

## **COUNCIL**

**19 July 2022**

Present: Councillor A Grimston (Chairman)  
Councillor S Feldman (Vice-Chair)  
Councillors P Taylor, N Bell, K Clarke-Taylor, A Dychton, I Hamid,  
M Hofman, S Johnson, A Khan, P Kloss, T Osborn, J Pattinson,  
G Saffery, I Stotesbury, S Trebar, M Turmaine, M Watkin and  
T Williams

Also present: Freemen of the Borough, Mavis Tyrwhitt and Norman  
Tyrwhitt

Officers: Managing Director  
Group Head of Democracy and Governance  
Democratic Services Officer (IS)  
Democratic Services Officer (BR)

### **17 Apologies for Absence**

Due to the red warning for extreme weather conditions, and following some health and safety advice, it had been agreed by both political groups that only half of each group would attend, ensuring Council remained politically balanced and quorate but mitigating risks to councillors and officers.

Apologies had been received from Councillors Ahmed and Walford.

The following Councillors had stepped down from attending in person, but viewed online instead:

Councillors Devonish, Hannon, Jeffree, Martins, Rodrigues, Smith and Stanton.

### **18 Disclosure of Interests**

There were no disclosures of interest.

### **19 Minutes**

The minutes of the Annual Council meeting held on 24 May 2022 were submitted and signed.

## Official Announcements

### Abbey View fire

The Chairman offered her best wishes to all those residents affected by the fire, thanked the various emergency services for their assistance and praised their work. She also thanked the Council staff members who had responded so quickly and efficiently to provide support.

### Chairman's engagements

The Chairman gave a brief overview of her activities, since taking up the role which included:

- Big Dance
- Afternoon tea at County Hall for this year's Mayors and Chairmen
- Jubilee celebrations at Museum – lighting the beacon
- Kingswood Residents Associations street party
- Centenary Party in the Park
- Flag raising – LGBTQ+ flag
- West Herts College – presenting certificates
- St Clement Danes Art and Photography Exhibition
- Summer concert – Watford Phoenix Choir and Children of Central Primary's Choir Clubs
- Special Constable Attestation evening
- One Life Entertainment Launch Party
- UCMAS Competition at Parmiters School
- West Herts Crematorium Service of Remembrance
- Afternoon tea with the Chairman of Hertsmere
- Jubilee Garden Party at County Hall

## Mayor's Report

The Mayor opened his report by associating himself with the Chairman's remarks about the Abbey View fire and thanked the emergency services, council officers and residents for their actions on the day.

A report of the Mayor had been circulated with the agenda.

The Chairman invited members to indicate whether they wished to ask a question of the Mayor. Councillors Bell and Turmaine indicated that they wished to ask questions.

1. Councillor Bell expressed his wish to be associated with the Chairman's remarks around the Abbey View fire.

Councillor Bell referred to the recent comments on social media about violence in The Parade and other anti-social behaviour; adding that there were clear issues that residents were concerned about. He asked what the Mayor had done about these problems and whether he had spoken to the Police about this.

The Mayor responded by making it clear that there was zero tolerance for violence. He wanted Watford to be a family friendly place, where all were welcomed. He commended the work of the Police and the Community Safety Team in tackling the issues.

He added that the fundamental need was for more Police on the town's streets and that this was a point he had repeatedly made to the Police and Crime Commissioner. The Mayor added that there was also close collaboration with the Business Improvement District.

Following up his question, Councillor Bell noted that Watford had its first female Chief Inspector and expressed his hope that the new officer would understand the need for a safe and family friendly town and that women and girls would feel safe to visit the town centre.

The Mayor agreed with Councillor Bell and explained that he had met with the Chief Inspector and she clearly understood the issues facing her.

2. Councillor Turmaine also wished to be associated with the comments about Abbey View. He asked what the Mayor and Council were doing to mitigate the soaring inflation rates for businesses in Watford.

The Mayor commented that it was unrealistic to expect that Watford Borough Council could have any effect on inflation rates, these were a result of national and international influences. However, the Council was doing a great deal to support businesses to adapt to the current situation.

The Mayor explained that he had visited a number of businesses that had raised issues of operating costs and labour shortages. The Council was growing the Economic Development Team to provide improved support.

Questions had been received from Councillor Bell. The questions and answers had been circulated as part of the supplementary agenda and published on the internet.

23 **Questions by Members of the Public under Council Procedure Rule 11.0**

No questions from the public had been received.

24 **Petitions presented under Council Procedure Rule 12.0**

No petitions had been received.

25 **Business especially brought forward by the Chairman or the Head of Paid Service which in the opinion of the Chairman should be considered as a matter of urgency.**

There was no urgent business.

26 **Scrutiny Annual Report 2021/22**

Council received the report of the Democratic Services Officer (IS) which provided the annual report for the Neighbourhood Locality Funds in accordance with the fund's protocol. This included information about the overall budget and types of projects the wards had supported during 2021/22.

RESOLVED –

that the annual scrutiny report for 2021/22 is noted.

27 **Neighbourhood Locality Fund Annual Report 2021/22**

Council received the report of the Democratic Services Officer (IS) which provided the annual report for the Neighbourhood Locality Funds in accordance with the fund's protocol. This included information about the overall budget and types of projects the wards had supported during 2021/22.

RESOLVED –

that the annual Neighbourhood Locality Fund report for 2021/22 is noted.

28 **Council Pay Policy Statement - August 2022**

Council received the report of the Executive Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development.

RESOLVED –

that the updated Council Pay Policy statement for 2022/23 is approved.

29 **Council Plan 2022-26 and Delivery Plan 2022-24**

Council received the report of Cabinet and the Managing Director.

RESOLVED –

1. that the Council Plan 2022-26 is approved.
2. that the Delivery Plan is approved.
3. that the Managing Director is authorised to make minor amendments to the Council Plan 2022-2026 and the Delivery Plan 2022-2024 in consultation with the Elected Mayor.

30 **Shared Services**

Council received the report of Cabinet and the Executive Head of Commercial Finance and Innovation.

RESOLVED –

That Council approves:

1. the creation of a shared Planning Enforcement service between Watford Borough Council and St Albans City and District Council with the aim to go live from 1 September 2022, with Watford Borough Council as the lead authority.
2. the creation of a shared Building Control service between Watford Borough Council and St Albans City and District Council with the aim to go live from 1 September 2022, with Watford Borough Council as the lead authority.
3. the creation of a shared Legal service between Watford Borough Council and St Albans City and District Council with the aim to go live from 1 January 2023, subject to the appointment of a Head of Legal Service, with St Albans City and District Council as lead authority.

31 **Executive Director of Place**

Council received a report from the Managing Director.

RESOLVED –

1. that Council approves the appointment of Tom Dobrashian, as Executive Director of Place for Watford Borough Council, effective from 1 August 2022.

32

### **Motions submitted under Council Procedure Rule 13.0**

Council was informed that two motions had been received.

#### **Motion 1**

The following motion was proposed by Mayor Taylor, seconded by Councillor Pattinson:

“Council Motion: Cost of Living Emergency

This Council notes that:

On 1 April 2022, Ofgem increased the energy price cap by 54 per cent. In light of the increased energy price cap, the average standard tariff energy bill will increase by £693 per year. The average pre-pay meter energy bill will increase by £708 per year (Ofgem, 2022).

On 6 April 2022, the Government increased National Insurance by 1.25 percentage points, which is projected to cost the average family in Watford an additional £600 a year.

The Government has suspended the pensions ‘triple lock’ for 2022/3, meaning Watford’s 16,325 pensioners will see a rise of 3.1 per cent this year (instead of 8.3 per cent under the triple lock formula). This year, this will cost pensioners in Watford hundreds of pounds.

In 2021/22 Watford Foodbanks distributed food parcels at a rate of 9533 per 100,000 people (Trussell Trust, 2022). There are also many independent foodbanks also operating in Watford which means that this figure is likely to be much, much higher. We recognise the amazing work of the people operating food banks throughout our town and know they are supporting people to be able to feed their families at this time.

Council notes the decision taken in June 2022 to impose a 'Windfall Tax' on the super-profits of oil and gas companies and to redistribute this as a one-off payment of £400 to households later this year. Council notes that the Windfall Tax was first proposed by Sir Ed Davey MP, leader of the Liberal Democrats, in May 2022. Though the Windfall Tax is welcome, Council believes it does not go nearly far enough and the Government should be doing much more to support local people through the Cost of Living crisis.

The Council is currently working with all relevant partners and stakeholders in our town to come together to understand the impact of the crisis on them / their clients and how we can all work together to maximise the support outcomes from our combined activities. But we recognise that this is not enough.

This Council therefore declares a 'Cost of Living Emergency' and calls on the Government to:

Immediately reduce the standard rate of VAT from 20 per cent to 17.5 per cent for one year, saving the average household in Watford a further £600 this year  
Immediately re-introduce the pension's triple lock to support Watford's pensioners.

Immediately restore the Universal Credit supplement of £20, which was cancelled by the Government in September 2021.

Finally the Council calls on the Elected Mayor of Watford to write to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions to express the Council's demands for VAT to be cut to 17.5%, for the re-introduction of the pension's triple-lock and for the £20 Universal Credit supplement to be restored in response to this crisis."

Members debated the motion.

On being put to Council the motion was agreed.

RESOLVED –

That this Council notes that

On 1 April 2022, Ofgem increased the energy price cap by 54 per cent. In light of the increased energy price cap, the average standard tariff energy bill will increase by £693 per year. The average pre-pay meter energy bill will increase by £708 per year (Ofgem, 2022).

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## **Motion 2**



Following the publication of the agenda, an amendment was put forward by the Liberal Democrat Group, and was accepted prior to the meeting by Councillor Bell. The following updated motion was proposed by Councillor Bell and seconded by Councillor Khan:

“The pandemic brought into sharp focus the imbalance of power in the workplace that Trades Unions and the Labour Party have long sought to rectify.

Wages have stagnated for over a decade and work is becoming increasingly insecure.

Since the Conservatives came to power 12 years ago, In-Work poverty, low pay and financial insecurity have become rampant.

Incomes have stagnated and many workers have experienced real terms pay decline.

This Council fully supports ending the pernicious practice of ‘Fire and rehire’ and giving a right to request a fixed-hours contract after 12 months for ‘zero hours’ and any agency workers on ‘zero hours’ that should not be unreasonably refused. We will make sure Watford Council continues to have a family friendly policy, balancing work, home, community and family life.

This Council calls on Watford’s M.P. to stand up for these principles and support them in Government.”

Members debated the motion.

On being put to Council the motion was agreed.

RESOLVED –

That the pandemic brought into sharp focus the imbalance of power in the workplace that Trades Unions and the Labour Party have long sought to rectify.

Wages have stagnated for over a decade and work is becoming increasingly insecure.

Since the Conservatives came to power 12 years ago, In-Work poverty, low pay and financial insecurity have become rampant.

Incomes have stagnated and many workers have experienced real terms pay decline.

This Council fully supports ending the pernicious practice of 'Fire and rehire' and giving a right to request a fixed-hours contract after 12 months for 'zero hours' and any agency workers on 'zero hours' that should not be unreasonably refused. We will make sure Watford Council continues to have a family friendly policy, balancing work, home, community and family life.

This Council calls on Watford's M.P. to stand up for these principles and support them in Government.

Chair

The Meeting started at 7.30 pm  
and finished at 8.35 pm