

**RESPONDING TO THE IMPACTS OF COVID 19 ON WATFORD'S BAME COMMUNITIES AND STREET NAME POLICY REVIEW TASK GROUP**

**5 January 2021**

**Present:** Councillor Councillor Favour Ezeifedi (Chair)  
Members: Councillor Dawn Allen-Williamson, Councillor Peter Jeffree, Councillor Asif Khan and Councillor Jennifer Pattinson

**Officers:** Head of Customer Experience  
Geographic Information Officer  
Senior Democratic Services Officer  
Democratic Services Officer (JK)

**6 Apologies for absence**

Councillor Allen-Williamson sent apologies that she was delayed.

**7 Disclosures of interest**

None.

**8 Welcome and introduction**

The officers introduced themselves and their roles.

The Geographic Information Officer reported to the Head of Customer Experience and was responsible for delivering the GIS and street naming function as well as the property database (local land and property gazetteer).

**9 Research update**

Councillor Jeffree explained the research work he had undertaken into street naming policies. He circulated a draft policy as a basis for discussion.

The task group considered the four roads listed in the original motion to Council as having unsavoury colonial connections – Clive Way/Imperial Way/Rhodes Way/Colonial Way. Other street names that might not be worth celebrating were also considered. Councillor Khan advised that when drafting his motion for Council he had reviewed the names with certain criteria in mind, for example

discounting those with a local connection. The streets listed in the motion were the key questionable roads and it was not clear why the names had been chosen.

The task group agreed that it would be valuable to recommend that a street naming policy be adopted by the council in their final report. Residents were not necessarily in favour of changing road names; it would be better to focus on establishing a formal policy for the council.

Members noted the importance of consultation with local residents and businesses to ensure any changes had an evidence base. Only those directly affected could be consulted. Businesses on the streets in question were unlikely to be in favour of change. Officers advised that two thirds of respondents to the formal consultation had to be in favour for a change to proceed. Royal Mail had the final say, mostly based on practical considerations.

The task group discussed the option of education; explaining the history and why certain street names might be unpalatable. Signage exploring the background had the potential to be vandalised. Members were supportive of this approach and suggested producing educational resources, perhaps with Herts for Learning.

An exhibition could be a vehicle to understand residents' views on changing street names.

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### **WBC street naming policy documents**

The task group reviewed the draft policy and the council's existing guidance documents.

Members suggested that any consultation on changing street names should include engagement with elected members for the relevant ward. It was noted that one criterion was whether a name for a new street was 'likely to cause offence'. Adding a link to slavery was suggested. Officers advised that a broad definition of offence was best as names could be offensive for any number of reasons. The policy might use examples, 'including slavery'.

The task group discussed the costs of changing street names, especially for businesses. Officers advised that land registry overheads were £40 per property and there might also be a need to establish ownership. It would be important to consider the cost implications for residents and businesses if a change of name were agreed and who would bear those costs.

It was noted that Watford was a dense borough with not many street naming opportunities.

Officers reported that they held a list of ideas for new street names which had a local or geographical significance. They also liaised with the museum. Developers often had different ideas and negotiations took place over suitable names. Task group members emphasised that names should reflect the diversity of the town. It was agreed that the officers' list of ideas would be circulated to the task group.

11 **Street naming themes**

The task group discussed themes for street naming and emphasised the need to reflect the town's diversity and history.

It was agreed that a period of time was required after a person had died to ensure their reputation stood the test of time; streets should not be named after living people.

12 **Recommendations**

Task group members suggested two recommendations; a new street naming policy and an exhibition and education programme exploring Watford's diverse communities, including the background and history of some of its street names.

There was no time for a full consultation to be carried out at this stage.

A new street naming policy would provide a good framework and did not close the door to considering name changes in future depending on the views of residents and businesses.

Chair

The Meeting started at 6.00 pm  
and finished at 7.15 pm