

COUNCIL

15 October 2019

Present: Councillor A Khan (Chairman)
Councillor A Dychton (Vice-Chair)
Councillors P Taylor, D Allen-Williamson, S Bashir, N Bell,
S Bolton, K Collett, F Ezeifedi, A Grimston, I Hamid, K Hastrick,
M Hofman, P Jeffree, P Kloss, B Mauthoor, M Mills, M Parker,
J Pattinson, G Saffery, D Scudder, I Sharpe, R Smith, Stanton,
I Stotesbury, M Turmaine, D Walford, M Watkin, R Wenham and
T Williams

Also present: Mavis Tyrwhitt and Norman Tyrwhitt

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

31 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Crout, Dhindsa, J Johnson, S Johnson, Martins, Shah and Stiff.

32 **Disclosure of Interests**

There were no disclosures of interest.

33 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 July 2019 were submitted and signed.

34 **Official Announcements**

Tudor By-election

The Chairman reported that the Tudor by-election had been held the previous week. He welcomed Councillor Bill Stanton to the meeting.

Audentior Awards

The Chairman advised that the Audentior Awards had been held on 11 October and was a great success. Over £1,600 had been raised for his charities. He thanked everyone who had attended the event.

Caroline Harris, Democratic Services Manager

The Chairman informed Council that this would be Caroline's last meeting as she was leaving Democratic Services and moving to IT. Councillor Collett, leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, and Councillor Bell, leader of the Labour Group, thanked Caroline for her support and assistance. They presented her with bouquets of flowers.

35

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 Turmaine, Mauthoor, Ezeifedi, Bashir, Mills and Bell indicated that they wished to ask questions.

- 1) Councillor Turmaine referred to the extensive Mayor's report. He asked if it would be possible to look at the process by which councillors had to pose their questions to the Mayor. He felt it was difficult to interrogate a document of this length and put their question within one minute.

The Mayor thanked Councillor Turmaine for his question. He noted that over the last year Councillor Bolton had been reviewing how the council operated. Councillors had been able to give their views. One of the results of the review had been to allow the leader of the Opposition the chance to ask a second question. He said if Councillor Turmaine wanted to make any suggestions for change they could be considered by a future Constitution Working Party.

The Mayor said that he was happy to answer questions at any time including by email. There was also an opportunity at Council for councillors to submit written questions.

- 2) Councillor Mauthoor made reference to the Town Centre Task Force item in the report. She had noted the three areas covered and asked whether the task force would also be targeting young people and making contact with the young offender's team.

The Mayor said that the Town Centre Task Force had been working with West Herts College, therefore it was definitely working with young people. If there were any further suggestions in that area that could be covered the group would be happy to look at it.

The Mayor added that it was important there was a vibrant town centre. However, where people were sleeping rough or begging aggressively action had to be taken. Lots had been happening and the group had brought everyone together.

- 3) Councillor Ezeifedi noted in the report regarding polling districts that an extra polling district had not been recommended for Holywell Ward. She asked whether this could be reviewed in line with the need of the area. The voters in King Georges Avenue and parts of Whippendell Road were cut off from the current polling districts. She suggested that a pop-up station near the doctors' surgery in Printers Avenue could be set up. She added that she would be happy to work with officers on this suggestion.

The Mayor clarified that this question referred to a report later in the agenda and not directly to his report. He understood that with regard to Holywell, Councillor Bell had been asked to put forward suggested alternatives but had not provided any. This was the reason officers had made their recommendation. It was often difficult to find appropriate locations for polling stations.

- 4) Councillor Bashir said that he felt everyone would agree that Watford was an open and tolerant town. There was no room to tolerate racism or any kind of discrimination. He asked if the Mayor agreed with him that Watford should be a Trump free zone. If he did then he questioned what the Mayor would be doing.

The Mayor responded that the Grove was mainly within Three Rivers although the entrance was in Watford. The councillor's question would therefore be more relevant to Three Rivers District Council.

The Mayor said that he had made clear in the press about his disagreement with most of President Donald Trump's comments. However, he felt it was important that international organisations such as the United Nations, the European Union and NATO existed and world leaders were able to meet and discuss matters. The Mayor said his other concern about the NATO summit was the impact on local policing in the area. He had been reassured that there would not be an extra cost to the council and area. The policing would be from across the country. Although he didn't agree

with many of President Trump's comments it was important for world leaders to meet.

- 5) Councillor Mills referred to several accidents that happened just outside Watford involving chickens and horses. As an activist for animal rights, she asked the Mayor if it was possible to ban large vehicles transporting animals from travelling on Watford roads. She would be happy to work with the Mayor to address this issue.

The Mayor responded that everyone was upset by the story and the impact it had. He noted her suggestion, but the council was not the highways authority. He understood that it would be quite difficult to implement her suggestion. However he welcomed her to send him more details.

The Mayor added that the council had a very active Environmental Health team who ensured that animal welfare was a priority for the council. They carried out a lot of activity across the town to make sure that animals were treated well.

- 6) Councillor Bell mentioned that the Development Management Committee had passed the multi-storey car park for the hospital. He asked the Mayor if he could provide Council with the latest position.

The Mayor said that it was important the car park was built. It would double the parking capacity at the hospital and access would be improved. Due to its location at the top of the hill there would be direct access to the hospital. There were ongoing discussions about the options with Kier, the LABV and the football club. It was correct that planning permission had been granted and the development needed to be progressed.

Councillor Bell asked if the Mayor could expand on any timeline for getting the car park built.

The Mayor confirmed there were active discussions about the location of the car park at the top of the hill. He was happy to report back to the councillor with further information once more was known following the various ongoing discussions.

36

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 and published prior to the meeting.

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

A question had been received from Mr Brian Hodgson, which was included on the agenda.

Mr Hodgson quoted his question which was set out in the agenda.

The Mayor thanked Mr Hodgson for his question. He said that Watford was a diverse town which was welcomed. In addition to the motion at the last meeting, Council had also passed the anti-Semitism international definition, which stated that racism against people of the Jewish faith was unacceptable. At the last Council meeting members had unanimously agreed that Islamophobia should also be prohibited. He felt there was a clear distinction between worthwhile acceptable debates about religious issues and criticism of people because they hold a particular faith. The council would not limit political and religious discussion in the town; however discrimination and tarring all people of one faith with particular accusations was not acceptable

Mr Hodgson did not have a supplementary question, however he commented that he felt his question had not been answered.

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

No petitions had been received.

39 **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.

40 **Appointment of Managing Director and Head of Paid Service**

Council received a report of the Group Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development which recommended the appointment of the new Managing Director and Head of Paid Service for Watford Borough Council, effective from 3 February 2020.

RESOLVED –

that the appointment of Donna Nolan as Managing Director and Head of Paid Service for Watford Borough Council be approved. Donna will also be the Electoral Registration Officer and Returning Officer for Watford and Clerk to the West Herts Crematorium Joint Committee.

Polling District, places and stations review

Council received a report of the Electoral Services Manager which set out the results of a review of the Polling Districts and Polling Places within the Borough. Proposals for changes, including alternative premises had been received and shown in Appendix 1 to the report.

RESOLVED –

1. that the current arrangements for Callowland, Central, Meriden, Nascot, Park, Stanborough, Vicarage and Woodside wards, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, continue without change.
2. that the existing 2 x polling places / 5 x polling stations within Holywell Ward be retained without addition for the reasons set out in Appendix 2 of the report.
3. that the current arrangements, including the use of Orchard Primary School and Cherry tree Primary, within Leggatts Ward be retained for the reasons set out in Appendix 2 of the report.
4. that the arrangements for Oxhey Ward continue unchanged following advice that the existing polling arrangements for polling district LB is acceptable to the Bushey and Oxhey Infants School for the foreseeable future, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report.
5. that the current arrangements for Tudor Ward be retained and to note that upon completion of the rebuild of Centrepoint Community Centre these facilities will be checked and consideration will be given for the return from the current arrangement with Glen Rovers Hurling and Football Club.

Appointment of new councillor

Council received a late report of the Democratic Services Manager setting out that there had been no change to the political balance following the Tudor by-election. It also included the appointment of the new councillor, Councillor Bill Stanton, to a committee and to fill the vacancy on the Licensing Committee.

RESOLVED –

1. that Council notes the political balance remains unchanged following the by-election.

2. that Councillor Stanton be appointed to the Finance Scrutiny Committee.
3. that Councillor Martins be appointed to Licensing Committee.

43 **Chair of Licensing**

Council received a report of the Democratic Services Manager providing information about the vacancy for the Chair of Licensing Committee following the resignation of Joe Fahmy.

RESOLVED –

that Councillor Stephen Bolton be appointed as Chair of Licensing Committee for the rest of the municipal year.

44 **Members Self Assessments 2018/19**

Council received a report of the Democratic Services Manager which included the members' self-assessments received prior to the publication of the agenda.

RESOLVED –

that the members' self-assessments for 2018/19, which will be published on the council website, be noted.

45 **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 Hofman and seconded by Councillor Saffery

“Hate Crime destroys lives and devastates communities, it attacks an individual's identity and can have an appalling and devastating impact on victims. People who experience such crimes can feel isolated and vulnerable and suffer from significant emotional and physical stress.

Sadly, since the Brexit referendum in 2016 the UK has experienced an unprecedented rise in hate crimes motivated by individuals and groups trying to promote a sense of “otherness” or discrimination towards people based on their race, religion, sexual orientation, disability or transgender identity.

Watford Borough Council is committed to defending the rights of everyone in our area to live free from fear and discrimination. Council fully condemns hate crime in all its forms and strongly believes that any acts motivated by prejudice or hate against a person are totally unacceptable. Watford's diverse population is one of our great strengths.

Council notes that

Home Office figures for last year, showed that in 2017/18:

- There were 94,098 hat crime offences recorded by the police in England and Wales, an increase of 17% compared with the previous year. This continues the upward trend in recent years with the number of hate crimes recorded by the police having more than doubled since 2012/13.
- 52% of religious hate crimes were targeted against Muslims (2,965 offences), with a further 12% targeted against Jews (672 offences).
- At the same time, the charge rates have fallen. Only 12% of hate crimes reported to the police resulted in a charge in 2017/18, which is down from 21% in 2015/16.

Therefore Watford Borough Council resolves to:

1. Continue to ensure that all possible steps should be taken by the Police Services at local level in consultation with local Government and other agencies and local communities to encourage the reporting of racist incidents and crimes.
2. Commit to recruit volunteer Hate Crime Ambassadors from across the council family who will help raise awareness of the issue among their colleagues and partner organisations to ensure reporting.
3. Challenge attitudes and behaviours that underpin hate crimes.
4. Raise awareness of the impact of hate crime by supporting the annual Hate Crime Awareness Week and other initiatives.
5. Stand up for the right of everyone in Watford to live free from hate."

Members debated the motion.

On being put to council the motion was AGREED.

RESOLVED –

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5. Stand up for the right of everyone in Watford to live free from hate.

Motion 2

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

“This Council calls on the Mayor to initiate and introduce on an annual basis ‘Black History month’ to celebrate the rich contribution of the Afro-Caribbean community in our town.”

Following discussions with representatives from the Liberal Democrat Group, it was agreed that the original motion would be amended and read as follows –

“This council calls on the Mayor and council to actively support and promote the annual ‘Black history month celebrations’ to celebrate the rich contribution of the African Caribbean community in our town.”

Members debated the motion.

On being put to Council the amended motion was AGREED.

RESOLVED –

This council calls on the Mayor and council to actively support and promote the annual ‘Black history month celebrations’ to celebrate the rich contribution of the African Caribbean community in our town.

Chair

The Meeting started at 7.30 pm
and finished at 8.45 pm