

COUNCIL

9 July 2019

Present: The Chairman (Councillor A Khan (Chairman))
The Mayor (Peter Taylor)
Councillors D Allen-Williamson, S Bashir, N Bell, S Bolton,
K Collett, K Crout, A Dychton, F Ezeifedi (for minute numbers 21
to 30), A Grimston, I Hamid, K Hastrick, M Hofman, P Jeffree,
P Kloss, R Martins, B Mauthoor, M Mills, M Parker, J Pattinson,
G Saffery, D Scudder, N Shah, I Sharpe, R Smith, J Stiff,
I Stotesbury, M Turmaine, D Walford, M Watkin, R Wenham and
T Williams

Also present: Freemen of the Borough, Mavis Tyrwhitt and Norman
Tyrwhitt
Ms Emma Kosmin, local resident

Officers: Managing Director
Group Head of Democracy and Governance
Interim Communications and Engagement Manager
Mayor's Political Assistant
Democratic Services Manager
Senior Democratic Services Officer

17 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Singh Dhindsa, Fahmy, J Johnson and S Johnson.

18 Disclosure of Interests

There were no disclosures of interest.

19 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 May 2019 were submitted and signed.

Official Announcements

Big Events

The Chairman informed Council that the Big Screen would be returning to the Town Centre on 29 July until 9 August. This would be followed by the Big Beach from 16 August to 30 August.

High Sheriff of Hertfordshire

The High Sheriff of Hertfordshire visited Watford on 8 July. She met the Chairman and Mayor and they were also joined by representatives from Watford Interfaith Association.

Starfish Children's Ward Fun Day

The Starfish children's ward was one of the Chairman's charities for this year. They would be holding a fun day on Saturday 13 July between 1 p.m. and 5 p.m. at Watford Fields. He encouraged all councillors to attend the event.

Audentior Awards

The Chairman informed Council that nominations for the Audentior Awards were still open. Members had until 19 July to submit an online nomination through the website.

Watford Community Housing – councillors' visit

The Chairman reminded councillors that the annual councillors' visit to Watford Community Housing would take place the following day, Wednesday 10 July at Watford Community Housing's offices in Clarendon Road. It was due to start at 6.30 p.m.

Mayor's Report

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, Shah, Martins, Smith, Turmaine, Stiff and Bashir indicated that they wished to ask questions.

- 1) Councillor Bell asked the Mayor for his view about the future of the Lemarie Centre for charities in North Watford.

The Mayor informed council that he had regularly met the groups at the Centre. They all did fantastic work. There had been discussion about them having a viable future. Concerns had been raised, particularly about the first floor. Representatives from Mencap, Paradance and Playskills had been guaranteed that the council would work with them and make sure they had a place fit for purpose.

As Councillor Bell was the leader of the Opposition, the Chairman asked him if he wished to put a supplementary question to the Mayor.

Councillor Bell asked the Mayor if he would agree that the Lemarie Centre had been a vital link to many vulnerable families over many years. It had been a base for Mencap, the Stroke Association, Paradance and Playskills. It had also been used by children from Nascot Lawn. He asked whether the Mayor and Liberal Democrat administration would invest and find new homes for these charities.

The Mayor responded that the council would be working with those charities to ensure premises were fit for purpose. He had visited the building many times and it was obvious it was not in a good condition. The council was working with the charities and families to make sure they had appropriate facilities. He acknowledged the vital work carried out by the charities and said that the council would continue to work with them, including on alternative premises.

- 2) Councillor Shah referred to Watford Women's Centre which had recently celebrated its 30th anniversary. It was noted that the Mayor had praised the Centre's work, but the domestic violence project would be shut down due to lack of funding. She asked the Mayor whether he would reinstate the funding for the voluntary sector which the council had cut in 2011.

The Mayor commented that since becoming Mayor he had done a lot of work supporting the women's centre. The viability of the Centre was not just about the funding given by the council but also other sources. He had put them in touch with the football club and business community in order to get support for their work. He was working closely with the Centre to make sure this happened. He agreed that the group did valuable work. However, the reality was the council had had its funding cut by 70% over the last 10 years. This meant it was necessary for the council to look at how it operated. He had agreed they would be the recipient of money raised through his Christmas card. He added they were not part of the Commissioning Framework, but they would continue to be supported and they had good facilities. The organisation had praised the work the council was doing to support their charity.

- 3) Councillor Martins referred to reports that discussed the damage to children's health, particularly for those at schools close to the highway and in built up areas. He said that in his ward there were three schools that were close to the highway. He was unsure if the council had information about the air quality near schools and if it was good enough and safe for the children. He asked if the Mayor would be able to obtain this information so that it could then be publicised and shown to parents to put their minds at rest.

The Mayor acknowledged that Councillor Martins had raised this with him previously. He was keen to get this information and work with the county council. As a parent he agreed that air quality across the town was an important issue for families and everyone who lived here. In addition to the information it was important to take action to support more sustainable modes of transport to and from school, including walking. The first step was to have the information that explained the level of pollution around the schools.

- 4) Councillor Smith welcomed the discussion about accessibility at Bushey Station. He asked if the Mayor would be meeting London Underground about Watford High Street, which presently did not have step free access.

The Mayor replied that he would be happy to raise this station. He regularly had meetings with Transport for London and would be happy to discuss it. His next meeting was due to take place on Wednesday. He was aware that funding was available for step free access. It was an important issue for families and those with a disability.

- 5) Councillor Turmaine noted that Imagine Watford had taken place over two days this year, less than previous times.

The Mayor stated that Imagine Watford had been on for exactly the same amount of time as in 2018. It started on Friday and finished on Sunday. Watford was one of the few councils in Hertfordshire that funded this type of event. It had been a huge success. It brought families to the town and was a boost to the local businesses. The event would continue to take place.

- 6) Councillor Stiff asked the Mayor if he could explain how the council was promoting Herts Pride that was due to take place in Cassiobury Park.

The Mayor informed council that Herts Pride would be returning to Cassiobury Park on Saturday 31 August. London Pride had taken place over

the weekend and he was proud to see the Proud Hornets there. He commended Watford Football Club for its support. It was good that Watford was a diverse town with people of all faiths, backgrounds and sexualities. There would be promotion of Herts Pride to ensure it was a success.

- 7) Councillor Bashir noted that in the report the Mayor had said the council had recouped £2.3 million from Transport for London (TfL). However his question related to the funding for the homeless charity, New Hope. He reminded the Mayor that in January, as part of the Labour Group's budget proposals, it had been proposed that New Hope should receive £125,000 over a four year period to support its vital work. He asked the Mayor why the Liberal Democrat group had not been able to support the Labour proposal at that time.

The Mayor said it seemed bizarre that unless the council was providing the funding it did not count. £300,000 had been secured for the work being carried out by New Hope, more than the Labour Group had proposed. The funding would increase the amount of outreach work that could be done. It would be possible to target people with mental health and addiction issues. He was surprised at the criticism. He had hoped that the Labour Group would work with the administration to tackle homelessness.

22 **Questions by Members of the Council under Council Procedure Rule 10.0**

A question had been received from Councillor Turmaine. The response had been circulated prior to the meeting.

23 **Questions by Members of the Public under Council Procedure Rule 11.0**

A question had been received from Ms Kosmin, which was included on the agenda.

Ms Kosmin quoted her question, which referred to the Living Wage. She asked for the number of the council's direct and third party staff who were earning below the Living Wage.

Mayor Taylor thanked Ms Kosmin for the question. Following on from their conversation prior to the meeting he could confirm that every employee directly employed by the council was paid the living wage and were in fact paid at least 10% more than the living wage threshold. The council had also ensured that contractors, including Everyone Active and Veolia, also paid the living wage. The council was working towards becoming a Living Wage Foundation accredited

employer. He recognised that everyone who did a day's work deserved a decent wage.

The Chairman invited Ms Kosmin to put a supplementary question to the Mayor.

Ms Kosmin said that she was pleased to hear the Mayor's comments. She asked if he could provide any timescale in receiving that accreditation. She also asked what action would be taken to inspire other hub organisations in the town to follow the council's lead.

The Mayor responded that council was already a living wage employer and was currently going through the accreditation process. He was keen to promote it to enable everyone to receive the living wage. The council would work with the Living Wage Foundation to make the case across Watford.

24 **Petitions presented under Council Procedure Rule 12.0**

No petitions had been received.

25 **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.

26 **Watford Community Housing Pension Scheme Transfer**

Council received a report which had been considered at Cabinet on 4 July. An extract of the minutes had been circulated.

RESOLVED –

1. that Watford Borough Council enters into the agreements with the Hertfordshire Pension Fund and Watford Community Housing.
2. that minor amendments to the legal agreements be delegated to the Director of Finance.

27 **Safeguarding training**

Council received a report of the Democratic Services Manager seeking agreement to make safeguarding training for members compulsory every two years.

RESOLVED –

that safeguarding training shall be compulsory for all members every two years.

28 **Neighbourhood Locality Fund Annual Report**

Council received a report of the Senior Democratic Services Officer providing the annual report for the neighbourhood locality funds.

RESOLVED –

that the neighbourhood locality fund annual report be noted.

29 **Scrutiny annual report**

Council received a report of the Senior Democratic Services Officer setting out the annual report on the work of scrutiny.

RESOLVED –

that the annual scrutiny report for 2018/19 be noted.

30 **Motions submitted under Council Procedure Rule 13.0**

Council was informed that two motions had been received.

Motion 1

The following motion was proposed by Councillor Stotesbury and seconded by Councillor Bell.

“Man-made climate change is the biggest threat that humanity faces. In 2018 the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report states that we have just 12 years to act on climate change if global temperatures rises are to be kept within the recommended 1.5 degrees Celsius.

All governments whether national, regional or local have a duty to limit the negative impacts on climate change and need to commit to aggressive reduction targets and carbon neutrality as quickly as possible.

Watford Borough Council has a pivotal role to play in tackling climate change and enabling sustainable living.

We recognise the importance of tackling climate change both in the terms of reducing greenhouse gas emissions to minimise future global climate change and planning for the unavoidable local impacts of climate change.

Therefore Watford Borough Council approves the following:-

- 1) Join other Councils in recognising and declaring a climate emergency
- 2) Pledge to do everything within the Council's power to make the whole of Watford carbon neutral by 2030
- 3) Within this develop an ambitious sustainability strategy for reducing the Council's own emissions, with an objective that the Council becomes carbon neutral by 2030
- 4) Use all planning regulations and the Local Plan to cut carbon emissions and reduce the impact on the environment
- 5) Call on national government for more powers and resources to make this pledge possible, and ask the Elected Mayor to write to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to this effect
- 6) Continue to work with partners across the borough, county and region to deliver this new goal through all relevant strategies and plans
- 7) Take account of climate impacts within existing decision making processes
- 8) Report back to Council, via the newly established Sustainability Forum, on an action plan to address the climate emergency, and then every six months after this an update on progress being made. The proposed action plan to be on the agenda of the Sustainability Forum to be held 3rd October 2019
- 9) Dedicate enough staff and budget to achieve these aims, including the most appropriate training for members and officers to promote carbon neutral policies and to achieve these aims"

Members debated the motion.

On being put to council the motion was AGREED.

RESOLVED –

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- 9) Dedicate enough staff and budget to achieve these aims, including the most appropriate training for members and officers to promote carbon neutral policies and to achieve these aims

Motion 2

The following motion was moved by Councillor Bashir and seconded by Councillor Bell

“Watford Borough Council is proud of its rich diversity and inclusivity. We see this as an asset and a source of great strength. Watford is home to thousands of Muslims, some who have been in the town for over half a century while others have come more recently. Watford has an honourable history of promoting cohesion and welcoming people from all over the world, most recently refugees from Syria.

Its residents have always united and supported each other in the fight against any form of racism and discrimination in all its forms.

This Council therefore welcomes, endorses and adopts the working All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) definition of Islamophobia, including all of its examples in full cited as follows:

‘ISLAMOPHOBIA IS ROOTED IN RACISM AND IS A TYPE OF RACISM THAT TARGETS EXPRESSIONS OF MUSLIMNESS OR PERCEIVED MUSLIMNESS.’

Contemporary examples of Islamophobia in public life, the media, schools, the workplace, and in encounters between religions and non-religions in the public sphere could, considering the overall context, include, but are not limited to:

- Calling for, aiding, instigating or justifying the killing or harming of Muslims in the name of a racist/fascist ideology, or an extremist view of religion.
- Making mendacious, dehumanising, demonising, or stereotypical allegations about Muslims as such, or of Muslims as a collective group, such as, especially but not exclusively, conspiracies about Muslim entryism in politics, government or other societal institutions; the myth of Muslim identity having a unique propensity for terrorism and claims of a demographic ‘threat’ posed by Muslims or of a ‘Muslim takeover’.
- Accusing Muslims as a group of being responsible for real or imagined wrongdoing committed by a single Muslim person or group of Muslim individuals, or even for acts committed by non-Muslims.
- Accusing Muslims as a group, or Muslim majority states, of inventing or exaggerating Islamophobia, ethnic cleansing or genocide perpetrated against Muslims.
- Accusing Muslim citizens of being more loyal to the ‘Ummah’ (transnational Muslim community) or to their countries of origin, or to the alleged priorities of Muslims worldwide, than to the interests of their own nations.
- Denying Muslim populations, the right to self-determination e.g., by claiming that the existence of an independent Palestine or Kashmir is a terrorist endeavour.

- Applying double standards by requiring of Muslims behaviours that are not expected or demanded of any other groups in society, eg loyalty tests.
- Using the symbols and images associated with classic Islamophobia.
- Holding Muslims collectively responsible for the actions of any Muslim majority state, whether secular or constitutionally Islamic.

This Council asks the Executive member to:

1. Continue to prioritise tackling hate crime and Islamophobia in partnership. Watford Borough Council works with partners, especially Hertfordshire Constabulary, on a rolling basis, and will now coordinate future actions in line with this definition of Islamophobia for all Muslims.
2. Continue to promote the rich diversity of our town.
3. Work with all stakeholders to listen to their concerns and develop policies that will continue to ensure we live in a vibrant and inclusive town.”

Members debated the motion.

On being put to Council the motion was AGREED.

RESOLVED –

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3. Work with all stakeholders to listen to their concerns and develop policies that will continue to ensure we live in a vibrant and inclusive town.

Chair

The Meeting started at 7.30 pm
and finished at 8.50 pm