

CABINET

5 July 2021

Present: Mayor P Taylor (Chair)

Councillors A Dychton, S Johnson, J Pattinson, I Stotesbury
and M Watkin

Also present: Councillor N Bell, Labour Group Leader
Councillor M Turmaine, Chair of Finance Scrutiny Committee

Officers: Managing Director
Group Head of Democracy and Governance
(Shared Services) Director of Finance
Head of Planning and Development
Spatial Planning Manager
Democratic Services Manager

12 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Williams, as he was having to self-isolate in line with Government guidance.

13 Disclosure of interests (if any)

There were no disclosures of interest.

14 Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 June 2021 were submitted and signed.

15 Conduct of meeting

The Mayor reported that he intended to go through the agenda as published.

16 Financial Outturn 2020/21

Cabinet received a report of the Director of Finance which informed members of the revenue and capital outturns for the financial year 2020/21.

The Mayor invited Councillor Watkin, Portfolio for Resources including Finance to present the report.

Councillor Watkin outlined the details contained in the officer's report. He noted that a small balance had been transferred to the Economic Impact Reserve. The property portfolio had held up well considering the pandemic. He referred to the savings achieved by the Watford 2020 project. He mentioned the Capital budget and the number of projects although some of these had not been completed during the year due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Councillor Watkin explained that Appendix 6 in the annex to the report set out the various reserve accounts. Some of these had been closed and transferred to the Recovery Fund. It had been the most challenging of years financially.

The Mayor invited Councillor Turmaine, the chair of Finance Scrutiny Committee, to speak.

Councillor Turmaine explained that the scrutiny committee had reviewed the document which was before Cabinet. Members had noted the re-phasing of capital projects. However they also understood there were many positive news stories. The scrutiny committee would be monitoring the budget through the year including the re-phased capital costs.

In response to a question from Councillor Bell about business grants paid out during the pandemic, the Mayor commented that the taxi trade had been paid directly.

The Director of Finance informed members that all grant schemes were now closed except for the re-start scheme. All grant funding received by the council, plus extra, had been paid out. The discretionary scheme had been opened on three separate occasions. The Licensing team had approached taxi drivers directly and most of them had been contacted and awarded a grant.

RESOLVED –

1. To consider the 2020/21 revenue outturn as shown in Annex A, and note the year end position, which includes requests to carry forward budgets into 2021/22.
2. To approve the 2020/21 budget carry forwards into 2021/22 as recommended by the Leadership Board totalling **£0.274 million**.

3. To consider the 2020/21 capital outturn as shown in Annex A and to confirm the net rephasing of **£29.804 million** into 2021/22 and future years.

17 **Local Development Scheme**

Cabinet received a report of the Spatial Planning Manager which set out the subject, scope and timetable for the preparation of the Development Plan Documents, including the Watford Local Plan.

The Mayor invited Councillor Johnson, Portfolio Holder responsible for planning, to present the report.

Councillor Johnson informed members that the last update had been in October 2020. The revised scheme reflected an updated position prior to the submission of the Watford Local Plan to the Secretary of State.

The Head of Planning and Development added that it was essential to ensure the Local Development Scheme was up to date prior to the Watford Local Plan's examination. It is expected the examination will take place during December 2021 or January 2022 with a targeted adoption date of June 2022.

RESOLVED –

1. That Cabinet recommends to Council the Local Plan timetable, attached as Appendix A, be adopted.
2. Cabinet recommends to Council that, 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.

18 **Watford Local Plan: Submission Document**

Cabinet received a report of the Spatial Planning Manager which included the draft Watford Local Plan and proposed modifications. Cabinet was asked to review the documents which would then be forwarded to Council for final approval.

The Mayor invited Councillor Johnson to introduce the report.

Councillor Johnson informed members that the draft Watford Local Plan had been developed over seven years and had involved many people. It was an important document for the council to have and it was not possible for the

authority to move forward without it in place. The draft Local Plan addressed the housing targets. It set out the council's approach to delivering new development and the policies included as part of the draft Local Plan would be used to determine planning applications.

Councillor Johnson explained that the policies had been informed by a comprehensive evidence base, which was available on the council's website. A number of the background studies had been completed jointly with other south west Hertfordshire authorities. This ensured that strategic issues were understood in a wider context across the council's boundaries. The document had been developed in several stages and comments had helped to shape the draft Local Plan. The draft Local Plan was accompanied by proposed modifications that would be put forward to the Planning Inspector for consideration as part of the Examination in Public.

The Mayor invited the Spatial Planning Manager to add further comments.

The Spatial Planning Manager added that the Planning Inspector would review the proposed modifications alongside the draft Local Plan. Some of the proposed modifications suggested were amending the plan period from 2018-2036 to 2021-2037, including the Watford General Hospital as part of site allocation MU21 and the approach to fast food takeaways had been revised to require a Health Impact Assessment alongside a planning application rather than having a broad restriction on takeaway establishments located near education facilities which could be difficult to implement. The team was working with Historic England to undertake Heritage Impact Assessments on several sites to clarify potential impact of new development and identify appropriate mitigation measures that may be required. The team was working with a number of landowners on several site allocations objecting to the draft Local Plan on soundness grounds. Results of this work would also be submitted to the Inspector.

Councillor Bell stressed the importance of working with neighbouring authorities and the county council. He noted that some ex-John Lewis stores were being put forward for retail and residential development. He asked whether there were any similar plans for the Watford site.

It was noted that John Lewis no longer had any connections to the Watford site in Atria. The Spatial Planning Manager advised that a consultation response had been submitted to the council suggesting the south part of the former intu shopping centre could be redeveloped for housing as part of the draft Local Plan. However, this was not considered suitable and not put forward as a proposed modification. In response to Councillor Bell's first comment, the officer explained that the council had been working with its neighbouring authorities on

strategic planning issues across the area for some time. Part of this work included the South West Hertfordshire Joint Strategic Plan that was being progressed.

RESOLVED –

That, Cabinet recommends to Council:

1. To agree 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. That, 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. That, 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.

Mayor

The Meeting started at 7.00 pm
and finished at 7.30 pm