

CABINET

28 November 2022

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

Also present: Councillor N Bell
Simon Hope, Montagu Evans

Officers: Chief Executive
Group Head of Democracy and Governance
(Shared Services) Director of Finance
Executive Director of Place
Associate Director of Customer and Corporate Services
Business Intelligence Manager
Customer Services Operations Manager
Infrastructure and Technical Support Manager
Property Development Project Manager
Democratic Services Manager

The Mayor welcomed everyone to the Cabinet meeting.

29 Apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence.

30 Disclosure of interests (if any)

Councillor Williams advised that he was a trustee of Watford Sheltered Workshop and therefore needed to declare an interest in minute number 34, as the group had applied for funding from the Neighbourhood CIL. He confirmed he would leave the meeting for that item.

31 Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 October 2022 were submitted and signed.

32 Conduct of meeting

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

Focusing on Delivery: Performance and Progress

Cabinet received a report setting out updates for the Council Plan 2022-26, Delivery Plan 2022-24, the Organisational Development Strategy 2020-24 and key performance indicators.

The Mayor introduced the report. He referred members to the appendices which included the Delivery Plan, Organisational Development Strategy and key performance indicators. The report contained some of the key highlights including:

- Delivering the Local Plan, which was an incredible achievement.
- The decarbonisation works which were underway on the Town Hall and Colosseum.

The Mayor invited the Chief Executive to provide further information.

The Chair Executive added that following the grant received towards the decarbonisation works at the Town Hall and the Colosseum, the council had applied for further funding to support decarbonisation works to other community buildings. Other highlights included:

- Market Lates, which was attracting more people to the town.
- Meriden Park improvements had commenced.
- White Ribbon accreditation had been achieved by the council.
- Building Control and Planning Enforcement Shared Services with St Albans City and District Council had begun with Legal to follow in 2023.
- Two new corporate apprentices had started with the council
- Six health and wellbeing workshops had taken place with more planned, including menopause awareness.

Councillor Watkin, Portfolio Holder responsible for Human Resources, commented that the Organisational Development Strategy was important for the organisation. He noted that the new values and behaviours had been developed with and agreed by the staff. The strategy made sure that the council was working together for a common purpose.

Councillor Stotesbury highlighted that the Sustainability and Biodiversity strategies were currently out for public consultation. He encouraged everyone to look at the proposals and provide feedback.

The Mayor noted that the report and its appendices would be presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee in December.

RESOLVED –

1. that Cabinet notes the progress updates within the report relating to:
 - the Council Plan 2022-26 and Delivery Plan 2022-24 (appendix A)
 - the Organisational Development Strategy 2020-24 (Appendix B)
 - the key performance indicator results for Quarter 2 of 2022/23 (Appendix C).
2. that Cabinet notes the key performance indicators and measures will continue to be reviewed as part of the council-wide service planning process and the ongoing work on the Business Intelligence Strategy.
3. that Cabinet notes the report will be presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee in December 2022.

34

Neighbourhood CIL Funding Allocation

Cabinet received a report of the Infrastructure and Technical Support Manager which recommended a total of £154,932 from the Neighbourhood CIL was allocated and distributed between 16 local infrastructure projects as identified in the report.

The Mayor introduced the report. He thanked the Infrastructure and Technical Support Manager for her work on this new scheme, she had carried out a great deal of engagement with different community groups. He explained that this was the first year of the funding programme. The intention was that there would be an annual programme funding new neighbourhood and community projects. The funding process had been developed following best practice from other councils. This year's application process had been very successful and 16 community projects had been put forward for funding. The Mayor highlighted some of those projects which were detailed within the report.

Councillor Dychton, Portfolio Holder for Community, stated that this funding was important and empowered local communities. She was pleased there were so many applications and was interested to see how it developed in the future.

Councillor Bell also thanked the Infrastructure and Technical Support Manager for her work. He asked whether the scheme would be reviewed.

The Mayor responded that the scheme was restricted by regulations but it would be reviewed and other allowed processes considered, for example the maximum level of funding that could be applied for in an application.

Councillor Stotesbury noted that there were some great projects in the list for this year. He encouraged local community groups to look at the report and submit bids in the future.

The Mayor reminded members that the Infrastructure and Technical Support Manager had visited many community groups to inform them about the new funding available.

RESOLVED –

that the Neighbourhood CIL spend for 2022/23, as set out in paragraph 5.15 of the report, be agreed.

35 **Customer Experience Strategy 2022-2026**

Cabinet received a report of the Customer Experience Lead which sought member approval for the Customer Experience Strategy and the supporting documents Staff Guide to Delivering Great Customer Experiences and Customer Care Service Standards.

The Mayor invited Councillor Watkin to introduce the report.

Councillor Watkin informed Cabinet that the new Customer Experience Strategy would ensure that the council provided the best service in the best possible way. The Customer Services team had identified over 400 services the council provided to the local community and customers. Face to face interactions were down 85% since 2017, which was not only due to Covid. It was essential that all staff were customer-focused. He wished to pay tribute to the Customer Experience Lead and her team. Customer feedback had been reviewed in the development of the strategy. The strategy contained four key themes which were set out in the report.

Councillor Pattinson referred to the Equalities Impact Analysis and stressed that it was important the strategy was fully inclusive and that all residents had access to the council's services.

Councillor Stotesbury encouraged residents to provide feedback as this helped the council to ensure improvement.

Councillor Bell commented that not all residents used the internet or were able to use it and the council need to take account of this. In addition, he noted that residents could visit the Customer Service Centre, but only for restricted hours. He said that it was important that this information was communicated to people.

The Mayor confirmed that the council recognised that not all people were able to use the internet. He stated that the Customer Service Centre was the first one in Hertfordshire to re-open following Covid. Watford and Three Rivers Trust were currently working to tackle digital exclusion. The Mayor agreed it was important to ensure that residents were aware of the Town Hall opening times. The opening times were kept under review and the numbers visiting the Customer Service Centre were monitored.

Councillor Dychton referred to equalities and asked how the council would ensure this was carried out in the delivery of the strategy.

Councillor Watkin responded that the Equalities Act referred to eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation. The council would look to advance opportunities foster good relations. These were core values of the organisation.

RESOLVED –

1. that the Customer Experience Strategy 2022-2026, attached as Appendix A to the report, be approved.
2. that the Customer Experience Lead be authorised to implement the Customer Experience Strategy and supporting Delivery Plan.
3. that the engagement with Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the development and progress of the Customer Experience Strategy Delivery Plan and views on further actions to improve the customer experience be noted.

36

Town Hall Quarter - New Neighbourhood - Selection of Preferred Bidder

Cabinet received a report of the Executive Director of Place which provided details of the preferred bidder for the private sector development partner for the Town Hall Quarter (THQ) New Neighbourhood project.

The Mayor introduced the report. He advised that this report focused on the New Neighbourhood project which would enhance the work being carried out on to revitalise the Town Hall and Colosseum. It would make the most of under-utilised land, delivering improved health facilities, new homes, businesses and possibly a hotel. He explained that a procurement process had been undertaken to find a private sector development partner with the intention of setting up a fifty-fifty joint venture. Following the procurement exercise Mace Developments had been identified. The company had a strong track record in delivering high profile schemes, including the Stevenage Town Centre.

The Mayor noted the appendix outlined the procurement in more detailed. He advised members that due to the commercially sensitive nature of the content if they wished to discuss it they would need to move the exclusion of press and public. However, firstly they would consider the report and invited questions or comments from members.

Councillor Bell said it was an interesting report and noted that it was intended to pause the work for 12 months. He asked whether there was a risk the scheme would not come back in 12 months, for example if the economy worsened. He also referred to the Limited Liability Partnership with Mace, he assumed this would remain in place as fifty-fifty between the council and Mace, the same as Kier.

The Mayor confirmed it was fifty-fifty as with the joint venture with Kier. He advised that there would still be a great deal of work going on over the next 12 months. He stressed it was prudent to recognise the economic uncertainty.

The Chief Executive commented that through the competitive tender process there had been a lot of interest in the scheme and the council's ambition. The report was recommending a prudent view and this would give time to carry out due diligence.

Councillor Watkin said that this was a critical decision; finding the right partner and it was important how they would work together. Currently it was not the most prudent time to start making big investments, but the company was committed to working with the council in the future. This scheme would transform this part of Watford.

The Mayor added that throughout all the discussions with Mace they had agreed with the council about creating a community and the facilities needed to support it.

Councillor Pattinson stated that she had been impressed with the Mace offer of developing quality homes which were needed in Watford. Officers would be working with Homes England to identify funding to ensure social housing was part of it.

Councillor Dychton also welcomed Mace's commitment to deliver the best possible outcome for the town.

There were no questions on the Part B appendix.

The Mayor thanked everyone for their comments.

RESOLVED –

1. that Mace Developments Limited be selected as preferred bidder for the Town Hall Quarter New Neighbourhood Project.
2. that the Executive Director of Place, in consultation with the Mayor and Chief Executive, and providing regular updates to the Town Hall Quarter Member Steering Group, be authorised to progress resolution of the delivery programme, complete contractual negotiations and prepare an initial business plan and to bring these back to Cabinet for ratification and recommendation onto Council.
3. that the Associate Director of Property and Asset Management be authorised to continue land assembly negotiations with other landowners across the site, to provide regular updates to the Mayor, Chief Executive and Member Steering Group, and to revert to Cabinet for authorisation for any acquisitions.
4. that the Regeneration Team to continue to work with other public and private sector bodies to consider the regeneration plans for this area of Watford, working within existing budgets and providing regular updates to the Mayor, Chief Executive and Town Hall Quarter Member Steering Group.

Mayor

The Meeting started at 7.00 pm
and finished at 7.30 pm