

## CABINET

17 January 2022

Present: Mayor Taylor (Chair)  
Councillors A Dychton, S Johnson, I Stotesbury, M Watkin and  
T Williams

Also present: Councillor N Bell, Leader of the Labour Group

Officers: Managing Director  
Group Head of Democracy and Governance  
(Shared Services) Director of Finance  
Executive Head of Corporate Strategy and Communications  
Head of Customer Experience  
Head of Planning and Development  
Mayor's Political Assistant  
Democratic Services Manager

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

### 53 **Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Pattinson.

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

There were no disclosures of interest.

### 55 **Minutes of previous meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 December 2021 were submitted and signed.

### 56 **Conduct of meeting**

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

### 57 **Street naming and numbering policy**

Cabinet received a report of the Head of Customer Experience which included the new Street Naming and Numbering Policy.

The Mayor set out the context for the new policy, which had arisen following a motion to Council. A cross party task group was then established to review the existing arrangements for naming streets. The majority of the policy was about future street names but also set out the procedures if residents or businesses wanted to change existing ones. There were no current plans to change any existing names. He invited Councillor Watkin to expand further.

Councillor Watkin noted that the proposed policy had attracted national interest and had appeared in a national newspaper. The policy set out the procedures to ensure everyone understood how the council selected names for new roads or buildings. A database of acceptable names would be compiled and provided to developers for reference. If a developer chose a name that had not been included in the database the suggestion would be considered by the Mayor, relevant Portfolio Holder and ward councillors. He reminded everyone that this had always been a chargeable policy and was not different to the existing policy. He commented that it appeared that there was an indication that the council wanted to change some existing street names but this was not correct. If the council did wish to change any street names then residents and businesses affected by the alteration would be consulted and their comments considered before a final decision was made.

Councillor Bell noted the process outlined by Councillor Watkin, but was concerned that if residents did want a street name changed that obstacles would be put in their way. He also asked whether the council could provide financial support or fund any change.

The Mayor reiterated that this had always been a chargeable service and was not uncommon across local authorities. However, the policy placed the power into the hands of residents or businesses who lived or worked on a particular street.

Councillor Watkin emphasised that it was unlikely that the Mayor or councillors would ignore residents' or businesses' views if the request met the criteria set out in the policy.

Councillor Bell then referred to the reference about naming roads after people several years after they had died.

The Mayor confirmed this was the usual procedure that was adopted by other councils. He noted that when this subject had arisen following the original motion, some of those mentioned agreed with the council's views as shown in the policy.

Councillor Johnson commented that in his opinion the new policy made sense and was easy to follow.

RESOLVED –

That the new Street Naming and Numbering Policy be approved.

58 **Contract Exemption - Town Hall and Colosseum PSDS Pre-construction Services Agreement**

Cabinet received a report of the Group Head of Transformation which set out information regarding a contract exemption for the award of the contract for the Town Hall refurbishment PSDS Pre-construction Services Agreement.

Councillor Watkin introduced the report. He explained the background and the decision to award the contract to Morgan Sindall / Overbury for a period of three months.

There were no further comments or questions about the report.

RESOLVED –

that the exemption be noted.

59 **The Climate Crisis: A Guide for Local Authorities on Planning for Climate Change**

Cabinet received a report of the Head of Planning and Development which set out details of the guide created by the Town and Country Planning Association and the Royal Town Planning Institute.

Councillor Stotesbury informed members that the new guide included case studies from councils' local plans and showed best practice. He explained that two of the case studies related to policies from Watford's Local Plan. The two policies were CC8.2: Sustainable Construction Standards for Non-residential Development and ST11.4: A Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Improvement Town. As the council had been included within the guide it had been asked to endorse it. The council would continue to align with best practice. He urged members to endorse the guide.

Councillor Johnson commented that it was the recognition the council had been given by inclusion in the guide. It was particularly pertinent of the eve of the start of the examination in public of the Watford Local Plan. He encouraged

residents to get involved in the examination and watch it online at [www.watfordlocalplan.gov.uk](http://www.watfordlocalplan.gov.uk).

The Mayor welcomed the guide highlighting the council's work in this area. He thanked officers who had a very busy few weeks with the examination of the Watford Local Plan in progress.

Councillor Bell asked for assurance that the council would be taking note of the other areas covered within the guide.

The Head of Planning and Development advised that the Watford case study covered non-residential properties. However, there were other policies within the Local Plan that covered residential properties, including drainage.

RESOLVED –

1. that the endorsement by the council of the RTPI and TCPA report 'The Climate Crisis – a guide for local authorities on planning for climate change' as set out in the appendix to the report be approved.
2. that the self-assessment undertaken in the guidance, the exemplar status this report provides, the good progress made by the Council and our commitment to continue to work towards mitigation to and adaptation of climate change be noted.

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## **Financial Planning**

Cabinet received a report of the Head of Finance enabling members to consider service level expenditure, funding and council tax levels for the medium term 2022/23 to 2024/25, including use of reserves.

Councillor Watkin, Portfolio Holder responsible for Finance was invited to introduce the report.

Councillor Watkin commented that at last year's budget setting meeting he had said there was uncertainty about the impact of coronavirus on the council; it had proven those concerns were correct. He highlighted key points within the budget report. Coronavirus was still having an impact on some of the services provided by the council and these would continue to be monitored throughout the coming year. The council was proposing many exciting projects which were set out in the Capital Investment Programme. There were a number of risks but appropriate action would be taken as required.

Councillor Watkin advised that the budget, as set out, proposed an increase of approximately 1.5%, equivalent to approximately £2 per month. It was likely to be one of the lowest increases in Hertfordshire.

The Mayor noted the proposed increase was significantly below inflation.

Councillor Johnson commented that the council was in a lucky position of not being required to look for cuts. He said this showed great testament to how the council had been run over the years.

The Mayor informed members that the council received more income from its property investments than it did from Council Tax.

Councillor Bell recognised that it had been very difficult over the last 18 months to two years due to the pandemic. He commended officers for their work. He noted the proposed funding for a new bus interchange in the town centre and asked if there was any indication when this may happen.

The Mayor explained that the bus interchange project involved other organisations working in partnership, including the county council. Currently there was no definitive time frame. Councillor Stotesbury added that it was important that it was indicated within the budget to show the council's commitment to it.

Councillor Bell then referred to the funding for social rented housing and in particular whether Croxley View phase three was part of it.

Councillor Johnson advised that the social rented housing, including temporary accommodation, for the Croxley View scheme were allocated within the first two phases. The third phase of the scheme was aimed more at the sales market, although there would need to be some to meet the council's requirement of 35% affordable housing. The £1 million referred to by Councillor Bell was outside of the 55 units mentioned.

The Mayor stressed that it was important to the administration that Council Tax was kept as low as possible.

In accordance with the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 the votes were recorded as follows –

**Those in favour**

Mayor Taylor, Councillors Dychton, Johnson, Stotesbury, Watkin and Williams

The resolution as set out in the report were **CARRIED** by 6 vote to 0.

RESOLVED –

1. That Cabinet delegates to the Director of Finance in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Resources the ability to amend the budget figures in accordance with decisions taken at the Cabinet meeting on 17 January 2022 and any minor variations that may occur before the Council meeting on 24 January 2022.

**That Cabinet recommends to Council that:**

2. Council resolves in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) Regulations 1992, the amount calculated by Watford Borough Council as its Council Tax Base for the year 2022/23 is 33,891.3 as outlined in the report.
3. Approves the continuation of the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2022/23.
4. Approves the budget (Attachment 1) as laid out in the report, including:
  - the budget for 2022/23
  - the Capital Investment Programme 2021/22 to 2024/25
5. Approves the schedule of fees and charges and income charging policy (Attachment 2).
6. Approves the Capital Strategy for 2022/23, and delegates to the Director of Finance in consultation with the Portfolio Holder Resources responsibility for agreeing and maintaining the Treasury Management policy. (Attachment 3)
7. Agrees to increase the annual Council Tax for a Band D property 2022/23 by 1.5%. This will apply to all other bands.
8. Notes the key risks identified and approves their proposed mitigations.
9. Notes the advice provided by the Director of Finance on the robustness of estimates and the adequacy of reserves.
10. Notes the indicative budgets for 2023/24 and 2024/25.

## Shared Services

Cabinet received a report of the Head of Enterprise Programme Management Office and Executive Head of Commercial Finance and Innovation which provided information about current investigations for sharing services with St Albans City and District Council and Three Rivers District Council.

The Mayor introduced the report. He informed members that discussions had been taking place between the three authorities about sharing some services. This followed on from a number of services that were already shared with Three Rivers District Council. The aim would be to provide value for money and good resilience within each of the areas referred to in the report. He commended officers for the work that taken place to date.

The Managing Director added her commendation to the officers working on this project. The opportunity to share services ensured a commitment to provide the best service possible for Watford residents.

Councillor Stotesbury welcomed the proposal to work together with the other authorities. It would provide resilience and the future security of those services.

Councillor Watkin commented that in line with his portfolio he was responsible for shared services. He noted that officers reflected the Watford position in their work for the council even if directly employed by another authority. He looked forward to working with the other councils on these mutual areas. He advised shared services was a complicated process but it was important to ensure it was correct.

Councillor Bell said that it made sense to rationalise services. He asked whether the council was looking to invite other councils to share services, for example Dacorum Borough Council and Hertsmere Borough Council. He noted the implications within the report and asked about staffing. He would want to see more details in the next report as he would be concerned if it led to job losses. Finally he added that it was important that it was made clear to Watford residents who to contact if they had any enquiries.

The Mayor responded that there was a great deal of collaboration between councils across the county. The councils referred to in the report had indicated they were willing to work together on these services. The intention was to minimise redundancies.

The Managing Director confirmed the aim would be to minimise redundancies as much as possible. Any staffing implications would become clearer as business cases became more detailed.

RESOLVED –

1. that officers should continue to develop business cases for the initial range of shared services comprising Building Control, Planning Enforcement Legal, Procurement and Emergency Planning with the intention that these are implemented between April and September 2022.
2. that specific proposals supported by business cases and associated staff communications plans, are to be brought to Cabinet for agreement when discussions with neighbouring authorities have concluded.

Mayor

The Meeting started at 7.00 pm  
and finished at 7.40 pm