#### COUNCIL

# 31 January 2023

Present: Councillor A Grimston (Chairman)

Councillor S Feldman (Vice-Chair)

Councillors P Taylor, S Ahmed, D Allen-Williamson, N Bell, K Clarke-Taylor, M Devonish, J Dhindsa, A Dychton, F Ezeifedi, I Hamid, P Hannon, M Hofman, P Jeffree, S Johnson, A Khan,

P Kloss, R Martins, L Nembhard, T Osborn, J Pattinson,

K Rodrigues, A Saffery, G Saffery, N Shah, R Smith, B Stanton, I Stotesbury, S Trebar, M Turmaine, D Walford, M Watkin,

D Watling, R Wenham and T Williams

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

Tyrwhitt

Officers: Chief Executive

Group Head of Democracy and Governance

Shared Director of Finance
Director of Performance
Mayor's Political Assistant
Democratic Services Manager
Democratic Services Officer (BR)

# 46 Apologies for Absence

Apologies had been received from Councillor Stiff.

# 47 Disclosure of Interests

Councillor Dychton disclosed that due to her work for West Hertfordshire Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust she had an interest in relation to minute number 59, the motion regarding the NHS. Councillors Turmaine and Ezeifedi also excused themselves citing conflicts of interest. All three left the meeting prior to the discussion of the third motion in minute number 59.

Councillors Ahmed, Dhindsa, Hamid and Shah all disclosed they had a conflict of interest in relation to the proposed amendment tabled in

relation to minute number 58 as they or a family member had a connection to the local taxi industry and did not vote on the amendment.

As all members had an interest in minute number 57 the Group Head of Democracy and Governance, as Monitoring Officer, had given a general dispensation to allow all members to vote and debate the item.

## 48 Minutes

The minutes of the Council meeting held on 17 October 2022 were submitted and signed.

#### 49 Official Announcements

## **Remembrance Day**

The Chairman informed Council that she had attended the annual Watford Remembrance Service on 11 November at the Vicarage Road War Memorial. This was followed on 13 November by the annual ceremony at the Town Hall, which this year began with a procession from St Marys Church.

## **Holocaust Memorial Day**

Last Friday was Holocaust Memorial Day, the Chairman advised that in company with the Mayor she had the honour to lay flowers at the Anne Frank tree outside the Town Hall. She stated that it was an important day to remember those that were victims of the Holocaust, both Jews and others persecuted by the Nazis and others killed during more recent genocides.

# King's New Year's Honours List

This year was the first King's New Year's Honours List. On behalf of the council the Chairman congratulated Dr Mary Ramsay, who had been awarded Commander of the Order of the British Empire, for her services to Public Health, Felicity Evans, who had been awarded Member of the Order of the British Empire for services to children in Hertfordshire and Rosalind Bluestone who had been awarded Member

of the Order of the British Empire for services to humanitarian aid in the UK and overseas.

## **Fairtrade Lunch**

Watford and Three Rivers Fairtrade had organised a lunch on Friday 3 March at West Herts College. It would cost £10 for a 3-course meal. The chairman encouraged those interested to find information on the council's intranet or to contact Councillor Rabi Martins for further information.

# **Neighbourhood Locality Funds**

All councillors were reminded that they needed to submit their Neighbourhood Locality Fund applications by the end of February in order to ensure that the projects had been completed by the start of the pre-election period on 17 March. All applications had to be submitted and signed off through the Members' Portal. The balance still available to spend was available on the portal. The Chairman advised that if members had any difficulties they should contact Democratic Services.

#### **Gala Dinner**

It was announced that the Chairman's Gala Dinner would be held on the 3 March at West Herts Golf Club.

#### **Council Vice Chairman**

At the next meeting, the nominations for the 2023/24 Vice Chairman would be announced by the Chairman. Each person nominated would need to be proposed and seconded. Council would then be asked to vote for their preferred candidate.

The Democratic Services Manager would be writing to all councillors with further details.

# Chairman's engagements

The Chairman gave a brief overview of her activities.

She stated that she had continued to represent the council at many events since the last Council. Events had included many which celebrated Watford's diverse community, amongst these there was a Black History Month lunch at Wellspring Church, Arts and Crafts exhibition organised by CareTech celebrating the diversity and creativity of children, young people and adults with mental health and learning disabilities, a visit to the Performing Arts School, attending the Romanian Traditional Dance and Music Festival, as well as the 11<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Watford Portuguese Association, and Ascot Road Primary School art work presentation.

Additionally the Chairman stated that she had been delighted to participate in events which recognised the achievements and service of residents and local organisations, including: opening of the new Boots Opticians, celebrating local businesses Boom Bar's first birthday and Treatz opening.

She celebrated Watford's rich heritage and culture and attended, raising the Centenary flag with the Mayor, Fireworks in Cassiobury Park and the raising the White Ribbon flag

The Chairman also represented Watford on a regional and national level at various events.

# 50 Mayor's Report

# Mayor's report

A report of the Mayor had been circulated with the agenda. The Mayor introduced his report, thanking all those involved in implementing the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) helping rough sleepers in Watford.

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

1. Councillor Ezeifedi noted that the White Ribbon accreditation, which she supported, had a three year action plan. She asked when action would start on this and if the Mayor was opposed to violence against women.

The Mayor responded that the first meeting of the working party had been held approximately ten days earlier and confirmed that he was opposed to violence against women.

2. Councillor Bell raised an issue of the council's customer services stating that people who did not use the internet were unable contact the council and gave examples of constituents' experiences. He stated that the only option given to contact the council was by going online.

The Mayor stated that the Town Hall had been reopened and was available five days per week. There was also the option to phone in. He praised the work of the customer services team. He added that he was happy to look into individual cases and their experiences.

Councillor Bell relayed a story of an elderly constituent who had travelled in to the Town Hall in heavy rain arriving at midday only to find that it was opening at 1 pm. He called on the Mayor to better publicise the opening hours.

The Mayor stated that the opening times were on council publications and were available online.

3. Councillor Khan highlighted recent incidents of police officers being convicted for violent offences against women. He asked whether the Mayor agreed that men should be doing more to stop violence against women.

The Mayor agreed that men should. He also praised Hertfordshire constabulary for their work, in particular during Chief Inspector Diane Whiteside's tenure as the Chief Inspector for Watford, the first woman to hold the role.

4. Councillor Smith welcomed the artificial grass at Everett Rovers football club and hoped there would be support and that further improvement would happen at other clubs, such as the Herons FC.

The Mayor answered saying he had visited both clubs and felt it was very important for all members to support local groups and find out what could be improved. He highlighted funding available through the new Neighbourhood Grant scheme which had supported 16 projects in 2022.

5. Councillor Turmaine asked the Mayor if he agreed with Michael Gove that the U-Turn on house building put homes at risk.

The Mayor responded commenting that there was a housing crisis and that central government by changing targets and then punishing local government for failing to meet them did not help the situation. He believed that increased housing should be focused on new towns and hubs rather than mass expansion of small towns like Watford.

Questions by Members of the Council under Council Procedure Rule 10.0

No written questions had been received from members.

52 Petitions presented under Council Procedure Rule 12.0

No petitions had been received.

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

54 Appointment of Chair to Licensing Committee

Council received a report of the Democratic Services Manager requesting the appointment of a new of Chair for Licensing Committee; the Liberal Democrat Group had proposed Councillor Richard Wenham as Chair.

If Councillor Wenham was appointed as Chair, a new Vice Chair would need to be appointed. The Liberal Democrat Group had proposed that Councillor Mark Hofman should be appointed to the position.

## RESOLVED -

- 1. That Councillor Wenham be appointed Chair of the Licensing Committee and receive the relevant Special Responsibility Allowance for the remainder of the Municipal Year.
- 2. That Councillor Mark Hofman be appointed as Vice Chair of the Licensing Committee.

# Request from Hertsmere Borough Council asking Watford to make a joint application for a Principal Area Boundary Review

The Council received a report from the Group Head of Democracy and Governance including a request from Hertsmere Borough Council asking Watford to make a joint application for a Principal Area Boundary Review.

## RESOLVED -

That the Council informs Hertsmere Borough Council that it will co-operate and join with Hertsmere in making a request for a Principal Area Boundary Review of Hertsmere Polling Districts EA, AB and BB.

# 56 New Polling Station Locations from May 2023

The council received a report from the Electoral Services Manager setting out plans for new polling stations.

# RESOLVED -

That Council agrees to the movement and addition of polling station locations within the Central; Holywell; and Oxhey Borough Ward locations as set out in bold in paragraph 4.3 of the report.

# 57 Members Allowances 2022/2023

The Council received a report from the Democratic Services Manager in relation to members' allowances. Members were asked to review the recommendation of the Independent Members Remuneration Panel following the agreement of the local government national pay negotiations for 2022.

#### RESOLVED -

that the Independent Members Remuneration Panel's suggestion that members allowances, as indicated in paragraph 4.7 of the report, be increased by 5% from 1 April 2022.

# 58 Budget and Council Tax Resolution 2023/24

The Mayor introduced the Budget highlighting that it was bold and would help to make Watford greener while dealing effectively with the current economic state.

He then moved the budget and council tax to be approved, this was seconded by Councillor Watkin.

Councillor Bell moved an amendment, seconded by Councillor Khan. The amendment was circulated prior to the meeting and was as follows: "Taxi fees to be frozen and remain at 2022/23 levels.
All fee cuts introduced for 2023/4 to go ahead.

The cost for this is will be taken from the Economic Impact Reserve at (£6,597, £12,750 + VAT) = £21,897"

The original motion and amendment was debated by Council.

The amendment was put to the vote.

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

# Those members voting in favour of the amendment:

Councillors Bell, Ezeifedi, Khan, Smith, Trebar, Turmaine and Watling.

## Those members voting against the amendment:

The Chairman Councillor Grimston, Mayor Taylor, Councillors Allen-Williamson, Clarke-Taylor, Devonish, Dychton, Feldman, Hannon, Hofman, Jeffree, Johnson, Kloss, Martins, Nembhard, Osborn, Pattinson, Rodrigues, A Saffery, G Saffery, Stanton, Stotesbury, Walford, Watkin, Wenham and Williams.

There were no abstentions.

The amendment was **LOST** by 7 votes to 25 with no abstentions.

The original motion was then put to Council.

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

# Those members voting in favour of the motion:

The Chairman Councillor Grimston, Mayor Taylor, Councillors Ahmed, Allen-Williamson, Clarke-Taylor, Devonish, Dychton, Feldman, Hamid, Hannon, Hofman, Jeffree, Johnson, Kloss, Martins, Nembhard, Osborn, Pattinson, Rodrigues, A Saffery, G Saffery, Stanton, Stotesbury, Walford, Watkin, Wenham and Williams.

There were no votes against the motion.

# Those members abstaining:

Councillors Bell, Dhindsa, Ezeifedi, Khan, Shah, Smith, Trebar, Turmaine and Watling.

The original motion was **CARRIED** by 27 votes to 0 with 9 abstentions.

RESOLVED -

# 1. That Council:

- a) 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 2023/24 is **35,532.1** as outlined in the report.
- b) Approves the continuation of the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2023/24 incorporating updates for changes to legislative requirements.
- c) Approves the budget (Attachment 1) as laid out in the report, including:
- the budget for 2023/24
- the Capital Investment Programme 2022/23 to 2025/26
- d) Approves the income charging policy and schedule of fees and charges effective from 1 April 2023 with the exception of charges for building control which are effective from 1 February 2023 (Attachment 2a and Attachment 2b).

- e) Approves the Capital Strategy for 2023/24, and delegates to the Director of Finance and Portfolio Holder Resources responsibility for agreeing and maintaining the Treasury Management policy. (Attachment 3)
- f) Agrees to increase the annual Council Tax for a Band D property 2023/24 by 2.99%. This will apply to all other bands.
- g) Notes the key risks identified and approves their proposed mitigations.
- h) Notes the advice provided by the Director of Finance on the robustness of estimates and the adequacy of reserves.
- i) Notes the indicative budgets for 2024/25 and 2025/26.
- 2. Setting the amount of Council Tax for Watford Borough Council:
- a) That the Council's net General Fund expenditure for 2023/24 shall be £14.962m.
- b) That the 2023/24 band D precept is set at £290.85 and other bands and amounts are set in accordance with the table at paragraph (E)
- c) That Watford Borough Council's Council Tax Base for 2023/24 has been calculated at 35,532.1 in accordance with Regulation 3 of the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012 made under Section 31B (1) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended.
- d) That the following amounts be now calculated by the Council for the year 2023/24 in accordance with Sections 31A to 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992:
- (A) Being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A (2) of the Act. (Effectively the gross expenditure and transfers to reserves) £76,285,592
- (B) Being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A (3) of the Act. (Effectively the gross income and transfers from reserves) £65,951,081
- (C) Being the amount by which the aggregate at (A) above exceeds the aggregate at (B) above calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 31A (4) of the Act as its Council Tax Requirement for the year £10,334,511

(D) Being the amount at paragraph (C)divided by amount at 1 a) above calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 33 (1) of the Act as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year (at Band D) £290.85

(E)

Council Tax	Conversion	Watford's Share
Valuation Band	Factor to Band D	£
Α	6/9	193.90
В	7/9	226.22
С	8/9	258.53
D	1	290.85
Е	11/9	355.48
F	13 / 9	420.12
G	15 / 9	484.75
Н	2	581.70

Being the amounts given by multiplying the amount at paragraph 2 (D) above by the number which, in the proportion set out in Section 5 (1) of the Act, is applicable to dwellings listed in a particular valuation band divided by the number which in that proportion is applicable to dwellings listed in Valuation Band D, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 36 (1) of the Act, as the amounts to be taken into account for the year 2023/24 in respect of categories of dwellings listed in different valuation bands.

e) That a report including precepts of both the Hertfordshire County Council and the Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire be presented to the Council Functions Committee on 22 February 2023 to set the total Council Tax.

## Motions submitted under Council Procedure Rule 13.0

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

The council was informed that three motions had been received.

#### Motion 1

The following motion was proposed by Councillor Stotesbury and seconded by the Mayor It was noted that an amended version to the one published in the agenda had been circulated prior to the meeting. It read as follows:

"Council notes:

- That the Labour Mayor of London Sadiq Khan has announced his intention to expand the Ultra Low Emission Zone to the London border, starting August 2023.
- That within the ULEZ, all vehicles not meeting the "ultra low emission vehicle" standard are charged £12.50 per day each time they are used, both residents' vehicles and visitors'.
- That the expansion to the London border will have knock-on effects to residents in Watford and in many other local authorities on the edge of London.
- Due to poor public transport links in outer London and nearby areas, Watford residents are unfairly penalised because people in these areas are more likely to own a car, more likely to need a car, and less able to find alternatives.
- Further, older cars which will be hit with the ULEZ charge will be disproportionately owned by people on lower incomes who cannot afford a newer replacement vehicle.
- Watford is served by a number of TfL services and as such, residents in Watford are paying into TfL's budget but do not have access to the TfL scrappage scheme.
- That the initial requirement for TfL to find new revenue from expanding current schemes was part of a negotiated funding settlement with the Conservative government.

Council acknowledges that Mayor of Watford, Peter Taylor has written to Sadiq Khan to outline his opposition to the ULEZ expansion until such time as:

- The car scrappage scheme is extended to Watford
- Watford stations are included in zone 6 to reduce public transport costs

Council calls for the Labour Mayor of London to halt or delay his proposed ULEZ expansion until such times as:

- Watford residents are included in TfL's scrappage scheme to encourage the transition from polluting vehicles to ULEZ compliant vehicles.
- TfL and Hertfordshire County Council invest more in our public transport in order to encourage residents to switch from private to public transport
- Watford stations are included in zone 6 of the TfL network to reduce costs for Watford's residents."

An amendment was proposed by Councillor Khan. It was noted that Councillor Ezeifedi would second the amendment and not Councillor Bell as indicated on the original amendment circulated prior to the meeting.

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<sup>&</sup>quot;Council notes:

- That the Labour Mayor of London Sadiq Khan has announced his intention to expand the Ultra Low Emission Zone to the London border, starting August 2023.
- That within the ULEZ, all vehicles not meeting the "ultra low emission vehicle" standard are charged £12.50 per day each time they are used, both residents' vehicles and visitors'.
- That the expansion to the London border will have knock-on effects to a minority of residents in Watford and in many other local authorities on the edge of London.
- Due to poor public transport links in outer London and nearby areas, a minority of Watford residents are disadvantaged because a minority of people in these areas may own a heavily polluting vehicles, and less able to find alternatives.
- Further, older cars, heavily polluting vehicles, which will be hit with the ULEZ charge will be disproportionately owned by fewer people but may be on lower incomes who cannot afford a newer replacement vehicle.
- · Watford is served by a number of TfL services and as such, residents in Watford are paying into TfL's budget but do not have access to the TfL scrappage scheme.

That the initial requirement for TfL to find new revenue from expanding current schemes was part of a negotiated funding settlement with the Conservative government.

· Watford Borough Council has declared a climate emergency and understands the need to implement policies that respond to the emergency, working with different councils and authorities, in particular in clearing up air pollution in our town and surrounding areas.

Council acknowledges that Mayor of Watford, Peter Taylor has written to Sadiq Khan to outline opposition to the ULEZ expansion until such time as:

- The car scrappage scheme is extended to Watford
- Watford stations are included in zone 6 to reduce public transport costs

Council calls for the Labour Mayor of London to halt or delay his proposed ULEZ expansion until such times as:

- Watford residents are included in TfL's scrappage scheme to encourage the transition from polluting vehicles to ULEZ compliant vehicles. , with Watford Borough Council paying it's fair share towards the scrappage scheme.
- TfL, and Hertfordshire County Council, Watford Borough Council and the National Government invest more in our public transport in order to encourage residents to switch from private to public transport
- Watford stations are included in zone 6 of the TfL network to reduce costs for Watford's residents."

Members debated the original motion and the amendment.

On being put to Council, the amendment was LOST.

Members then voted on the original motion, on being put to Council the motion was agreed.

## RESOLVED -

#### Council notes:

- That the Labour Mayor of London Sadiq Khan has announced his intention to expand the Ultra Low Emission Zone to the London border, starting August 2023.
- That within the ULEZ, all vehicles not meeting the "ultra low emission vehicle" standard are charged £12.50 per day each time they are used, both residents' vehicles and visitors'.
- That the expansion to the London border will have knock-on effects to residents in Watford and in many other local authorities on the edge of London.
- Due to poor public transport links in outer London and nearby areas, Watford residents are unfairly penalised because people in these areas are more likely to own a car, more likely to need a car, and less able to find alternatives.
- Further, older cars which will be hit with the ULEZ charge will be disproportionately owned by people on lower incomes who cannot afford a newer replacement vehicle.
- Watford is served by a number of TfL services and as such, residents in Watford are paying into TfL's budget but do not have access to the TfL scrappage scheme.
- That the initial requirement for TfL to find new revenue from expanding current schemes was part of a negotiated funding settlement with the Conservative government.

Council acknowledges that Mayor of Watford, Peter Taylor has written to Sadiq Khan to outline his opposition to the ULEZ expansion until such time as:

- The car scrappage scheme is extended to Watford
- Watford stations are included in zone 6 to reduce public transport costs

Council calls for the Labour Mayor of London to halt or delay his proposed ULEZ expansion until such times as:

- Watford residents are included in TfL's scrappage scheme to encourage the transition from polluting vehicles to ULEZ compliant vehicles.
- TfL and Hertfordshire County Council invest more in our public transport in order to encourage residents to switch from private to public transport

• Watford stations are included in zone 6 of the TfL network to reduce costs for Watford's residents.

The next two motions were then changed from the order printed in the agenda.

#### Motion 2

The following motion was proposed by Councillor Dhindsa and seconded by Councillor Trebar:

"We call on the Council to use its powers and influence to create a new BID zone in West Watford.

To work with the County Council and other agencies to maintain and upgrade the streetlights in Vicarage Road precinct.

So that they can be used for festive lights in the future.

Also to provide hanging baskets in the spring and summer along with new signage highlighting the amenities on offer in the precinct.

This creation of a new BID could then provide sustained funding for the lights and provide future improvements for the area."

The motion was debated by the council.

On being put to the council the motion was LOST.

#### Motion 3

The following motion was proposed by Mayor Taylor and seconded by Councillor Allen-Williamson:

"Council notes that recent statistics compiled by the BBC show:

- That at West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust, 71% of ambulances are waiting longer than 30 minutes before handing over to A&E staff, more than double the figure in 2019 and well above the national average of 44%.
- At the trust, more people are waiting longer to see a doctor in A&E. In 2019, 18% of patients waited more than four hours to be seen. That figure is now 42%.
- That hospital waiting lists in the trust have risen by 158% since 2019 and over half of patients are waiting more than 18 months for treatment.

#### Council believes

- That local NHS staff are working incredibly hard and that local residents are proud of the work of health workers and social care workers do every day to help others.
- That management in the local NHS Trust have been successful in improving the standard of care over recent years and have been rightly recognised by national awards for their work and innovations such as digital wards.
- That the current crisis is a result of a long period of underfunding by the Conservative government, long term issues with the social care sector, and a staffing crisis caused by a lack of long term thinking.
- That anti-strike legislation proposed by the government to ensure minimum staffing levels will make industrial relations worse, attack individual rights, and are a way for the government to distract from their failures.
- That local health outcomes would be vastly improved by implementing plans for investment at Watford General Hospital and hospitals at St Albans and Hemel Hempstead.

#### Council calls for

- The Secretary of State for Health and Social care to immediately fund the improvement plans set out by West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust and supported by Watford Borough Council
- The Conservative government to drop plans to legislate against the right to strike and to achieve a fair pay deal with nurses, ambulance workers and other key workers.
- The government to deal with the current NHS crisis and then create a long term strategy to properly fund and staff our precious health service."

The motion was then discussed by the Council

On being put to Council, the motion was AGREED.

# RESOLVED -

Council notes that recent statistics compiled by the BBC show:

- That at West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust, 71% of ambulances are waiting longer than 30 minutes before handing over to A&E staff, more than double the figure in 2019 and well above the national average of 44%.
- At the trust, more people are waiting longer to see a doctor in A&E. In 2019, 18% of patients waited more than four hours to be seen. That figure is now 42%.
- That hospital waiting lists in the trust have risen by 158% since 2019 and over half of patients are waiting more than 18 months for treatment.

# Council believes

- That local NHS staff are working incredibly hard and that local residents are proud of the work of health workers and social care workers do every day to help others.
- That management in the local NHS Trust have been successful in improving the standard of care over recent years and have been rightly recognised by national awards for their work and innovations such as digital wards.
- That the current crisis is a result of a long period of underfunding by the Conservative government, long term issues with the social care sector, and a staffing crisis caused by a lack of long term thinking.
- That anti-strike legislation proposed by the government to ensure minimum staffing levels will make industrial relations worse, attack individual rights, and are a way for the government to distract from their failures.
- That local health outcomes would be vastly improved by implementing plans for investment at Watford General Hospital and hospitals at St Albans and Hemel Hempstead.

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- The Conservative government to drop plans to legislate against the right to strike and to achieve a fair pay deal with nurses, ambulance workers and other key workers.
- The government to deal with the current NHS crisis and then create a long term strategy to properly fund and staff our precious health service.

Chair

The meeting started at 7.30 p.m. and finished at 10.15 p.m.