

COUNCIL

16 March 2021

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

Officers: Managing Director
Group Head of Democracy and Governance
Democratic Services Manager
(Shared Services) Director of Finance
Mayor's Political Assistant
Democratic Services Officer
Executive Head of Corporate Strategy and Communications

64 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Hamid.

65 **Disclosure of Interests**

There were no disclosures of interest.

66 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 January 2021 were agreed and will be signed at the next non-virtual meeting.

67 **Official Announcements**

Civic death

The Chairman announced the death of ex-councillor Judi Jackson, who was a councillor from May 1983 until May 1991.

Councillor Bell paid tribute to the former councillor Judi Jackson.

The Chairman invited the meeting to observe a minute's silence in her memory.

Elections 2021

The Chairman announced that this would be the last Council meeting for some members who had decided not to re-stand in the elections in May. She thanked them on behalf of the Council for their service to the council and the Watford community and wished them all the best for the future. She read out the names of those who were standing down:

Iain Sharpe – first elected May 1991

Derek Scudder – first elected May 1994

Kareen Hastrick – first elected May 2006

Karen Collett – first elected May 2010

Mo Mills – first elected October 2011

Sohail Bashir – first elected May 2014

Stephen Bolton – first elected May 2014

Jane Johnson – first elected May 2016

Charity event

The Chairman referred to her charity event, Watford Moves Together, and informed the members that a Go Fund Me link would be circulated the following day.

Related Party Transactions

The Chairman reminded members to return their related party transaction forms to the Group Head of Democracy and Governance, as soon as possible.

68

Mayor's Report

A report of the Mayor had been circulated with the agenda. The Mayor thanked the Chairman for her service this year under extremely difficult circumstances and for chairing the virtual meetings. He also thanked those councillors standing down. They had all served their community with dedication. He wished them all the best for the future.

The Chairman invited members to indicate whether they wished to ask a question of the Mayor. Councillors Ezeifedi, Bashir, Bell, Turmaine and Dhindsa all indicated they wished to ask a question.

- 1) Councillor Ezeifedi raised the issue of women's safety which had come to the fore following the recent kidnap and murder of Sarah Everard. She also mentioned the petitioner who had spoken at the previous meeting about a sexual assault in Oxhey Park and necessary improvements to CCTV. She asked about the Mayor's plans to improve women's safety in

Watford and his thoughts about the cultural change required for individuals to be able to move around the town safely.

The Mayor replied that everyone had been appalled by the murder of Sarah Everard and offered condolences to her friends and family. He pointed out that both parties within the council had campaigned against the county council's decision to switch street lights off at night. He said that everyone need to work towards the safety of people as they walked across the town. He noted that Councillor Ezeifedi had referred to a cultural change. This was an issue for the whole society and not just women. He suggested that everyone needed to have conversations not only with their daughters, but also their sons to educate them on respectful relationships, tackling harassment and inappropriate behaviour. He recognised that there was a need to do more and that he was happy to work with members from all parties.

- 2) Councillor Bashir referred to the 'ArrivaClick' bus service. He expressed regret that the service had seen less use than hoped for, but understood that this was most probably as a result of the onset of the pandemic and lockdown. He was pleased to note that the service was being used to take people to and from the vaccination centres. He asked if the Mayor had any statistics on the service's use for this purpose and would this service be used to take Watford residents to vaccination centres outside the Borough.

The Mayor replied that to the best of his knowledge, that people were already able to use the service to travel to vaccination centres outside the Borough and named specific centres. If Councillor Bashir was aware of any issues then to let him know. He stated that he did not have figures for usage to take people to and from vaccination centres. However it was an important service to ensure people were able to get their vaccinations. He hoped that as the lockdown eased the service could be expanded. The government had made a recent announcement about expanding similar schemes in the country. He agreed with Councillor Bashir that it had been a difficult time, but it was good to be able to support residents to get to their vaccinations.

- 3) Councillor Bell also thanked the Chairman, Councillor Aga Dychton, for her service over the past year and paid tribute to all those standing down. He noted that the Mayor had mentioned Watford's heritage in his report. He asked if the Mayor agreed that the demolition of the Sun Printers clock tower would be a blow for the town's heritage.

The Mayor replied that this was a locally listed building and had a strong connection to the town's printing heritage. He pointed out that any person was able to apply for planning permission to alter any building. However, there was a rigorous planning process in place and residents were able to feed back their views about an application. He agreed that it was important to conserve the town's heritage. He gave a number of examples where locally significant buildings had been preserved.

Councillor Bell thanked the Mayor for his response. He asked that the council tried to preserve the clock tower in any future development for the western gateway.

The Mayor responded that it was agreed it was important to preserve the town's heritage and a number of officers worked on this matter. He advised that there was an ongoing legal issue around that location, which needed to reach its conclusion.

- 4) Councillor Turmaine said his question also related to the death of Sarah Everard and the events on Clapham Common. As a man it was important to stand in solidarity with women and to condemn any discriminatory behaviour. The government had just announced a new better lighting and CCTV fund of £25 million. He asked if the Mayor would be ensuring if the council bid for its share of the £25 million fund.

The Mayor replied that he would see if it was possible to access some of that funding. There were hundreds of CCTV cameras within Watford, however he did not feel the solution was to have thousands of cameras. Councillor Ezeifedi had referred to a cultural change and changing people's behaviour. He agreed that there was work to do in this area. He said he would look at the fund and find ways to improve Watford; CCTV was not the only solution. There was more to be done including educating people about respectful relationships.

- 5) Councillor Dhindsa stated that his question had already been asked. However he took the opportunity to thank all those colleagues who were standing down for their service to Watford and its residents.

69

Questions by Members of the Council under Council Procedure Rule 10.0

There were no written questions received from members.

70

Questions by Members of the Public under Council Procedure Rule 11.0

No questions from the public had been received.

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

No petitions had been received.

72 **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.

73 **Vice Chairman 2021/22 Nominations**

Council received a report of the Democratic Services Manager which set out the procedure and nominations for the election of the Vice Chairman for 2021.

The Chairman announced that following members' votes, Councillor Amanda Grimston had been elected as Vice Chairman for 2021/22.

RESOLVED –

1. that Council approves the election of Councillor Amanda Grimston as Vice Chairman for 2021-2022.
2. that the voting procedure be amended as set out in the report for those occasions when there are more than two candidates.

74 **Adopting the LGA Model Code of Conduct for Councillors**

Council received the report of the Group Head of Democracy and Governance and the details presented to Standards Committee on 27 January 2021. Following the publication of the agenda a new version of the model code had been circulated to members and published on the council's website.

RESOLVED –

that the LGA Model Code of Conduct be adopted.

75 **Appointment of Section 151 Officer**

Council received the report of the Group Head of Democracy and Governance setting out the proposed appointment of the Section 151 officer.

RESOLVED –

that with effect from 1 April 2021 Alison Scott becomes the S151 Officer and the Director of Finance for Watford Borough Council.

76 **Review of Licensing Act 2003 Statement of Licensing Policy**

Council received the report of the Licensing Committee of the 15 March 2021, which included the revised Statement of Licensing Policy.

RESOLVED-

that the new Statement of Licensing Policy and Cumulative Impact Assessment be adopted.

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

Council was informed that three motions had been received.

Motion 1

The following motion was proposed by Councillor Collett and seconded by Councillor Wenham.

“This Council notes that:

- The charity [Crohn's and Colitis UK](#) is encouraging venues providing accessible toilets to install [new signage](#). This is to help stop [stigma and discrimination](#) towards people with Crohn's Disease and Ulcerative Colitis and other invisible conditions.
- There have been instances nationally where such individuals using an accessible toilet have been accused by staff members of being ineligible to use them.
- The charity signs have two standing figures and a wheelchair user with the words Accessible Toilet and the logo 'Not every disability is visible'.
- The Government has decided recently that large accessible toilets for severely disabled people - known as Changing Places - will be made compulsory for large new buildings, such as shopping centres, supermarkets, sports and arts venues.

Council resolves to:

- Ensure that accessible toilets on Council operated and / or directly managed premises bear these signs.

- Ask town and district centre retailers and leisure outlets to do likewise with their accessible toilets.
- Seek advice from the charity Crohn's & Colitis UK on the information and training we should provide to council staff members. This is so they understand these conditions and to prevent potential embarrassment for those who suffer with them.
- Ensure that any Changing Places toilets in our buildings are properly signposted for visitors."

Members debated the motion.

On being put to Council, the motion was agreed.

RESOLVED –

This Council notes that:

- The charity [Crohn's and Colitis UK](#) is encouraging venues providing accessible toilets to install [new signage](#). This is to help stop [stigma and discrimination](#) towards people with Crohn's Disease and Ulcerative Colitis and other invisible conditions.
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- Seek advice from the charity Crohn's & Colitis UK on the information and training we should provide to council staff members. This is so they understand these conditions and to prevent potential embarrassment for those who suffer with them.
- Ensure that any Changing Places toilets in our buildings are properly signposted for visitors.

Motion 2

The following motion was proposed by Councillor Hofman and seconded by Councillor Khan.

“This Council notes that:

1. Covid-19 has had a huge impact on the lives and livelihoods of residents in Watford and across the rest of the UK;
2. Key workers have put themselves on the frontline throughout the pandemic to keep society going;
3. The Covid-19 vaccination roll out has been going well across the UK and it is one of the key routes out of lockdown alongside having an effective track and trace programme;
4. Watford Borough Council have been working hard to ensure the successful roll out of the Covid-19 vaccine across the borough, converting the town hall into a vaccination hub, providing free transport to vaccination appointments, and redeploying council staff to support the vaccination programme;
5. Local government elections are due to take place on 6th May, when it is anticipated that not everyone will have received even their first dose of vaccination.

Council believes that:

1. High vaccination rates are essential to protecting everyone in our community and further afield, but vaccine hesitancy still exists among some people and the impact it may have on vaccination take-up is concerning;
2. An effective test, track and trace system is also essential in keeping our economy going and protecting lives, but so far in the pandemic the government have not succeeded in making this system the most effective it can be;
3. Teachers, police and frontline key workers need to be prioritised for vaccinations after the most vulnerable cohorts in our community to protect people and ensure public services and the economy can stay open;
4. While precautions will be taken to ensure a safe election day, the safest way for people to vote will be to stay at home and vote by post.

Council therefore resolves to:

1. Engage with the local community to understand and overcome vaccine hesitancy;
2. Call on the government to provide funding for local authorities to fully operate track and trace schemes;

3. Call on government to require commissioners for vaccine delivery to provide flexible, local solutions to enable access, remove barriers and reduce inequalities;
4. Pledge our support for teachers, police and frontline key workers to be vaccinated as a matter of priority;
5. Implement a comprehensive communications campaign to encourage people to sign up for a postal vote and provide information on how to do so;
6. Ask the Mayor to write to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care to ask him to implement these policies regarding track and trace and vaccinations, and copy in the MP for Watford asking him to make representations in support of the Council's position."

Members debated the motion and on being put to Council, the motion was agreed.

RESOLVED –

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Motion 3

The motion was proposed by Councillor Bell and seconded by Councillor Collett. Following the publication of the agenda an amendment had been suggested by Councillor Martins. As a result of discussions, Councillors Bell and Collett accepted the amendment.

“This Council recognises the brave and determined campaign by the Indian Farmers and their families to stand up for their rights against the Indian Government's agricultural reforms.

Watford Council condemns the violence being directed against farmers and their families who are protesting peacefully.

Such acts must stop with immediate effect.

We recognise the importance of protesting as a fundamental part of any democracy, and aggression towards peaceful protestors or their allies goes against the basics of a democratic society.

Council believes that use of physical force against individuals protesting peacefully is inhumane and unacceptable.

There are over 500,000 people in Britain who have settled here whose families originally came from the Punjab area of India and many have families settled in and around Watford.

This Council calls on the Mayor to raise our concerns about the physical restrictions on farmers in India engaged in peaceful demonstrations over introduction of new laws with the High Commission of India and the Foreign Office and to seek assurances that farmers in the affected areas will be allowed to demonstrate against the proposed changes in a peaceful manner.

Council further resolves to speak up for the Right to Peaceful Protest as defined by the European Convention of Human Rights whenever it affects Watford residents or their families whether in the UK or elsewhere in the world.”

Members debated the motion.

On being put to Council, the motion was agreed.

RESOLVED –

This Council recognises the brave and determined campaign by the Indian Farmers and their families to stand up for their rights against the Indian Government’s agricultural reforms.

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Chair

The Meeting started at 7.30 pm
and finished at 9.45 pm