

CABINET

2 March 2020

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

Also present: Councillors N Bell, Labour Group Leader

Officers: Managing Director (ML)
Managing Director (DN)
Acting Shared Director of Finance
Group Head of Community and Environmental Services
Group Head of Corporate Strategy and Communications
Group Head of Commercial
Energy & Renewal Surveyor
Democratic Services Manager
Mayor's Political Assistant

58 Apologies for absence

There were no apologies.

The Mayor welcomed Donna Nolan, the council's new Managing Director, to her first Cabinet meeting. He also noted that it would be Manny Lewis's last Cabinet before leaving the council at the end of March.

59 Disclosure of interests (if any)

Councillor Williams informed Cabinet that he was an allotment holder.

60 Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 January 2020 were submitted and signed.

61 Conduct of meeting

The Mayor agreed to move item 6 in the agenda to the beginning. He welcomed Councillor Bell, Labour Group Leader to the meeting.

Sustainability Strategy Part 1:2020 TO 2023

Cabinet received a report of the Energy and Renewal Surveyor which set out the first phase of the Sustainability Strategy, providing a roadmap towards the council's ambition to become carbon neutral for emissions generated within the borough that fell within the local authority's influence. It was noted that the strategy had been presented to the Sustainability Forum on 24 February 2020.

Councillor Williams, at the invitation of the Mayor, provided details of the report. He thanked officers for their work on developing the new strategy. 80 projects were listed in the strategy. However, he cautioned that councils needed to receive appropriate government financing in order to support this ambitious aim.

The Energy and Housing Renewal Surveyor advised that the full programme would extend to 2030. The document before Cabinet was the first part of the strategy, working towards the council's ambition.

RESOLVED –

1. that the Sustainability Strategy, action plan, initial six projects to focus on and the project structure to deliver the strategy be noted and approved.
2. that the Group Head of Commercial be granted delegated authority to progress the action plan and subsequent future parts of the strategy in conjunction with the portfolio holder.

Ombudsman Complaint

Cabinet received a report of Group Head of Democracy and Governance which set out a decision received from the Ombudsman, following a complaint it had investigated.

The Managing Director (ML) explained the details of the report. The officer's report highlighted the lessons the council had learnt from the complaint and decision. It was important the council continued to maintain its high standards.

Following a question from Councillor Bell, the Managing Director confirmed that measures had been put in place to stop the issues highlighted in the report from reoccurring. The measures included new officers were advised at their induction about the proper procedures to be followed.

RESOLVED –

that the decision be noted.

64

An Allotment Strategy 2020-2025

Cabinet received a report of the Head of Parks, Heritage and Culture setting out a new strategy for the next five years.

Councillor Williams, at the invitation of the Mayor, introduced the report. He thanked officers for their work. He noted that this item and the following two were closely linked. He highlighted some of the feedback from the consultation and the current popularity of allotments.

Councillor Watkin, an ex-allotment holder, commented that it was a very rewarding activity. He cautioned against self-management for allotments, as it could become divisive amongst ploholders.

Following a comment about pre-preparing plots for new users, Councillor Williams said that this had been raised in the survey and at the recent forum. Officers had been asked to look into the feasibility of this suggestion. He acknowledged that the uptake was low by disabled users, however if the preparation could be carried out in advance, this may encourage more disabled residents to apply for a plot.

Councillor Bell stated that he had spoken to an ex-resident of the Farm Terrace Allotments. There had been discussion with the Head of Parks, Heritage and Culture about a commemorative plaque, or something similar, to be located at the previous allotment site and something at Watford Museum.

The Mayor responded that he had also been involved in those discussions about something to recognise the former site. Allotments were a part of the council's civic history and therefore something should be displayed at the museum.

RESOLVED –

1. that the contents of the report and strategy be noted.
2. that the Allotment Strategy be approved and adopted for the next five years.

65

A Green Spaces Strategy for Watford - mid term report

Cabinet received a report of the Head of Parks, Heritage and Culture which provided an update on the Green Spaces Strategy that had been adopted in 2013.

Councillor Williams, at the invitation of the Mayor, introduced the report. He asked the Group Head of Community and Environmental Services to thank the staff for their work throughout the duration of the strategy. He noted the increase of three green flags in 2013 to 12 this year. He added that this year the council had submitted 13 application and in 2021 it was proposed to submit 16. It was important the council continued to invest and improve the borough's green space.

Members, including Councillor Bell, commented about the strategy, including developing green space in built up areas, for example pocket parks, or in new developments, for example Nascot Grange. It was noted that the council had taken over the management of the public space in Nascot Grange. It was also asked that the good work carried out by Veolia was noted.

RESOLVED –

that the report be noted.

66

A Tree and Woodland Strategy for Watford

Cabinet received a report of the Head of Parks, Heritage and Culture which provided a new strategy that had been prepared in association with Veolia.

Councillor Williams was invited by the Mayor to introduce the report. He again thanked the officers. He commented that trees were vital for sustainability and people's wellbeing. It included woodlands, trees within parks and also street trees. They helped to create and attractive and healthy place to live, work and visit. He had noted that some residents did not feel the strategy had gone far enough.

In response to a question from Councillor Bell, the Group Head of Community and Environmental Services advised that section two of the strategy set out the benefits of trees to Watford and its links to the council's Sustainability Strategy. In the officer's cover report it explained that it was proposed to increase the tree and woodland canopy cover to 20% across the borough. The number of trees was not specified.

Councillor Williams added that the council should explore different initiatives to increase the number of trees, for example involving local groups. The Mayor added officers could look at schemes which had involved the Woodland Trust.

RESOLVED –

1. that the contents of the report be noted.
2. that the Tree and Woodland Management Strategy for Watford be adopted.

67 **Watford BC Corporate Plan 2020**

Cabinet received a report of the Group Head of Corporate Strategy and Communications which provided the latest draft of the 2020 Corporate Plan. The final version would be presented to Council for final approval.

Councillor Johnson stressed that it was important the council delivered its programme or works and the outcomes were monitored.

RESOLVED –

1. that the revised draft Corporate Plan 2020 be noted.
2. that it be noted 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. that the draft Corporate Plan 2020 be recommended to Council.

Mayor

The Meeting started at 7.00 pm
and finished at 7.35 pm