

## **CABINET**

**6 December 2021**

Present: Mayor (Chair)

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

Also present: Councillors

Officers: Managing Director  
Group Head of Democracy and Governance  
(Shared Services) Director of Finance  
Group Head of Transformation  
Group Head of Community and Environmental Services  
Executive Head of Corporate Strategy and Communications  
Head of Programme Management Office  
Programme Manager  
Executive Head of Commercial Finance and Innovation  
Property Development Project Manager  
Executive Support Officer  
Democratic Services Manager

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

### **42 Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Bell, leader of the Labour Group.

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

There were no disclosures of interest.

### **44 Minutes of previous meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 November 2021 were submitted and signed.

45 **Conduct of meeting**

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

46 **Hertfordshire Armed Forces Covenant**

Cabinet received a report of the Executive Support Officer which set out details of the Hertfordshire Armed Forces Covenant which had been launched in 2011 and was currently undergoing a refresh.

Councillor Pattinson introduced the report. She explained that the covenant was a promise to ensure those who had served in the Armed Forces were treated equally in Hertfordshire and not disadvantaged in accessing services. She added that the council had given additional preference on its Housing Register to those who had served in the Armed Forces. The council observed Armed Forces Day which took place in June each year.

As part of the town's centenary charter celebrations there would be an opportunity to renew focus on the town's veterans and consider any additional support that could be given to them. Further proposals would be presented to a future Cabinet drawing on the aspirations of the refreshed covenant.

The Mayor agreed that the centenary year would provide a good opportunity to see how the council could improve support to veterans across the town.

RESOLVED –

1. that the changes to the Hertfordshire Armed Forces Covenant be noted.
2. that Watford's centenary celebrations in 2022 be used as an opportunity to focus on the support offered to local veterans.

47 **Contract Exemption - Town Hall Refurbishment Lead Consultant and Project Management**

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 lead and project management.

The Group Head of Transformation introduced the report. He explained that due to the value of the contract it was a requirement to present the details to Cabinet. He outlined the reason for the exemption as set out in the appendix to the report. By awarding the contract to Mace the same design team could support the refurbishment of the Colosseum and Town Hall, which would

provide a financial benefit as well as in the delivery of the refurbishment of both buildings.

RESOLVED –

that the exemption be noted.

48 **Procurement Exemption - Watford Market Management Contract - Six month extension until April 2023**

Cabinet received a report of the Head of Leisure and Environmental Services which set out details of the procurement exemption decision to extend the contract with Market Asset Management for a further six months from 1 October 2022.

Councillor Williams informed members that the decision provided the current market management contractors with a six-month extension to the current contract. This would enable officers to discuss the future management of the market with all stakeholders and consider their comments. During the current management contract period a number of improvements had been made. Additional signposting had been installed and 'Market Lates' had successfully been introduced. The current occupancy rate of the market was near 90%. The extension of the contract by six months would allow the council time to ensure the long term future of the market.

The Mayor welcomed the improvements to the market and the 'Market Lates' event. He had received many positive comments from residents.

RESOLVED –

that the approved exemption to the council's procurement procedures be noted.

49 **Ombudsman Decisions**

Cabinet received a report of the Group Head of Democracy and Governance which set out two decisions from the Ombudsman.

Councillor Johnson was invited to introduce the Ombudsman's decision regarding a Housing matter. Councillor Johnson began by apologising and acknowledged the council had not acted correctly. An apology had been sent to the complainant with the agreed financial recompense and it had been agreed to review the complainant's case on medical and social and welfare grounds. The service had also made changes to its procedures to ensure the same mistake would not happen again.

The Mayor then invited Councillor Watkin to speak about the Ombudsman's decision regarding the discretionary grant refusal.

Councillor Watkin advised that discretionary grants had been made available by central government to local authorities to support local businesses during the pandemic. He informed members that a team of officers had been put together who had not carried out this type of work before. It had been a fast moving situation. The complainant's application had been refused as it had not met the relevant criteria. The Ombudsman had not found fault with the council's decision but found the way the subsequent complaint had been handled had been at fault. The council had failed in its communications with the applicant/complainant. The council had apologised to the complainant and awarded £200 to them in recognition of the uncertainty caused and the time and trouble they had to go through. In response to the complaint and Ombudsman's decision, the service had reviewed its management structure to ensure complaints were handled correctly and a similar situation would not arise again.

The Mayor acknowledged the Ombudsman's decisions and that their recommendations had been accepted by the council. He also noted that services had taken on board the comments and services had implemented changes.

RESOLVED –

that the decisions be noted.

50 **Town Hall Quarter programme: Town Hall and Colosseum Refurbishment Business Cases**

Cabinet received a report of the Head of Enterprise Programme Management Office which included the business plans for the refurbishment of the Town Hall and Colosseum.

The Mayor introduced the report, which he said covered an exciting piece of work. Recently the Town Hall had been busy with residents visiting the vaccination centre. He wanted the Town Hall to be a hub of activity in the future. The plans before Cabinet were ambitious for two of the town's historic buildings. It would be a major 10-year scheme. There would be eventual accommodation savings in the region of £300,000.

The Mayor thanked the officers and those members on the steering group for their work, including residents and partners who had also contributed. The charter centenary would take place next year and it was good to look to the future. The proposals would make the best use of the buildings.

The Managing Director added that officers had been working for over 11 months on the programme. It was a complex programme, as members could see from the range of documents before them. The work would see the council moving forward. She added her own thanks to the staff from across the organisation at all levels who had been involved. It demonstrated their hard work and dedication and she looked forward to its delivery.

The Mayor noted that whilst this work had been taking place, the council and its staff had also been responding to the covid pandemic.

Councillor Stotesbury added his thanks and said that it was important the council preserved its heritage assets. The proposal set out to modernise and bring the buildings into public use. The works would also ensure the buildings were 'greener'.

Councillor Johnson commented that there were two core parts to the programme, value for money being one. The other was the council's staff, who were the biggest resource the council had. It had been made apparent how difficult it was to work in the older buildings. It was important to get it right.

Councillor Williams referred to the Colosseum. The refurbishment would enhance the cultural offer to the town. The premises would become more commercial. It was proposed that the planned opening date was November 2023. He would be looking forward to the opening of this key cultural building.

Councillor Watkin added that the business plans would ensure the area became a lively focal point of the town.

RESOLVED –

1. that the Colosseum Refurbishment business case, RIBA Stage 2 designs, implementation plan and the assumptions and constraints on which these are based be approved.
2. that the Town Hall Refurbishment business case, implementation plan and the assumptions and constraints on which these are based, including the associated Museum Outline Business Case and Innovation and Incubation Hub Outline Business Case, shown within the Appendices, be approved.
3. that the financial resource necessary to deliver the next phase of the Town Hall Quarter programme, including in relation to the Town Hall and Colosseum refurbishments be presented to full council for approval in January 2022.

51 **Exclusion of press & public**

RESOLVED –

that, under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business as it was likely, in view of the nature of the discussions, that if members of the public were present during consideration of the item there would have been disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in Section 100(1), Schedule 12A of the Act for the reasons stated in the report.

52 **Watford Business Park - Delegated Authority to appoint a Principle Contractor**

Cabinet received a report of the Property Development Project Manager regarding Watford Business Park.

Councillor Johnson and the Property Development Project Manager outlined the report and responded to questions.

RESOLVED –

1. that the progress to date and the procurement route implemented to select a principal contractor for the main works contract be noted.
2. that in the event that the tender returns/final contract sums following a detailed review of tenders are over the current allocated capital budget, the use of capital receipts from lease re-gears and renewals, disposals and overage payments up to a value of £2,000,000 from the council's property investment portfolio in advance of seeking a further capital growth bid at budget Council in January 2022 be approved.
3. that delegated authority be granted to the Group Head of Place Shaping in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Commercial Property, Planning and Housing Services to appoint a principal contractor for the main works, provided the value of the contract does not exceed the current capital budget combined with the capital receipts referred to in the report.

Mayor

The Meeting started at 7.00 pm  
and finished at 7.35 pm