an example of recent work by Safer Streets where ward councillors had been out with the police, WCH and the fire service during the snow and had identified some vulnerable people who would now be visited. Their neighbours had also been made aware of them.

Councillor Taylor commented that recently there had been an e-mail from ward councillors during the snow to which a number of elderly residents had responded. He supported the task group's recommendations and felt there was more to be done to bring the work of charitable groups together.

Cabinet thanked Councillor Mauthoor and the Tackling Loneliness Task Group.

RESOLVED

That Cabinet agrees the Tackling Loneliness Task Group recommendations:

1. To provide signposting to appropriate organisations for those experiencing loneliness, through the use of:
 - a. A dedicated page on the council's website
 - b. Leaflets and publications from relevant organisations in the customer service centre at the Town Hall and in other council owned facilities e.g., community centres, Watford Museum and the leisure centres
 - c. Information from external organisations displayed on community noticeboards.
2. To provide training for councillors to help them to recognise and assist people vulnerable to loneliness in the course of their work in the local community.
3. To provide best practice guidance for councillors – to be included as a downloadable document on the council's intranet.
4. That the Mayor writes to:
 - a. HCC underlining the importance of tackling loneliness amongst Watford residents and encouraging them to ensure the issue remains a priority and is reflected in the allocation of resources
 - b. The MP for Watford underlining the importance of tackling loneliness and encouraging him to take an active part in cross-party efforts to address the issue and to speak out on behalf of residents who may be affected.
5. That the Mayor encourages councillors to be mindful of local organisations and events which attempt to tackle loneliness in their ward when allocating money from their Neighbourhood Locality Funds.
6. That Cabinet notes the Task Group Chair is to write and encourage the Portfolio Holder for Community to be mindful of local organisations and events which attempt to tackle loneliness in Watford in their consideration of the council's Small Grants Fund applications.

71

Revision to Digital Watford Board meeting schedule

Cabinet received a report of the Head of Service Transformation.

The Managing Director explained that as Cabinet had approved the original terms of reference it had been necessary to bring the report regarding the change to the terms. The report also recommended delegating any future changes to the Head of Service Transformation in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.

RESOLVED

That Cabinet agrees that the Digital Watford Board meeting schedule and approach for the new municipal year should be amended as indicated and that the Head of Service Transformation in consultation with the Portfolio Holder are given the delegated authority to amend this schedule as appropriate and make any other changes necessary to the operation of the Board.

Mayor

The Meeting started at 7.00 pm
and finished at 7.45 pm