

## **COUNCIL**

**19 July 2021**

Present: Councillor B Mauthoor (Chairman)  
Councillor A Grimston (Vice-Chair)  
Councillors P Taylor, D Allen-Williamson, N Bell, K Clarke-Taylor,  
M Devonish, J Dhindsa, A Dychton, F Ezeifedi, S Feldman,  
I Hamid, P Hannon, M Hofman, P Jeffree, S Johnson, A Khan,  
R Martins, T Osborn, A Saffery, G Saffery, N Shah, R Smith,  
B Stanton, J Stiff, I Stotesbury, S Trebar, M Turmaine, D Walford,  
M Watkin, D Watling, R Wenham and T Williams

Also present: Freemen of the Borough, Mavis Tyrwhitt and Norman  
Tyrwhitt

Officers: Group Head of Democracy and Governance  
Senior Democratic Services Officer  
Democratic Services Manager  
Mayor's Political Assistant

### **17 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies had been received from Councillors Crout and Parker, and from the Managing Director Donna Nolan.

Councillors Pattinson and Kloss also sent their apologies which were due to a requirement to self-isolate.

### **18 Disclosure of Interests**

There were no disclosures of interest.

### **19 Minutes**

The minutes of the Annual Council meeting held on 25 May 2021 were submitted and signed.

### **20 Official Announcements**

**Alan Garside**

The meeting noted with sadness the death of Alan Garside who had worked in the Democratic Services team until very recently. Councillors Bell, Grimston and Watkin paid tribute to his straightforward efficiency, sincerity and professionalism, extending deepest condolences to Alan's wife and family. A minute's silence was held in acknowledgement and appreciation of Alan's services to the council.

### **Register of Interests**

The Chairman advised that some members had been provided with register of interest forms. These needed to be completed and returned to Carol Chen at the end of the meeting.

### **Neighbours Together**

Members were advised that there was a Zoom meeting on 20 July to provide information about the Watford and Three Rivers Trust's Neighbours Together initiative. Those interested should contact Sandra Hancock or Anita Hibbs, or book through the Members Portal.

### **Chairman's events since Annual Council**

The Chairman gave a brief overview of her activities over the past eight weeks:

- **Cassiobury Park** – noting her thanks to the friends of Cassiobury Park following her recent visit, the Chairman described the planned work to restore the park's nature reserve and transform the wetlands habitat.
- **Armed Forces Week** – the Chairman had raised the armed forces flag with Mayor Taylor on 21 June.
- **Royal Visit** – the Chairman had welcomed HRH Prince Richard the Duke of Gloucester to the One Vision project at Stanborough Church alongside other distinguished guests, including the Lord Lieutenant Robert Voss CBE, Kate Holland – Hibbert DL and Lionel Wallace.
- **St John's Day** – on 24 June the town hall had been lit up in green to honour St John's Ambulance and remember their bravery and hard work, particularly during the current pandemic.
- **NHS Day** – the Chairman had attended the NHS Charities Together campaign and raised the flag on 5 July. This was followed by afternoon tea at Tremona Care home where the Chairman had met with residents and staff.

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### **Mayor's Report**

A report of the Mayor had been circulated with the agenda.

The Chairman invited members to indicate whether they wished to ask a question of the Mayor. Councillors Watling, Trebar, Turmaine, Khan, Dhindsa, Bell, Ezeifedi and Smith indicated that they wished to ask questions.

Before responding to members' questions, Mayor Taylor paid personal tribute to Alan Garside extending sincere condolences to his wife and family.

Referring to the government's decision to ease lockdown restrictions on 19 July, the Mayor underlined the ongoing problems associated with Covid 19. Acknowledging the considerable efforts of many to tackle the coronavirus locally, he encouraged all those eligible to take up the vaccine to afford themselves maximum protection.

The Mayor wished everyone a pleasant summer break with their families.

1. Councillor Watling asked if the Mayor had plans to include Gareth Southgate in his cultural recognition plan. Mr Southgate, who had been born in Watford, had demonstrated great statesmanship during the recent European football tournament.

The Mayor acknowledged the contribution made by Gareth Southgate and praised his exemplary leadership as England Manager. He would be happy to discuss suitable recognition with members, but cautioned that the Freedom of the Borough was awarded specifically to those who had made an exceptional contribution to the life of the town.

2. Following up her written question, Councillor Trebar asked whether the Mayor had any local plans to tackle the racism exhibited in the aftermath of the European football tournament.

The Mayor concurred that it was important to be ever vigilant to hate crime and racism. These issues were also taken extremely seriously by the police. He was happy to work on a cross party basis and invited input and suggestions from all members. The Mayor underlined that Watford was an open and tolerant town but there was no room for complacency.

3. Councillor Turmaine asked about progress to achieve accreditation from the Living Wage Foundation, a commitment made previously by the Mayor.

The Mayor advised that all staff directly employed by Watford Borough Council were paid at least the national living wage, the importance of which should be recognised by all councillors. This commitment remained integral to all future contracts. Indeed, the current contract with SLM

went above and beyond the legal minimum requirements. The Mayor noted that the process to achieve formal recognition had been started by the council.

4. Councillor Khan noted that local Covid rates and hospitalisations were on the rise. There also continued to be a small number of deaths. He asked the Mayor what advice he would give to local entertainment venues about how people should keep safe.

The Mayor confirmed that local case rates were on the rise: from 76 cases per 100,000 to over 350 cases per 100,000 over the last month. He noted that 75% of local residents had received at least one vaccine and 55% had received two. Ongoing work was required to encourage further uptake. The Mayor lamented the poor leadership of the government in its lockdown easing and the difficulties this presented to local businesses.

5. Councillor Dhindsa referred to the government's Restart Grant scheme for businesses. He questioned whether there was likely to be a surplus and, if so, what the plans were for this.

The Mayor advised that there would not be a surplus of funds from the scheme; it was vital that all monies were paid out to local businesses some of whom had missed out on earlier allocations. Officers continued to work tirelessly to distribute the grants to local businesses, including taxi drivers and market traders.

6. Councillor Bell asked the Mayor whether it was responsible for the Pryzm nightclub owner to aspire to welcome some 2,000 people at the club in Watford once Covid restrictions were eased.

The Mayor stated that criticism should be levelled at the government's poor leadership rather than at local businesses. The council's environmental health officers were working strenuously with businesses to encourage safe behaviours and to mitigate the risks of transmission. It was important that people exercised caution, particularly 18-30 year olds who as a group were less likely to be fully vaccinated against Covid.

7. Councillor Ezeifedi thanked the Mayor for his update on progress against the recommendations from the scrutiny task group she had chaired earlier in the year. In a follow-up question, she asked who would chair the One Watford Equality and Diversity Forum and when councillors would be provided with further information on this grouping.

Mayor Taylor advised that Councillor Dychton was the relevant portfolio holder for this area, but he was happy to have a discussion with all members about the details. The Mayor agreed to ensure that an update briefing be provided to members on the council's equality and diversity work.

8. Councillor Smith noted that the council was running a number of events over the summer. He questioned what plans the council had in place to keep people safe.

The Mayor underlined that all the planned events were taking place outdoors where the Covid risks were lower. Additional precautions would be put in place including, the use of track and trace systems, encouraging people to remain in social bubbles and promoting the use of hand sanitiser. Against this, the Mayor commented that it was important to focus on the positive benefits of attending events on people's mental health.

## 22 **Questions by Members of the Council under Council Procedure Rule 10.0**

Questions had been received from Councillors Ezeifedi and Trebar. The questions and answers had been circulated as part of the supplementary agenda and published on the internet.

## 23 **Questions by Members of the Public under Council Procedure Rule 11.0**

No questions from the public had been received.

## 24 **Petitions presented under Council Procedure Rule 12.0**

No petitions had been received.

## 25 **Business especially brought forward by the Chairman or the Head of Paid Service which in the opinion of the Chairman should be considered as a matter of urgency.**

There was no urgent business.

## 26 **Local Development Scheme**

Council received the report of the Spatial Development Manager regarding the Local Development Scheme, which had been considered by Cabinet on 5 July 2021. This set out the subject, scope and timetable for the preparation of

Development Plan Documents, including the Local Plan which was anticipated would be adopted in June 2022.

RESOLVED –

Council agreed that:

1. the Local Plan timetable, attached as Appendix A, be adopted.
2. minor updates to the Local Development Scheme be delegated to the Head of Planning and Development in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Commercial Property, Planning and Housing Services.

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### **Watford Local Plan: Submission Document**

Council received the report of the Spatial Planning Manager which included the draft Watford Local Plan and proposed modifications. It was noted that this had been approved by Cabinet at its meeting on 5 July 2021.

RESOLVED –

Council agreed that:

1. the final draft Watford Local Plan, attached at Appendix A, and the Final Draft Watford Local Plan inclusive of proposed modifications (track changes), attached as Appendix B, be submitted to the Secretary of State Housing and Local Government for Examination in Public.
2. any minor updates to the Schedule of Proposed Main Modifications and Schedule of Proposed Minor Modifications can be made by the Head of Planning and Development in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Commercial Property, Planning and Housing Services.
3. delegated authority be given to the Head of Planning and Development in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Commercial Property, Planning and Housing Services, to undertake consultation on the Schedule of Main Modifications and Schedule of Minor Modifications, as recommended by the appointed Planning Inspector following the Examination in Public.

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### **Review of Parliamentary Boundaries**

Council received the report of the Group Head of Democracy and Governance regarding the Boundary Commission for England's proposals for new

Parliamentary constituency boundaries for England. It was considered whether council wished to respond to the consultation.

RESOLVED –

that Council responds to the consultation by supporting the proposals for the Watford Parliamentary Constituency.

29 **Neighbourhood Locality Fund Annual Report 2020/21**

Council received the report of the Democratic Services Manager providing the annual report for the Neighbourhood Locality Funds in accordance with the fund's protocol. This included information about the overall budget and types of projects the wards had supported during 2020/21.

RESOLVED –

that the Neighbourhood Locality Fund annual report be noted.

30 **Scrutiny annual report 2020-21**

Council received the report of the Senior Democratic Services Officer describing the work and process of the council's scrutiny committees and task groups during 2020-21.

RESOLVED –

that Council notes the annual scrutiny report for 2020-21.

31 **Motions submitted under Council Procedure Rule 13.0**

Council was informed that two motions had been received.

**Motion 1**

The following motion was proposed by Councillor Bell, seconded by Councillor Smith:

“Watford Council condemns the proposals in the Government's planning bill that will take away our local democratic oversight and scrutiny of planning applications.

Planning will be taken away from locally elected representatives and handed over to development boards appointed by Ministers in Whitehall.

The boards will zone areas for future development. Residents living in areas designated for growth or renewal will find that they no longer have the right to object to tower blocks at the end of the Road, to the concreting over of green space or to oversized developments that will overburden local infrastructure here in Watford such as roads, GP surgeries and public transport.

Watford Council believes that regeneration works best for all our residents if we have a strong local partnership between the Council, local community groups and developers.

The best developers understand this and its in their interests to work positively with the council and our communities in this collaborative way.

This Council resolves that the Mayor writes to the secretary of state for Housing, communities and Local Government expressing our strong objections to the new planning bill and we want to keep the right of communities to object to individual planning applications.”

Members debated the motion.

On being put to Council the motion was agreed.

RESOLVED –

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## **Motion 2**

The following motion was proposed by Councillor Turmaine and seconded by Councillor Watling:

### **“Title: Informing members of ward activity**

This council notes that all members work towards responding to residents needs and delivering the best service they can as an elected councillor for the area that they represent.

In order to effectively achieve this, members need to know about activity that the council is planning or undertakes in their ward ahead of it happening, so that they have the opportunity to be involved and can represent their residents’ interests.

Therefore, this council resolves to:

- Ensure that all relevant staff are aware of the requirement to keep local ward members informed and that the timing of such information allows members to contribute to those discussions.
- Local ward members should also be kept informed about matters affecting their wards during the formative stages of policy development. It is important in an effective democratic process that they know early on if they are to deal with their constituents’ concerns or to exert influence on their behalf.
- If local ward members do not attend such a meeting for whatever reason, they should be advised by the convenor of the meeting (provided the meeting is convened by the Council or its officers) of any significant outcome.
- Whenever the Council undertakes any form of consultation exercise, the local ward members will be notified at the outset of the exercise.
- Local ward members will be advised of all planning applications relating to their wards (and be able to view them within the Council as the Planning Authority). Licensing applications are available for viewing on the website, which is routinely updated.
- Where any public meeting to be held in a member’s ward is arranged by the Council the local ward members for the ward in which the public meeting takes place will be informed of the event and invited to attend by the Chief Executive or relevant Director.

- Local ward members will be invited to the opening of any Council buildings/projects or launches of services in their wards.
- A copy of the Mayoral Engagement List shall be sent by electronic means to all members in order that they are kept informed of the Mayor/Deputy Mayor's attendance at any occasion in their ward.
- Where a local liaison or local consultation group is established by the Council, local ward members should be invited to attend to observe if not appointed as a member of the group.
- Any publicity activity organised by officers in a member's ward whether of a local nature or borough wide nature will seek to involve the relevant local ward members."

Members debated the motion.

On being put to Council the motion was LOST.

Chair

The Meeting started at 7.00 pm  
and finished at 9.20 pm