

## CABINET

**1 November 2021**

Present: Mayor P Taylor (Chair)

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

Also present: Councillor N Bell, Labour Group Leader

Officers: Managing Director  
Group Head of Democracy and Governance  
Executive Head of Corporate Strategy and Communications  
Head of Planning and Development  
Head of Property Investment and Regeneration  
Head of Finance  
Planning Policy Officer  
Democratic Services Manager

The Mayor welcomed everyone to the Cabinet meeting in the Town Hall and to those viewing online.

### 36 **Apologies for absence**

There were no apologies for absence.

### 37 **Disclosure of interests (if any)**

There were no disclosures of interest.

### 38 **Minutes of previous meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 October 2021 were submitted and signed.

### 39 **Conduct of meeting**

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

### 40 **Housing Delivery Test Action Plan (2020)**

Cabinet received a report of the Head of Planning and Development which set out details of the action plan required by the National Planning Policy Framework.

Councillor Johnson introduced the report. He explained that the council was required to produce the Housing Delivery Test Action Plan as the council had not met its housing delivery targets. The council had achieved 48% of the set target. Officers had carried out research and engaged with the development industry. Reasons that had come forward had been lack of sites, constraints within the borough and high land values. The actions the council was able to take were set out in the report. He highlighted the provision of affordable housing and stressed this was a major priority for the council. The council should take the opportunity to challenge developers' viability tests more.

Councillor Johnson stated that if the report was approved at the meeting then the action plan would be published on the council's website. He noted that if all the applications that had been approved by Development Management Committee had been built the council would have met 100% of its target.

The Mayor thanked the Head of Planning and Development and the Planning Policy Officer for their hard work in producing the action plan.

In response to Councillor Bell's question about the order of items in the table on page 12 of the report, Councillor Johnson confirmed they were listed in no specific order.

Councillor Bell then referred to a motion regarding government targets and the new planning bill that had been debated and agreed at Council in July. He asked if the Mayor had received any communication from the government minister.

The Mayor replied that he had written a further communication to the minister about the unrealistic target for Watford. A response had been received advising that the council should use any means necessary to meet its target. The message had been clear. The council continuously made the point, but pressure to meet targets was maintained on councils similar to Watford.

The Head of Planning and Development added that since changes had been made to the government department, councils were waiting to see what the new department would do regarding planning reforms.

Councillor Johnson commented that representatives from the council would be meeting Watford's MP at the Houses of Parliament in December. They would listen to his concerns but also explain how the process worked.

RESOLVED –

That the Housing Delivery Test Action Plan 2020, attached as Appendix A to the report, is approved to be published on the Council's website to ensure the Borough complies with the National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance.

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### **Watford Riverwell - LABV Business Plan 2021/22**

Cabinet received a report of the Head of Property Investment and Regeneration which provided an update on the progress regarding the regeneration of Watford Riverwell and the latest Business Plan for endorsement by the executive.

Councillor Johnson introduced the report. He commented that this project was delivering the council's ambition, including building on a brownfield site, keeping the hospital in Watford and bringing an income to the council. The report before the committee provided an update on progress to the scheme, including the multi-storey car park, housing development, which would incorporate social housing, and the development zones. He noted that the housing was under construction and the social housing element had been brought forward into the first phase of the scheme.

The Head of Property Investment and Regeneration informed members that the business plan was produced on an annual basis and set out the plans for the year. It covered the multi-storey car park, family housing, industrial zone and the West Herts Hospitals Trust's programme. The first phase of family housing was under construction and expected completion was August 2022. This phase of housing would include 23 affordable housing units. Discussions had started with a third party about the development of the industrial zone. In addition discussions were continuing with the Trust about timings and delivery.

Councillor Bell questioned whether some of the statements regarding equity in the report would be achievable. He welcomed the delivery of the affordable housing and that the social housing element had been brought forward. In reference to the multi-storey car park, he hoped that local residents would be able to use the car park, particularly at quieter times for the hospital.

The Mayor noted that residents' use of the multi-storey car park had been discussed at Major Projects Forum.

Councillor Johnson responded to the questions about equity and whether they would be achievable. He advised this was the aspiration for the Local Asset Backed Vehicle (LABV). If the LABV was unable to achieve the equity within the

report and business plan then an update report would be presented to Cabinet to explain.

The Head of Property Investment and Regeneration added that the LABV was beholden to market conditions. These were the LABV's targets.

Councillor Bell then referred to the legal implications in paragraph 11.2 and spoke about the repayment of £2 million by the Hospitals Trust to the council.

The Head of Property Investment and Regeneration assured members that an agreement was in place for its repayment to the council.

RESOLVED –

1. that the Watford Health Campus Partnership LLP business plan 2021/22 for Riverwell appended to the report is endorsed.
2. that the progress made at Watford Riverwell to date in the delivery of key sites is noted.
3. that the progress West Hertfordshire Hospital Trust (WHHT) has made with regard to the redevelopment of the Watford General Hospital campus is noted.

Mayor

The Meeting started at 7.00 pm  
and finished at 7.20 pm