

CABINET

30 November 2020

Present: Mayor (Chair)
Councillors K Collett, S Johnson, I Sharpe, M Watkin and
T Williams

Also present: Councillors N Bell, A Dychton, F Ezeifedi and P Jeffree

Officers: Managing Director
(Shared Services) Director of Finance
Group Head of Democracy and Governance
Group Head of Place Shaping
Group Head of Community and Environmental Services
Executive Head of Corporate Strategy and Communications
Head of Housing
Head of Development Management
Head of Leisure and Environmental Services
Interim Head of Property
Principal Planning Officer (JG)
Housing Supply 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.

48 **Apologies for absence**

There were no apologies for absence.

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

There were no disclosures of interest.

50 **Minutes of previous meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 November 2020 were agreed. It was noted that the minutes would be signed once officers and members were able to return to the Town Hall.

51 **Conduct of meeting**

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

52 **Procurement Exemption - Rough Sleeper Winter Accommodation and Intensive Support for Rough Sleepers with and without recourse to public funds**

Cabinet received a report of the Head of Housing setting out details of the procurement exemption agreed on 2 November 2020. It enabled the council to procure two projects with One YMCA.

Councillor Johnson, Portfolio Holder for Housing, was invited to introduce the report. He stated that the Head of Housing and Housing Strategy Officer had put together strong bids to support the most deprived group in the town. The schemes would provide Covid-19 compliant accommodation and support for up to five rough sleepers with no recourse to public funds up to 31 December 2020 and up to 15 rough sleepers with recourse to public funds to March 2021. He invited the Head of Housing to further introduce the report.

The Head of Housing explained the bidding process to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). The process had involved working through the bid with the MHCLG and the county council. This procurement exemption referred to two schemes that would provide Covid-19 compliant accommodation through the winter. The previous communal facilities used for the winter night shelters would not have been suitable under the Covid restrictions. Soft market testing had been carried out and three providers had submitted bids. One YMCA had been chosen due to the quality of its bid and the ability to deliver the scheme.

In response to a question from the Mayor about progress on the homelessness strategy, the Head of Housing confirmed progress was being made. The team carried out a significant amount of monitoring. The target was for a near zero number of people on the streets. The service had a better understanding of this community. It was trying to support those from outside Watford back to their original communities. There was a fear that successful schemes became a magnet for people to come to the area as word spread amongst the rough sleeper community. It had to be recognised that it would be difficult to achieve actual zero as some people did not want support. The team worked with colleagues in the health and mental health profession. They would also be working with Community Protection to show that it was no longer acceptable to remain on the street in Watford.

Councillor Bell thanked officers for the comprehensive report, which he supported. He had taken part in the rough sleeper count. He had yet to hear the result.

The Head of Housing explained that the figure had to be verified at government level and would be announced in January. The Portfolio Holder added that he believed it to be significantly less than the last verified number which was 13.

Following a question about success rates, the Head of Housing advised that it would take some time. For example the next report covered the Housing First scheme which was at least a two-year project. Other schemes would be a minimum of nine or 12 months before it would be possible to see a difference.

RESOLVED –

that Cabinet notes the Approved Exemption to the Council's Procurement Procedures in relation to the Winter Accommodation and Intensive Support provision for Rough Sleepers set out in Appendix 1 to the report.

53

Procurement Exemption - Housing First Support

Cabinet received a report of the Head of Housing which set out the details of the procurement exemption for the Housing First specialist support contract. The council had successfully obtained funding from the MHCLG to support 10 rough sleepers who would be accommodated in self-contained homes. The homes were to be purchased by Watford Community Housing; the exemption was to enter into a contract with the One YMCA to offer support to those being housed.

In response to a question, the Head of Housing said that he was confident Watford Community Housing would find all 10 properties. They were currently in the process of purchasing six units and had identified the remaining four units and were in negotiations for them.

RESOLVED –

that Cabinet notes the Approved Exemption to the Council's Procurement Procedures in relation to the Housing First-principled Specialist Support Provision set out in Appendix 1 of the report.

54

Final Draft Local Plan

Cabinet received a report of the Interim Head of Planning and Building Control which sought approval for the final draft Watford Local Plan to be published for Regulation 19 consultation.

Councillor Sharpe, Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Development, was invited to introduce the report. He informed Cabinet that the plan had been developed in a constantly changing planning system. It had been a significant challenge and expressed his gratitude to current and former officers for their work in producing this important document for the council. The plan would shape the future of the town for many years. He set out some of the areas covered in the report including, developing high-quality office floorspace, improvement to the green infrastructure, built heritage, infrastructure and sustainable transport.

Councillor Sharpe said one of the biggest challenges was the level of housing growth the council was required to meet. The plan helped to shape locations for development. The planning team had worked hard to identify appropriate sites. The council attempted to protect the character of the residential neighbourhoods. Following the consultation, the plan would be examined by a government-appointed inspector who would consider if the plan was sound.

Following a question from the Mayor about the consultation process, the Executive Head of Corporate Strategy and Communications advised that the team had tried to find new ways to engage with the local community in addition to traditional methods. They had identified particular target groups, including young people, older residents, the BAME community and the disabled community. A range of consultation tools had been developed. There was a dedicated website. In addition they had tried to ensure that the document was in plain English.

Councillor Bell welcomed the communications plan. He said it was very important that Watford residents were able to have their say. The test would be in the future if residents felt their area was losing its character and any loss of heritage.

The Interim Head of Planning and Building Control advised that there were a number of detailed policies within the plan to cover this. It was necessary to make the best opportunity for heritage assets to be used so that they could be enjoyed by future generations.

Councillor Johnson welcomed the social housing proposals. He added that he realised that it would not be without difficulties to get every social home possible. He was concerned about the density of some proposed sites, for example the Tesco site in the Lower High Street.

The Spatial Planning Manager explained that as part of the Regulation 19 consultation, people would be asked about the content of the plan and any

concerns. There would be scope for officers to consider any comments and if it was possible to improve the plan to ensure the best policies had been applied. The changes would be put to the planning inspector who would make any changes. At this point the key point was whether the plan was sound.

The Interim Head of Planning and Building Control added that it was necessary to look at planning in the round. Density was founded on evidence, mapping it to public transport and local facilities.

Councillor Collett asked for clarification about the communications. She was pleased that young people would be contacted. She questioned whether sixth formers and college students would be included. In addition she commented that some older people did not have access to social media and enquired if there would be a mailshot.

The Executive Head of Corporate Strategy and Communications confirmed that the college and sixth forms would be contacted. Hard copies of the review would be available and a group of older residents was being set up. The Mayor mentioned that it had already been presented to the Dementia Steering Group.

RESOLVED –

1. that the Watford final draft Local Plan, content set out at Appendix A of the report and proposed graphic design included at Appendix B of the report, be approved for publishing for Regulation 19 consultation.
2. that delegated authority to the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Development to approve any minor amendments required including following feedback from the Sustainability Appraisal and a peer review prior to publication be agreed.

55 **Exclusion of press & public**

RESOLVED –

that, under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business as it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the public were present during consideration of the items there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in Section 100(1) of the Act for the reasons stated below in terms of Schedule 12A.

56 **Watford Colosseum Management Arrangements**

Cabinet received a report of the Head of Leisure and Environmental Services setting out management arrangements for Watford Colosseum.

RESOLVED –

1. that, with effect from 1 January 2021, the council takes on the management of Watford Colosseum.
2. that delegated authority be granted to the Group Head of Community and Environmental Services for the day to day management of the Colosseum.
3. that Council be recommended to approve a draft budget for operating the Colosseum until April 2022.

57 **Approval to refurbishment works at Croxley Business park**

Cabinet received a report of the Interim Head of Regeneration and Property setting out proposals for refurbishment work at Croxley Business Park.

RESOLVED –

1. that the refurbishment of suites within Building 4 and 6, and suites 5 and 6 of Building 4 Croxley Business Park as set out in appendix 1 of the report be approved.
2. that the Group Head of Place Shaping / Head of Property and Regeneration be given delegated authority to approve expenditure on refurbishments as recommended by the council's advisors up to a limit of £500,000 per unit.

58 **Update on progress at Watford Riverwell**

Cabinet received a report of the Interim Head of Regeneration and Property which provided an update on the progress to date on the regeneration of Watford Riverwell.

RESOLVED –

1. that Cabinet endorses the Watford Health Campus Partnership LLP business plan for Riverwell appended to the report.

2. that Cabinet notes the decision to increase the number of socially rented homes and to deliver 35% affordable housing by habitable room in order to best respond to the current demand for larger socially rented homes in Watford.
3. that Cabinet notes West Hertfordshire Hospital Trust (WHHT) will fund and fully operate and maintain the MSCP dedicated to hospital usage whilst the Watford Health Campus Partnership LLP will provide Development and Project Management services and deliver it as a 'turnkey' project to WHHT.
4. that Cabinet notes the current plans to redevelop the Watford General Hospital campus and the steps being taken to integrate the two masterplans to deliver cohesive regeneration.
5. that Cabinet notes the options for Industrial Zone North.
6. that Cabinet notes the progress made at Woodlands.
7. that Cabinet notes the progress on sites sold to third party developers (Mayfield and Bellway).

Mayor

The Meeting started at 7.00 pm
and finished at 8.25 pm