

CABINET

9 November 2020

- Present: Mayor Taylor (Chair)
- Councillors K Collett, S Johnson, I Sharpe, M Watkin and T Williams
- Also present: Councillors N Bell, A Dychton, F Ezeifedi and G Saffery
Falak Kausar, local resident
Maria Manion, Watford BID
- Officers: Managing Director
Group Head of Democracy and Governance
(Shared Services) Director of Finance
Group Head of Community and Environmental Services
Group Head of Place Shaping
Executive Head of Corporate Strategy and Communications
Head of Programme Management Office
Parking Services Manager
Voluntary Sector Specialist
Senior Democratic Services Officer
Mayor's Political Assistant
Democratic Services Manager

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

39 **Apologies for absence**

There were no apologies for absence.

40 **Disclosure of interests (if any)**

There were no disclosures of interest.

41 **Minutes of previous meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 October 2020 were agreed. It was noted that the minutes would be signed once officers and members were able to return to the Town Hall.

42 **Conduct of meeting**

The Mayor reported he would go through the agenda as published.

43 **Petition - Benskin Road**

Cabinet received notification of a petition signed by the requisite number of residents. The Mayor invited Ms Falak Kausar to present the petition.

Ms Kausar explained that the petition related to one resident who used threatening and intimidating behaviour to any resident who parked in the disabled bay outside his property. He made claims that he worked for the council and that he had friends there, which was an abuse of power if it was true. He used council headed paper and left notices on car windscreens if parked in the disabled bay. She had spoken to a Civil Enforcement Officer who had said he did not know why he was required to put a penalty notice on the vehicle in the bay. When the car owner challenged the ticket they were told that a voucher was not on display; no picture had been taken by the enforcement officer. She did not feel it was appropriate for the council to respond to calls from the gentleman and to send an enforcement officer to issue penalty notices.

Ms Kausar commented that the gentleman appeared to believe that he had sole use of the bay. She acknowledged that parking spaces were scarce in the street, but people were considerate. She had seen him put notices on vehicles even if they were parked close to the bay.

The Mayor thanked Ms Kausar for her comments and invited Councillor Williams, Portfolio Holder for Client Services, to comment.

Councillor Williams thanked Ms Kausar for her contribution and highlighting the issues she and other local residents experienced. He commented that parking was an issue in this area, across Watford and nationally. He advised that the disabled bay had been approved in 2017 as the application met the criteria. It had to be noted that disabled bays were advisory and not statutory and therefore were not enforceable. The resident should not be threatening other individuals and not be making false claims. It was not acceptable to put a cone or any other obstruction in the bay.

Councillor Williams understood that the Parking Service had written to the resident. If the resident did not stop obstructing the highway, the matter could be referred to Hertfordshire Highways and enforcement action taken if appropriate.

The Head of Parking confirmed that one enforcement notice had been issued in that road. He confirmed that, as an advisory bay, any vehicle was able to park in the space as long as it displayed a visitor voucher or had a permit. Penalty notices would only be issued if there was any problem with the permit or voucher not being displayed. The service took seriously any reported abuse of power shown by an enforcement officer. He added that officers were not allocated one route, their routes were rotated, so it would be difficult for a resident to strike up an arrangement with one particular officer.

The Head of Parking stated that he and his officers did not agree with abusive behaviour against any neighbour. The bay had been provided as the application had met the required criteria. He had seen the evidence sent in by Ms Kausar and although it was difficult to read the letter in the windscreen in any detail, he had noted the name of an officer from Transport and Infrastructure, who had probably issued the original letter confirming the application met criteria. The letter had no bearing on enforcement or eligibility. The Parking Service's back office would deal with any notices that were challenged by residents.

The Head of Parking advised that he was aware of the gentleman concerned and assured Ms Kausar that he had no special relationship with the service and he had no access to the staff. He had the same provision as any other resident, who may contact the office to report a contravention. The back office would radio the nearest enforcement officer to check the issue raised, who would only issue a penalty notice if a vehicle contravened the regulations in that location. He added that any obstruction of the highway was the responsibility of the Hertfordshire Highways. The service had written to the resident advising them not to put anything in the bay and blocking it. Enforcement officers had been advised to remove any obstructions and place them on the footpath; they did not have the power to take it away.

The Mayor thanked the Head of Parking for his update. The Mayor considered it would be useful to write to all residents in the road and explain that the bay was not for the sole use of one resident and that it should not be obstructed by a cone or similar item.

The Mayor invited Councillor Bell to speak, who was the county councillor for West Watford.

Councillor Bell thanked the Head of Parking for clarifying the rules. He felt it would be useful to write to all residents to clarify the rules. He informed Ms Kausar that, as the county councillor for the area, he would be happy to follow up this matter from a county perspective. He had listened to the allegations that the person worked for the council, but he was not aware he had worked for the

council for a long time. It would also be useful for the resident to be reminded they could not put things on the road to save the space.

Ms Kausar stressed that no one should be threatened if they used the bay; this was not acceptable behaviour. People should be treated with respect. She added that the enforcement officer had no idea why he was issuing the ticket, but understood the resident held a high position in the council and the son had rung asking for the ticket to be issued.

The Mayor thanked Ms Kausar and assured her that the person did not currently work for the council and had not done so for some time. He would ensure that the ticket issued and shown in the evidence was investigated. It had been agreed by the Head of Parking that a letter would be sent to all residents in Benskin Road setting out the status of the bay. He had also said that he would report the situation to Hertfordshire Highways and ask them to look into the matter further.

44

Watford BID ballot - February 2021

Cabinet received a report of the Executive Head of Strategy and Communications that outlined the proposals for the Watford Business Improvement District (BID) Ballot which was due to take place in February 2021.

Councillors Sharpe and Collett introduced the report. It was noted how the BID had been integral to the town and had supported businesses throughout the pandemic. It had been instrumental in supporting them as businesses opened after the first lockdown. There would be a lot of work to be carried out to ensure an agreement for the BID could be reached. Each business would be required to make an extra contribution towards the business rates.

The Managing Director informed Cabinet that the BID's five-year term would end in March 2021. It had proven to be successful. The report set out information to ensure it met the relevant legislation. The BID supported the council's strategic plan and had a critical role in the road to renewal. The BID's plan demonstrated how it set out to support businesses to bounce back from the pandemic.

In response to a question from Councillor Bell about extending the BID area, Maria Manion, the BID's Chief Executive, explained that the proposal was to retain the same area for the next five-year term. This was due to the consultation required to be undertaken. It would be very difficult to carry this out whilst most businesses were not open, for example Clarendon Road offices. Within a year it would be possible to consider a new BID to incorporate other areas, including Market Street, Waterfields and Clarendon Road. This would be a BID in its own right. It would be necessary to carry out consultation in the area.

The new BID would be managed within existing resources. It was essential to stabilise the town centre, the cultural sector and night-time economy.

RESOLVED –

1. that the renewal of the Watford Business Improvement District (BID) be supported and agrees that the proposed Business Plan 2021-2026 (Appendix 3) meets the required regulatory requirements;
2. that the Ballot Holder be instructed to formally manage the ballot process in accordance with the BID Regulations;
3. that the Group Head of Place Shaping be authorised to vote ‘Yes’ in relation to the council’s votes as a National Non Domestic Rates (NNDR) levy payer in the BID ballot;
4. that, subject to a ‘Yes’ vote at ballot, the council as the relevant local billing authority confirms it will manage the billing and collection of the BID levy and its transfer to the BID Company in accordance with the BID Regulations, and will recharge the BID Company for the collection costs of the levy, as estimated in Appendix 2; and
5. that the Executive Head Strategy and Communications be authorised to ensure that the legal arrangements are appropriately formulated, the council will continue to hold a Service Level Agreement together with a data protection arrangement with the BID Company.

45

**Progress report on the delivery of the council's strategic framework;
Council Plan, Organisational Development Strategy and Road to Renewal
Plan**

Cabinet received a report of the Managing Director, Executive Head of Strategy and Communications and Head of Enterprise Programme Management Office. The report provided an update on the progress of the Council Plan, Organisational Development Strategy and Covid-19 Road to Renewal Plan.

The Mayor welcomed the report and commented that it was good to see the progress being made. He invited the Managing Director to introduce the report.

The Managing Director highlighted some of the key achievements over the last three months. The report included some of the completed projects under the Council Plan’s three themes, the Organisational Development Strategy and the Covid-19 Road to Renewal Plan. She thanked all the council’s staff who had been unwavering in their commitment to deliver the projects.

The Mayor thanked the Managing Director and endorsed her comments. However, he felt the council had undersold itself in the report. He referred to the re-profiling of dementia work. It seemed to imply the work had been paused.

The Managing Director noted the Mayor's comments about 're-profiling' and assured members that it did not mean that projects had been paused. The phrase would be reviewed for future reports.

All portfolio holders commented on the report and acknowledged the work that had been achieved across all areas. It was agreed to be an ambitious programme. Key points included –

- First steps leadership programme and learning how to grow the council's own staff.
- The great works in parks and open spaces, which had been enjoyed during lockdown.
- IT team had enabled the council's work to carry on.
- Mental health support for staff.
- Success of Oxhey Activity Park.
- Work carried out to ensure local economy thrives.

Councillor Bell noted the Mayor's comments about the dementia projects and welcomed these plus the other important initiatives. He noted the amount of funds left in the renewal fund and asked if there were any plans how this would be used.

The Managing Director advised that the report had highlighted the areas of work that had already been funded. Officers were actively look at how the remaining funding could be used to best support the road to renewal. For example with the new national restrictions there may be new initiatives that arose to support the local economy

RESOLVED –

1. that Cabinet notes the progress updates within this report relating to:
 - the Council Plan 2020-24 and Delivery Plan 2020 -22 (Appendix A);
 - the Organisational Development Strategy 2020-24 (Appendix B); and
 - the Road to Renewal Plan (Appendix C).

2. that the significant corporate effort over the last four months that has resulted in the level of progress made against all three plans be noted.
3. that the impact of external factors on some areas of delivery be noted. These will be re-profiled to reflect the current environment during Quarter 3. Whilst delivery over the life of the plans remains a corporate commitment, the impact of the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic will be the focus of the council's corporate effort.
4. that the proposal to bring regular updates to Cabinet on the three plans on a quarterly basis be noted. From Quarter 3 the ambition is to include reporting on the Council Plan and Delivery Plan and the Road to Renewal Plan on the council's new business intelligence platform. Once this is established a similar approach will be taken to the Organisational Development Strategy 2020-24 and Delivery Plan.
5. that Cabinet notes that a communications plan will be linked to the update reporting on the Council Plan and Road to Renewal Plan to ensure the Council communicates its progress and achievements to our community. An annual report will be developed on the Council Plan progress, which will be distributed to residents and stakeholders.
6. that Cabinet notes staff will be engaged throughout the delivery of the Organisational Development Strategy and regular opportunities to feedback will be an integral part of delivery.

46

Watford and Three Rivers Trust Task Group report

Cabinet received a report of the Senior Democratic Services Officer incorporating the Watford and Three Rivers Trust Task Group's final report. The final report included the task group's recommendations.

The Mayor invited Councillor Saffery, who had chaired the task group, to present the report and recommendations.

Councillor Saffery explained each of the recommendations and the rationale behind them.

Councillor Collett, Portfolio Holder for communities, commented that the Watford and Three Rivers Trust had worked very closely with the council through the pandemic. The number of volunteers who had come forward had been heart-warming. It was essential to hold their enthusiasm. The Trust had had its own challenges. The Community Fund would benefit from a dedicated member of staff. They would also be able to encourage and support smaller or

unconstituted groups. She agreed that the voluntary sector and the business community would benefit from working together and referred to the support given to Small Acts of Kindness by one business whose staff helped the organisation to pack bags. She thanked Councillor Saffery, the task group and officers for their work on this piece of work.

Councillor Williams, portfolio holder for client services, wished to echo Councillor Collett's comments. He thanked the community sector who had responded during the pandemic. It was important that the Trust got out and engaged with individual organisations through more outreach work.

Councillor Bell acknowledged the important work carried out by the task group. He explained that Councillor Dhindsa was unable to support the final report. He had been concerned about the lack of funds for BAME groups. He had also felt it was important that the Trust undertook more outreach work. Some BAME groups had not been aware of the community fund or not until it was too late. Councillor Dhindsa did not feel this had been highlighted sufficiently in the report. It was also felt the fundraiser should be employed by the council.

The Mayor asked Councillor Saffery to comment on Councillor Bell's remarks. Councillor Saffery advised that a final decision would have to be made about the employment of the fundraiser. It had been envisaged initially that they would be employed by the Trust. The council provided funding for the Trust. The potential co-location of the position had come up during discussions but it would be for others to make a final decision as the recommendations were progressed. The report had recognised Councillor Dhindsa's comments and had addressed the outreach work required with the BAME community.

Following a question from the Mayor about the implementation of the recommendations, the Group Head of Community and Environmental Services responded that the intention was to combine them with the recommendations set out in the Voluntary Community Strategy, if Cabinet agreed the next item. An action plan would be developed and brought back to Cabinet for approval. He had already scheduled a meeting with the Trust's Chief Executive to discuss the recommendations from both reports.

RESOLVED –

that the task group's recommendations be approved:

1. W3RT should take steps to improve understanding of its activities in the local community.

2. There is a need for W3RT to build more and better partnership working across the local community.
3. W3RT and the wider local voluntary sector would benefit from a dedicated fundraiser at Watford and Three Rivers Trust.
4. The Community Fund should be established as a lasting pillar of support for Watford's voluntary sector.
5. W3RT needs to clarify its long-term strategy for recruiting and sustaining local volunteering activities.
6. W3RT should ensure that connections with local partners and statutory bodies are maintained in order to maximise the number of volunteers locally.
7. W3RT and the business community should strengthen their links.
8. W3RT and WBC should maintain a strong and collaborative working relationship.

47

VCS Strategy

Cabinet received a report of the Voluntary Sector Specialist which included the new strategy. The Mayor invited Councillor Collett to introduce the report.

Councillor Collett thanked the Voluntary Sector Specialist for her work and bringing the strategy together. She also wished to thank everyone who had gone the extra mile during the pandemic. The pandemic had highlighted successes and it was now necessary to build on these. The strategy would enable a more collaborative working. She appreciated the views and recommendations from all the participants which had led to this strategy.

The Voluntary Sector Specialist had found it useful to have the support of officers and the councillors on the task group. In addition the members of the community had been generous with their time.

The Group Head of Community and Environmental Services added that officers had been humbled by the way the community had stepped up during the current crisis. Strong bonds had been developed. The recommendations in the strategy showed how this work could be taken forward. An action plan would be developed and reported to Cabinet. It would cover the recommendations from the task group and the strategy.

RESOLVED –

1. that the Voluntary and Community Strategy be adopted.
2. that delegated authority be given to the Group Head of Community and Environmental Services to develop a 4 year action plan to deliver the Strategy, in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder.
3. that, once completed, progress with this action plan be reported to Cabinet as part of the quarterly updates on progress with the Council Plan.

Mayor

The Meeting started at 7.00 pm
and finished at 8.20 pm