

CABINET

6 July 2020

- Present: Mayor Taylor (Chair)
- Councillors K Collett, S Johnson, I Sharpe, M Watkin and T Williams
- Also present: Councillors N Bell, F Ezeifedi, A Khan, M Parker and M Turmaine
- Officers: Managing Director
Acting Shared Director of Finance
Group Head of Democracy and Governance
Group Head of Human Resources
Group Head of Corporate Strategy and Communications
Group Head of Place Shaping
Head of Community Protection
Head of Housing
Housing Supply Manager
Senior Licensing Officer (AY)
Democratic Services Manager

7 Apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence.

8 Disclosure of interests (if any)

There were no disclosures of interest.

9 Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 June 2020 were agreed. It was noted that the minutes would be signed once officers and members were able to return to the Town Hall.

10 **Conduct of meeting**

The Mayor reported he would go through the agenda as published. He welcomed the non-Cabinet members to the meeting.

11 **Council Plan - 2020-2024 / Delivery Plan - 2020-22**

Cabinet received a report of the Managing Director and Group Head of Corporate Strategy and Communications incorporating the Council Plan 2020-2024. It also included the Delivery Plan 2020-22 that underpinned the Council Plan, setting out the programme of work. It was noted this report would be forwarded to Council on 14 July 2020.

The Mayor introduced the report and thanked the Managing Director and Group Head of Corporate Strategy and Communications for all their work in compiling the new Council Plan. It provided a future focus for the council, setting out how it would achieve its ambitions and commitments. He noted that Cabinet would receive a quarterly update on its progress.

The Managing Director informed Cabinet that the Council Plan contained three key themes and under each of these there were five commitments. The council was building on its response to Covid-19. The Delivery Plan was set for a period of 18 months and it was confirmed a quarterly update report would be provided to Cabinet. The approach was to ensure flexibility and enable the council to respond to emerging matters, which was important in the post Covid-19 era.

Councillor Collett noted that the Equality Impact Analysis had been prepared taking into account how the council had responded to Covid-19, aware of the protected characteristics and particularly the effect of Covid-19 on the BAME community.

Councillor Bell, leader of the Labour Group, thanked the Managing Director for the wide-ranging report. He commented that he agreed with much of its content. He had noted Councillor Collett's comments and referred to the motion submitted to Council by Councillor Ezeifedi.

RESOLVED –

1. that the Council Plan 2020-2024, at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved and recommended to Council, subject to any amendments.
2. that the Delivery Plan 2020-2022, at Appendix 2 to the report, be approved.

3. that it is recommended to Council that the Managing Director be authorised to make minor amendments to the Council Plan 2020-2024 in consultation with the Elected Mayor.
4. that the Managing Director be authorised to make minor amendments to the Delivery Plan 2020-2022 in consultation with the Elected Mayor.
5. that it is noted progress on delivering the Council Plan 2020-2024 to be reported on a quarterly basis to Cabinet, with an annual report being published.
6. that it is noted the actions outlined in the report that will contribute to the delivery of the Council Plan 2020-2024.
7. that the establishment of the new role of Executive/Group Head Assistant be agreed.

12 **Organisational Development Strategy**

Cabinet received a report of the Group Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development which included a new Organisational Development Strategy, setting out the council's ambitions for its staff to be the very best they could.

The Mayor introduced the report and advised that it underpinned how the council would implement the Council Plan. It would make sure staff had the right opportunity to develop the skills and knowledge to enable them to grow.

The Managing Director explained that the strategy was presented in a similar format to the Council Plan, in terms of themes and commitments. She had worked with the Staff Ambassadors Group during its development and the strategy had also been developed mindful of recent staff surveys. There were four themes:

- Workforce health and wellbeing
- An organisation driven by values and behaviours
- An agile organisation
- Performance and staff development

The Group Head of HR and Organisational Development informed Cabinet that a detailed delivery plan had been included to demonstrate how the strategy would be delivered.

Councillor Watkin thanked the Group Head of Service for his work on this strategy. He welcomed that the health and wellbeing of staff had been the top theme. He had been pleased to see the Customer Service Academy.

Councillor Johnson agreed with the sentiments contained within the strategy. It was right that mental health was an area on which the council focussed concentration.

Councillor Bell welcomed the emphasis on support and recognition for staff, particularly the idea of keeping staff within the council and promoting from within. The strategy contained good ideas.

RESOLVED –

that the Organisational Development Strategy and Delivery Plan be adopted.

13

2020/21 Revenue Budget and Capital Programme

Cabinet received a report of the Director of Finance setting out the latest forecast of the impact of Covid-19 on the council's finances. It also set out proposed actions to rebalance the budget and fund recovery activity during the remainder of the year.

Councillor Watkin introduced the report. He said that the version before Cabinet was slightly different to the one presented to Finance Scrutiny Committee. He explained the projected loss of income and increase in costs. The officers had identified savings to put against the net increase. The shortfall of £1 million would be taken from the economic reserve.

The Mayor noted that it was an evolving situation and the council was still waiting to hear the details of the Government's announcement made the previous week.

Councillor Turmaine, Chair of Finance Scrutiny Committee, commented that the scrutiny committee had received the budget report. It had been recognised the significant impact Covid-19 had had on the council's finances. The scrutiny committee would be closely monitoring the budget over the coming year.

The Director of Finance advised that there were two key risks that had still to be considered; financial implications related to the leisure centres and commercial income. The council had started to receive June quarter rents, however some had approached the council to ask for rephrasing.

Councillor Bell thanked the Director of Finance for her response to his email. He enquired when officers would have an indication of the shortfall from Council Tax collection. In addition he asked how the money added to the recovery fund would be spent.

The Director of Finance advised that she was aware people had requested changing payment dates. Once the statistics for June had been collated officers would have a better understanding. In respect of business rates there had been an impact in April but it was slowly recovering. However, she cautioned members that it may be some time before the council knew the full impact.

The Managing Director explained that £1.2 million added to the recovery reserve would support activities set out in the Road to Renewal item, with a focus on our businesses and community.

RESOLVED –

1. that the financial impact of Covid-19 and the work being done to balance the budget be noted.
2. that Cabinet recommends to Council that the Director of Finance be authorised to make the necessary adjustments to individual budgets to reflect the expenditure and loss of income arising from Covid-19 contained in the report, including the expenditure savings set out in Appendix 1 and the capital programme changes set out in Appendix 2.
3. that Cabinet recommends to Council the use of Earmarked Reserves as set out in Appendix 3 in order to create a Recovery Fund and that Council delegates the approval of expenditure from the Fund to the Managing Director in consultation with the Mayor.

14 **Financial Outturn 2019/20**

Cabinet received a report of the Director of Finance which provided the revenue and capital outturns for the 2019/20 financial year.

Councillor Watkin introduced the report. He highlighted some of the key elements of the report, including the overall underspend, further sum added to the economic reserve and the carry forward for the capital budget which would be rephrased in 2020/21.

The Director of Finance added that services had been challenged about any carry forwards by the Senior Leadership Team and had been reduced from the original proposals. Some had been required due to the pressures from Covid-19.

Councillor Turmaine confirmed that Finance Scrutiny Committee had received the report. It was important that the scrutiny committee monitored the rephasing.

RESOLVED –

1. that the 2019/20 revenue outturn, as shown in Annex A, and the year end position, which includes requests to carry forward budgets into 2020/21 be noted.
2. that the 2019/20 budget carry forwards into 2020/21, as recommended by the Strategic Leadership Team totalling £0.724 million, be approved.
3. that the 2019/20 capital outturn as shown in Annex A and to confirm the net rephasing of £20.220 million into 2020/21 and future years be noted.

15 **Covid-19 Our Road to renewal**

Cabinet received a report of the Managing Director and Head of Programme Management Office which set out the council's Road to Renewal plan.

The Managing Director introduced the report. She advised that this plan was critical in underpinning the Council Plan considered earlier in the meeting. It provided a focus on moving forward from Covid-19. The plan detailed the specific activities that would be undertaken by the council in leading the renewal work. The work streams, each supported by a number of objectives, in the plan were –

- Community
- Business and Economy
- Organisational Renewal
- Financial Resilience

RESOLVED –

1. that the Road to Renewal Plan work stream objectives outlined in the report be approved.
2. that the Road to Renewal delivery actions (Appendix 1 to the report) be approved.

3. that the Road to Renewal Plan governance structure (Appendix 2) and associated reporting proposals, including that progress on delivering the Road to Renewal delivery actions will be reported on a quarterly basis to Cabinet, be approved.
4. that the Managing Director be authorised to make amendments to the plan objectives, governance structure and delivery actions in consultation with the Elected Mayor and with oversight from the Renewal Coordination Group.
5. that the actions outlined in this report will contribute to the delivery of the Council Plan 2020-2024 be noted.

16

Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy

Cabinet received a report of the Head of Housing which included a draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, following a requirement to produce a Homelessness review.

Councillor Johnson introduced the report and highlighted key elements, including eliminating the number of rough sleepers from the streets, a housing scheme for single people and couples without children and homelessness prevention packages. The consultation about the strategy had generated 61 responses. There had only been one negative response; they had disagreed with the mission statement. He thanked the housing team for their ongoing hard work.

The Head of Housing added that the council had a statutory responsibility to review its strategy every five years. It had been developed in partnership with the voluntary and private sectors. Officers had carried out extensive research, including looking at good practice elsewhere. The key part of the strategy was the action plan, which would be reviewed annually.

Councillor Collett thanked the Housing team for their work; they were a credit to the council. They had shown a good working relationship with the council's partners in this area of work.

Councillor Bell welcomed the report, particularly the housing for single people, couples and those with complex needs. He looked forward to the new schemes and developments coming forward.

RESOLVED –

that the draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and associated documents be agreed.

17 **Section 13A Policy**

Cabinet received a report of the Head of Revenues and Benefits seeking approval for a Section 13A Local Government Finance Act 1992 scheme.

Councillor Watkin introduced the report. The scheme allowed the council to review requests from council taxpayers for an amount of their council tax to be reduced or written off.

The Director of Finance advised that this ensured the policy was set and allowed officers to consider individual cases as they arose.

The Mayor commented that the policy provided targeted support for those on the lowest income.

RESOLVED –

1. that the policy set out in appendix 1 to the report be approved.
2. that decisions relating to granting relief under the Scheme be delegated to the Revenues and Benefits Manager with reviews considered by the Head of Revenues and Benefits.

18 **Procurement Exemption - Medium Complex Needs Intensive Support Service**

Cabinet received a report of the Head of Housing which set out details of a decision taken by the Managing Director and provided to the executive for information.

Councillor Johnson introduced the report. It had been agreed to work with One YMCA, who would provide a scheme supporting individuals with medium complex needs. It would be a 12-month pilot. Funding had been found for this year.

The Head of Housing commented that this showed a good example of partnership working. It was a standalone scheme. Funding had been from grants from the government during the Covid-19 pandemic and the county

council. The intention was that this scheme would later be mainstreamed by the county council.

Councillor Bell said that this type of scheme would normally be the responsibility of the county council, but it was good that Watford Borough Council was doing it. He hoped the two councils would work closely together.

RESOLVED –

that the Approved Exemption to the Council's Procurement Procedures, in relation to the Medium Complex Intensive Support Service, set out in appendix A to the report, be noted.

19

Pavement Licensing Policy

Cabinet received a late report of the Senior Licensing Officer which put forward a new pavement licensing scheme.

Councillor Collett explained that the Business and Planning Bill was still progressing through Parliament. This temporary policy would allow businesses to serve drinks and food outside, following an application to the council.

The Head of Community Protection added that the Bill was currently at the House of Lords stage. When enacted it would come into immediate effect. In order to avoid delays in applications it was essential to get the policy approved as quickly as possible. Officers had been able to map potential locations through GIS.

The Mayor said that this showed an overall approach of working with businesses and provided an opportunity to bring more vibrancy to the town.

Councillor Bell thanked the Head of Community Protection for all the work she and her team had carried out throughout the Covid-19 pandemic.

Following a question from the Mayor about the application fee, the Head of Community Protection advised that the maximum permitted charge was £100. The majority of local authorities in Hertfordshire intended to charge the maximum fee. However some were only granting the licence for a set period, for example three or seven months. This would mean that businesses would have to reapply and pay another fee. Watford Borough Council would issue licences that ran through to September 2021, when the proposed legislation was due to expire. It would be less of a burden for businesses and the council. She reminded members that the bill was still progressing through Parliament. It would be effective as soon as the Bill received Royal Assent.

The Group Head of Democracy and Governance advised that a further recommendation was required –

“If any significant changes occur to the requirements for licences once the legislation is enacted, the Group Head of Community and Environmental Services in consultation with the Mayor be delegated to make any necessary changes to the policy.”

RESOLVED –

1. that the policy detailing the application process for the new pavement licensing regime attached as appendix 1 to the report be agreed.
2. that officers in the Environmental Health (Business) Team be given delegated power to determine applications for licences under this legislation with appeals and any revocations of Licences being determined by either the Group Head of Community and Environmental Services or the Head of Community Protection.
3. that the fee for each Licence be set at £100.
4. that, if any significant changes occur to the requirements for licences once the legislation is enacted, the Group Head of Community and Environmental Services in consultation with the Mayor be delegated to make any necessary changes to the policy.

Mayor

The Meeting started at 7.00 pm
and finished at 8.10 pm