

CABINET

28 February 2022

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

Also present: Councillors N Bell, S Feldman and A Grimston

Officers: Managing Director
Group Head of Democracy and Governance (via remote
access)
(Shared Services) Director of Finance
Group Head of Community and Environmental Services
Head of Planning and Development
Head of Property Investment and Regeneration
Senior Projects Officer and CCTV Manager
Sustainable Transport Officer
Democratic Services Manager

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

62 **Apologies for absence**

There were no apologies for absence. It was noted the Group Head of Democracy and Governance would be joining the meeting remotely.

63 **Disclosure of interests (if any)**

There were no disclosures of interest.

64 **Minutes of previous meeting**

The minutes held on 17 January 2022 were submitted and signed.

65 **Conduct of meeting**

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

Strategic Framework Progress Update (Q2/Q3 2021/22)

Cabinet received a report of the Executive Head of Strategy and Communications and Head of Enterprise Programme Management Office which provided the latest update on the council's delivery of the commitments contained in the

- Council Plan 2020-24 and Delivery Plan 2022-22
- Organisational Development Strategy 2020-24 and
- Covid-19 Road to Renewal Plan

The Mayor introduced the report and highlighted some of the key achievements over the last two quarters from each of the plans. He thanked officers for their continuing hard work. These included

- 17 Green flags
- Preparations for Watford Centenary
- New Heritage trail
- Market Lates events
- Dementia work
- Agile working for officers
- Kickstarters scheme
- Audentior Awards

The Mayor noted the strong progress across all three plans. He invited the Managing Director to comment.

The Managing Director reported that over 180 young people attended the second Generation Watford Careers Fair. The council's Local Plan examination had been completed. The council's investment portfolio continued to make positive contributions to the council's finances. There had been an enormous amount of work over the last quarter and she thanked all the staff who had been involved.

Councillor Watkin commented on the Organisation Development Strategy as it was led by HR, which was within his portfolio. He noted the development of agile working and was pleased to see it had been met with enthusiasm by staff. He commented that being more agile would breakdown any silo working that may exist and ensured officers worked collectively as one team. He said that he liked the statement 'that everyone was a leader', and felt this reflected Watford as an organisation.

The Mayor noted the reference to agile working and said that earlier in the day he had visited Watford Community Housing and had seen some of the council's officers working there. He thanked the council's partners for their support.

In response to a question from Councillor Bell about the Young Entrepreneurs Programme with University of Hertfordshire, the Managing Director advised that 57 young people aged between 18 and 30 had taken part.

Following Councillor Bell's question about the funding for the Centenary celebrations, the Mayor advised that this was being led by the Group Head of Community and Environmental Services. He understood that £50,000 had been set aside for the centenary. There would be various events throughout the year.

Councillor Bell then asked about the costs associated with the Shop Local campaign. The Mayor and Managing Director commented that there were no additional costs as the project was delivered within existing officers' time in the communications and economic development services.

RESOLVED –

1. that Cabinet notes the progress updates within this report relating to:
 - the Council Plan 2020-24 and Delivery Plan 2020 -22 (Appendix A)
 - the Organisational Development Strategy 2020-24 (Appendix B)
 - the Road to Renewal Plan (Appendix C)
2. that Cabinet notes the impact of external factors on some of the areas of delivery. Where this is the case, the areas have been reviewed to reflect the current environment during the last period. The focus on delivery within the life of the plans remains a corporate commitment.
3. that Cabinet notes the report will be presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee in March 2022.

67

Review of Governance Structures for Council Companies

Cabinet received a report of the Group Head of Democracy and Governance and Executive Head of Commercial Finance and Innovation which sought approval for a Shareholder Board that would have oversight of the operation of the council's companies and joint ventures.

The Mayor explained that this report was being presented following a discussion about the number of companies the council had. He advised that the proposed

Shareholder Board would have no decision making powers but would make recommendations to Cabinet. The report also contained details of officers appointed to the director positions of each company and some changes that were required.

Councillor Watkin added that the final report on the agenda regarding Watford Commercial Services had some ambitious plans. The Shareholders Board would be able to monitor the companies and proposed developments.

Councillor Johnson advised that this had been noted at Property Investment Board and that political oversight was required. There needed to be more visibility, and the proposed structure would ensure greater oversight of the companies. It was important to ensure that the decisions reflected the direction of travel the shareholders/members required.

The Group Head of Democracy and Governance confirmed that the Shareholder Board would provide more oversight and would be able to provide direction to the council's directors on the companies. Training would be provided to those councillors who were members of the Shareholder Board and officers appointed as directors to ensure roles and responsibilities were understood. She asked Cabinet to confirm the names of the members who would be appointed to the Shareholder Board.

The Mayor advised that he proposed the three members would be him, as Mayor, Councillor Watkin, who was responsible for Finance, and Councillor Johnson who was responsible for property-related matters and housing.

Councillor Bell noted this was a very complex matter. He commented that the opposition members were not included, it would be useful if the minutes could be shared. He enquired whether outside legal advice and best practice had been taken into account.

The Group Head of Democracy and Governance responded that the Executive Head of Commercial Finance and Innovation had brought knowledge from her previous employment. External training had also been provided to senior officers.

The Managing Director confirmed that the proposed modelling reflected best practice. It would ensure enhanced member engagement.

Following a comment from Councillor Bell the Mayor confirmed that no councillors were members of the company boards. The Group Head of Democracy and Governance added that this was an executive function as set out in the council's constitution. Cabinet was the shareholder and therefore

members of the Shareholder Board had to be members of Cabinet. Advice had been taken and confirmed that officers were directors on the company boards and members had a separate role as shareholders.

Councillor Johnson suggested that if opposition members wished to find out information they should contact officers. If there was a relevant Shadow Portfolio Holder, then he would be happy to discuss the situation with them.

The Mayor stated that this report was about members' oversight of the council's companies and ensured accountability was more straightforward.

RESOLVED –

1. that a Shareholder Board be established with the terms of reference set out in Appendix to the report. The Shareholder Board to comprise the Mayor, Councillor Watkin and Councillor Johnson.
2. that the membership of the companies / joint ventures be agreed as set out in the report at paragraph 4.8.

68

Neighbourhood Locality Application Review

Cabinet received a report of the Democratic Services Manager which set out the outcome of the review into the Neighbourhood Locality Application Fund process.

Councillor Watkin introduced the report. He advised that the working group comprised three councillors who were supported by the Democratic Services Manager and other officers. He thanked those members who had responded to the survey and provided important feedback. For some time members had raised concerns about technical issues with the application process, which was completed through the Members Portal. A permanent quick solution was not possible, however some short term measures would be introduced as set out in the report and a longer term solution would be investigated over the forthcoming year ready to be implemented in 2023/24. He referred to the application process used by the County Council and it was hoped that a similar solution could be used for Watford. Councillor Watkin requested the removal of 'at the earliest' at the end of the first recommendation.

Councillor Bell agreed that the process used by the County Council was simpler. He acknowledged the short term changes set out in the report to try to ensure all three ward councillors were able to complete the application.

Councillor Johnson commented that there were other areas of the Members Portal that needed to be reviewed. He considered the portal to be too 'clunky'.

The Mayor noted Councillor Watkin's amendment and moved the recommendations as amended.

RESOLVED –

1. that a new application process to be developed whereby applications are made through the council's website by an external organisation and to be introduced in 2023/24.
2. that a revised interim process be introduced for 2022/23 as detailed in paragraph 4.13 of the report.
3. that officers review alternative ways to access the Members Portal.

69

Electric Vehicles Task Group - final report

Cabinet received a report of the Senior Democratic Services Officer including the Electric Vehicles Task Group's final report.

Councillor Stotesbury introduced the report. He thanked Councillor Feldman and the other task group members for their work on this review and the rapid response and the officers who had supported the work. He had found this to be a positive scrutiny. Members had been provided with information about the work that had already taken place and the council's direction of travel. He noted that Watford was the top local authority area in Hertfordshire for electric vehicle ownership. He endorsed each of the task group's recommendations, particularly the development of an Electric Vehicle Strategy for Watford.

Councillor Feldman, as chair of the task group was invited to speak. Councillor Feldman stated that the task group had been completed very rapidly. It was recognised that there was still work to be done. It linked to the Strategic Transport Strategy which was to follow later in the agenda. As the recommendations showed communications with residents was considered important and the council needed to improve on this work. It was noted that the council was not the highways authority and it was essential to find ways of working with the county council on charging infrastructure, for example lamppost charging points being made available.

Councillor Bell thanked the task group for their work. He agreed that communications were important and that residents were included in the process, particularly those areas with controlled parking zones. He was aware

that in some roads parking bays had been lost to enable charging points to be installed.

Councillor Stotesbury noted the comments about the loss of parking bays and explained that recent installations had not restricted the parking to those charging vehicles, the bays were available to others with the appropriate parking permit. There were many roads in Watford where properties did not have off-street parking and it was necessary to find ways that those residents were able to charge their electric vehicles on the street. He acknowledged the comments about communications. He informed members that one of the next public Sustainability Forums would have the theme of electric vehicles.

The Mayor agreed about on street charging points and referred to the fourth recommendation. There was a need for more lamppost charging points. It was noticeable that the county council had taken a different approach.

Councillor Feldman finished by adding that it was necessary to work closely with the county council. If residents required charging points perhaps they could submit requests, as funding had to be applied for to cover the cost of installation. The Electric Vehicle Strategy should tie in the Sustainable Transport Strategy.

RESOLVED –

that Cabinet approves the task group's recommendations:

1. To extend and develop the communications around electric vehicles, including the development of an information hub, with a focus on preparing residents for the shift to electric vehicles and enabling access to clear information for users.
2. In order to help the council make the case for funding and to increase understanding of the interest in different areas, an online form should be developed to enable residents to make an expression of interest for a charging unit in their neighbourhood.
3. For the public Sustainability Forum to hold a session discussing electric vehicles with residents.
4. To continue to work collaboratively with Hertfordshire County Council to increase the charging infrastructure in Watford and to make the case to reinstate the use of lamp columns for that purpose as well as other public highway land.

5. To develop an Electric Vehicle Strategy for Watford.
6. To make further consideration about how the taxi fleet can be enabled to transition to more electric vehicles.

70

Sustainable Transport Strategy Task Group - final report

Cabinet received a report of the Senior Democratic Services Officer which included the final report from the Sustainable Transport Strategy Task Group.

Councillor Stotesbury thanked Councillor Grimston and the task group for their work, supported by officers. There had been a lot of work carried out. It had been really helpful to have the strategy scrutinised and useful feedback had been provided. He advised that the strategy had also been endorsed by the county council.

The Mayor invited Councillor Grimston, Chair of the task group, to speak. Councillor Grimston commented that the strategy was a significant document for the council for the next 20 years. The task group had provided an opportunity for councillors to feed in to its development. She outlined the recommendations shown in the report. It was important to prioritise the reduction in short journeys taken by car. It suggested the expansion of existing schemes, for example the bike share, allowing it to extend across the council's boundaries. There needed to be engagement with the county council. It was necessary to find alternative modes of transports for those areas that currently had no public bus routes, for example Tolpits Lane. The recommendations had been approved the recommendations and recognised there was a pressing need for infrastructure.

Councillor Bell commented that he had found it an interesting report and thanked Councillor Grimston and the task group for their work. He agreed with the comments about public transport facilities to Tolpits Lane, it was very necessary. Currently there was a bus service to Watford Business Park and Croxley Park, but one was also needed for the Tolpits Lane business area.

Councillor Watkin supported the recommendations but was concerned about the increased bike usage without the proper cycle routes being in place. It would be necessary to put pressure on the county council to get this done.

The Mayor advised that he had noticed increased engagement by the county council with regard to sustainable transport.

Councillor Stotesbury confirmed he had regular meetings with county representatives. Watford Borough Council was working outside of its remit to

push for transport. It had been good to get both authorities involved in the strategy and for it to be signed off. The strategy provided a common baseline to work from.

Councillor Grimston finished by adding that the task group had been strongly of the opinion that investment was needed now.

RESOLVED –

that Cabinet approves the task group's recommendations:

1. The priority for the implementation of the strategy should be to reduce the number of short trips (under 2 miles) that are driven in Watford. This should be a determining factor in how actions contained in the strategy are prioritised.
2. In recognition of the close geographical relationships with neighbouring districts, ongoing partnership work should continue to be developed with areas that border Watford.
3. To build on the popularity of the bike share scheme, the council should explore with neighbouring authorities and other stakeholders how the scheme could be expanded beyond the borough's boundaries.
4. In considering whether there are any areas in Watford that would benefit from becoming a low-traffic neighbourhood, the highest priority should be working with and listening to residents and local stakeholders. Low traffic neighbourhoods could be considered if they have extensive community support designed to address a defined local issue.
5. The strategy, or associated documentation, should include a target to have a travel plan in place for every school in the borough and proactively work with schools and Hertfordshire County Council to achieve this.
6. Further work should be undertaken with local businesses and other stakeholders to improve transport links to employment areas that are not easily reached without a car to consider how access could be improved.
7. Recognising that accepting the need for wider change is different to making personal behavioural change, further work is needed to consider how to grow confidence in the alternatives to travelling by car.

Transforming Travel in Watford: The Strategy for 2021 - 2041

Cabinet received a report of the Sustainable Transport Officer and the Group Head of Place Shaping which provided the final draft of the Transforming Travel in Watford: the strategy for 2021-2041.

Councillor Stotesbury reported that approximately 54% of all journeys were less than three miles, most of which were driven. The document highlighted the strategic interventions and investment the council wished to make. The strategy had been developed with Watford and county officers and he wished to thank them for their work. The strategy had recently been approved by the county council. There had been a lot of consultation about the strategy's content, which had included various groups including those who were disadvantaged and disability groups. The council had declared a climate emergency and the biggest factor was greenhouse gases. At the morning peak travel time the average speed was 10mph. Other modes of transport or activity were to be encouraged. He commented that congestion costs money as well as environmental costs. Those walking or cycling were more likely to stop along the route and spend money locally, which supported the local economy. He thanked the Group Head of Place Shaping and Sustainable Transport Officer who had been involved in many aspects of the consultation.

Councillor Bell agreed that congestion was an issue in Watford. He asked if the introduction of a congestion charge was likely in Watford.

Councillor Stotesbury advised a comment had been made during the residents' consultation, however there were many other methods to use before congestion charging would be considered.

The Mayor thanked the residents that had taken part in the consultation. A large number of responses had been received.

RESOLVED –

1. that the new sustainable transport strategy, 'Transforming Travel in Watford: the strategy for 2021-41', and the High Level Delivery Plan be approved.
2. that the LCWIP be agreed and further work to undertake and validate proposed routes and develop detailed proposals be endorsed.
3. that the strategy will be monitored through quarterly updates to Cabinet and annual reviews.

Watford to Croxley Link

Cabinet received a report of the Head of Planning and Development which provided an update on the progress of the development of potential Conceptual Designs for the Watford to Croxley Rail link.

The Mayor introduced the report and referred to one of his first meetings as Mayor which had been with Transport for London about the proposed link at that time. It had always been identified this was a quick and easy link across that part of the town. The report set out how a scheme would be carried forward and the ambitious timeline. The council would work with other partners as set out in the report. The Mayor proposed that recommendation 2 should include the Mayor as part of the delegated authority to enter into the Memorandum of Understanding.

The Head of Planning and Development advised that this was the first step in what could be a long journey. All options would be considered from active travel, for example cycling, to more expensive solutions.

Councillor Stotesbury reminded all present that the county council was currently consulting on the HERT Scheme.

Councillor Bell advised that he was being kept up to date about the project by the county council as it was within his county division. He questioned how much would be spent.

The Mayor confirmed that funding details were contained in the report and would be split between Watford Borough Council and Hertfordshire County Council.

RESOLVED –

1. that Cabinet notes the progress made so far on the development of the W2CL Conceptual Designs and the proposed procurement approach (which includes a competitive tender process in early 2022).
2. that Cabinet delegates authority to the Group Head of Place Shaping to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (Appendix 1) with Hertfordshire County Council, Three Rivers District Council and Network Rail (the 'Partner Organisations'), subject to any amendments to be agreed with the Group Head of Democracy and Governance and Mayor.

3. that Cabinet approves the procurement and subsequent working in partnership with the Partner Organisations to develop the Conceptual Designs for the Watford to Croxley Link (W2CL) scheme.
4. that Cabinet notes and endorses the use of delegated authority by the Group Head of Place Shaping to utilise £150,000 of Community Infrastructure Levy funding to fund part of the budget for the Conceptual Designs.

73 **Joining Bulk Solar Initiative**

Cabinet received a report of the Sustainability Officer which provided information about the bulk solar initiative being developed by Dacorum Borough Council.

Councillor Stotesbury introduced the report. He advised that he was a member of the Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Panel, representing Watford. The panel looked at best practice and co-ordinated schemes. The recommendation was for the council to add its name to the proposed scheme which required no funding from the council. Similar schemes had been in operation in other areas and had worked well. The commercial broker involved in the scheme was well established.

There were no further questions or comments.

RESOLVED –

1. that the council participates in the bulk solar initiative.
2. that the entering into of a MOU with Dacorum Borough Council who will lead act as lead authority is delegated to the Group Head of Community and Environmental Services in consultation with the Group Head of Democracy and Governance.

74 **Review of CCTV**

Cabinet received a report of the Transport and Infrastructure Manager which provided an update of the ongoing review of CCTV and the proposal for a mobile CCTV pilot.

The Mayor introduced the report. He said that as CCTV technology was advancing the council was able to consider looking at other areas, for example to enable targeting fly tipping hotspots.

Councillor Williams added that he agreed with the establishment of mobile CCTV for the town as an addition to the existing cameras. It would help the council to identify hotspots and then follow up incidents identified as a result. The latest wireless technology enabled improved mobile CCTV equipment. The picture quality had improved; it was easier to set up and then moved to other locations as require. There were still some matters that needed to be resolved and these were shown in paragraph 4.11 of the report. The aim would be to start the pilot later in the year.

The Transport and Infrastructure Manager agreed that the technology had improved, but there were still some technical issues to be resolved.

Councillor Bell welcomed the proposal. It was something that members had raised on previous occasions and at the time had been told it was not possible.

The Mayor responded that the main point to note was that the technology had changed in recent years. The quality of the footage was much better.

Councillor Williams added that the proposal was for a trial period but he hoped it would continue in the future.

RESOLVED –

1. that the progress of the CCTV in Watford review be noted.
2. that the implementation of a mobile CCTV pilot be agreed, subject to identifying and agreeing suitable sites, and the discharge of statutory duties and legal obligations in relation to privacy, data protection and consultation.
3. that the allocation of £20,000 from the Council's Renewal Fund to support this activity be approved.

75

Croxley Park Business Plan

Cabinet received a report of the Head of Property Investment and Regeneration which included the Croxley Park Business Plan for 2022/23. It was noted that the plan at Appendix 1 was exempt from publication in accordance with paragraph 3, part 1 Schedule 12A as it contained commercially sensitive information.

Councillor Johnson advised that the report provided an update on the year to date and the year ahead. He commented that so far the long lease for the park had been a success. He commended everyone for their work including officers and Lambert Smith Hampton. The original decision had been big for a small

borough council. The income was helpful in supporting the council's finances. There would be ongoing refurbishment plans.

The Head of Property Investment and Regeneration added that there was more hard work to be done. This included the conclusion of some lettings and the improvement of buildings as they became available.

Councillor Stotesbury commented that the council could ensure its values were reflected as building were refurbished.

The Mayor noted that the income the council had received in connection with Croxley Park had been invested in sustainable investment funds.

Councillor Watkin said that this had been a brilliant investment but said the council needed to be cautious about the future. He wished to pay tribute to Manny Lewis, the previous Managing Director.

Councillor Bell added his acknowledgement that it had progressed well and the comments made about Manny Lewis. He was wary of interest rate increases and the potential impact.

RESOLVED –

1. that the Business Plan for 2022/2023 as produced by LSHIM, and more particularly as attached at Appendix 1 to the report be approved.
2. that the delegations to the Head of Property Investment and Regeneration as outlined in paragraph 4.5 and also set out in Appendix 1 to the report be agreed.

76

Watford Commercial Services Business Plan update

Cabinet received a report of the Shared Director of Finance which provided an update on the Watford Commercial Services (WCS) Business Plan 2022-2027. It was noted that the plan at Appendix 1 was exempt from publication in accordance with paragraph 3, part 1 Schedule 12A as it contained commercially sensitive information.

Councillor Watkin introduced the report. Following the earlier agreement for a Shareholders Board, members would be provided with regular reports. The document provided an optimistic plan for Hart Homes. In response to a question from Councillor Bell about the provision of social rented accommodation, Councillor Watkin advised the details would be forwarded to him.

The Director of Finance reminded members that Phase 1 of the Croxley View development had wholly comprised affordable rented units. In order to ensure the overall percentage was correct these figures would need to be included.

Councillor Johnson commented that over the whole of the Croxley View development there should be 35% affordable and social rented units. It was a challenging time. In addition, there had been the temporary accommodation in Phase 1. The Croxley View scheme had been very successful.

The Mayor noted that the development had included environmental features. Councillor Stotesbury agreed and said that a high level of insulation was installed which was really important with the rising cost of living.

RESOLVED –

1. that the Watford Commercial Services Business Plan for 2022-2027 attached as appendix A to the report be approved;
2. that it is noted the business plan reflects the Hart Homes schemes all proceeding on an optimistic programme, the WCS Board note that the timings could well slip, with the implications of investment and returns happening later than those projected;
3. that it is noted that following Cabinet approval of the creation of the Shareholder Board that Board will receive on a regular basis a report setting out the services provided by WCS and the performance compared to the agreed KPIs.

Mayor

The Meeting started at 7.00 pm
and finished at 8.15 pm