

CABINET

1 June 2020

- Present: Mayor (Chair)
Councillors K Collett, S Johnson, I Sharpe, M Watkin and T Williams
- Also present: Councillors N Bell
- Officers: Managing Director
Acting Shared Director of Finance
Group Head of Democracy and Governance
Group Head of Place Shaping
Group Head of Community and Environmental Services
Group Head of Corporate Strategy and Communications
Head of Parks, Open Spaces and Projects
Principal Planning Officer (JG)
Business Development Manager
Mayor's Political Assistant
Democratic Services Manager

The Mayor welcomed everyone to the virtual Cabinet meeting. He introduced the councillors and officers present. He advised that at the end of each item he would ask each member of Cabinet how they wished to vote.

1 Apologies and welcome

There were no apologies for absence.

2 Disclosure of interests (if any)

There were no disclosures of interest.

3 Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 May 2020 were agreed. It was noted that the minutes would be signed once officers and members were able to return to the Town Hall.

4 **Conduct of meeting**

The Mayor reported he would go through the agenda as published. He welcomed Councillor Bell, Labour Group Leader to the meeting.

5 **Authority Monitoring Report 2019**

Cabinet received a report of the Spatial Planning Manager. The Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) covered the period 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019. It outlined progress made against the local plan timetable and the effectiveness of planning policies against targets and indicators.

Councillor Sharpe introduced the report and set out the background to the document and how it was an important tool whilst completing the Local Plan. He acknowledged that the greatest concern for members and the public was the delivery of housing in the town. It highlighted the challenges and difficulties the council had in meeting its targets.

The Spatial Planning Manager stressed the dates the report covered. He advised that changes in government policy and delivery, issued after 31 March 2019, were not included in this document but would be shown in the next annual report.

Following a question about the impacts of not delivering set targets and the Covid-19 pandemic, Councillor Sharpe responded that the government recognised there would be some impact due to coronavirus, however there would be no relaxation of policy. The Local Plan would identify how the council could best meet its targets.

The Spatial Planning Manager added that the council had passed the housing delivery test in March 2019, the end of this monitoring report. However since then the target had not been met. One year added growth also had to be applied to the five-year housing land supply, which meant that the current annual completions target for Watford was 944 dwellings. It had to be noted that planning permission had been granted for housing but they had not all been completed by the development industry.

Councillor Bell asked if the census would still be going ahead next year, as the town's demographics would have changed since the last census in 2011. He also enquired about co-operating with neighbouring authorities.

The Group Head of Corporate Strategy and Communications confirmed that currently the census was due to go ahead as planned.

Councillor Sharpe confirmed that the council worked with other authorities under its duty to co-operate. As part of longer term plans the council was working with neighbouring authorities on a Joint Strategic Partnership, valid to 2050. This was at an early stage. He reminded Cabinet and Councillor Bell that they had been sent details of an online seminar and survey to be completed by 5 June 2020. This enabled them to make comments about the future of the region.

In response to a question from Councillor Johnson about comments at Development Management Committee regarding housing targets, Councillor Sharpe explained that the council had approximately just over five years of land supply for housing. If the council did not have a five-year housing land supply then this was potentially a tool for developers to use if appealing a planning decision.

The Spatial Planning Manager advised that it was useful for members to have this information when considering planning applications. The biggest issue was the number of units completed by developers and not permissions.

RESOLVED –

That the Authority Monitoring Report be noted and published and that delegated authority be given to the Head of Planning Policy to make any minor amendments or corrections as required.

6 North Watford Cemetery Expansion

Cabinet received a report of the Head of Parks, Open Spaces and Projects summarising a proposal to expand the existing North Watford Cemetery site within the boundaries of the existing cemetery, based on unused land, currently ornamental landscape as well as options to pursue further provision outside of the Borough with neighbouring authorities.

Councillor Williams introduced the report. A review of the cemetery service had been carried out five years ago and in 2016 a 10-year strategy had been adopted. There had been concern about capacity at the site, which had led to other options being considered. The report before Cabinet set out how it would be possible to provide some additional capacity at North Watford Cemetery. Officers were already working to find ways of working with neighbouring authorities on this issue.

Finally Councillor Williams wished to thank all those officers who had been working at the cemetery over the last few months. There had been a significant

increase in the number of burials being carried out. The cemetery had continued to retain its Green Flag and had recently received the ICCM Gold Award.

The Head of Parks, Heritage and Culture thanked Councillor Williams for his kind words about the team. He commented that the proposal before members would provide some additional capacity until an alternative solution could be found.

Councillor Bell also thanked the cemetery team for their work during the pandemic. He stated he was putting a question on behalf of Councillor Khan. He asked if extra water points would be installed within the cemetery. With regard to co-operating with another authority he enquired if the Watford rates would have to change in line with the other council.

Councillor Williams responded that it had been hoped that the water points and extra pathways would have been completed by the previous contractor. However, Covid-19 had meant that the work had to stop. The council would ensure this work was completed either by the previous contractor or a new one. The work with another authority had yet to be formulated. It was at a very early stage and therefore difficult to be specific about costs etc.

RESOLVED –

1. that the proposals outlined and the design submitted by Southern Green Landscape Architects be accepted.
2. that progress to detailed design, procurement and appointment of a contractor be agreed.
3. that negotiation and work with neighbouring authorities in Hertfordshire about provision of burial space to meet future demands be agreed.

Mayor

The Meeting started at 7.00 pm
and finished at 7.30 pm