

## COUNCIL

17 October 2022

Present: Councillor A Grimston (Chairman)  
Councillor S Feldman (Vice-Chair)  
Councillors P Taylor, S Ahmed, D Allen-Williamson, N Bell,  
K Clarke-Taylor, 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, I Stotesbury, S Trebar,  
M Turmaine, D Walford, M Watkin, D Watling, R Wenham and  
T Williams

Also present:

Officers: Chief Executive  
Group Head of Democracy and Governance  
Director of Performance  
Head of Finance  
Associate Director of Planning, Infrastructure and Economy  
Principal Planning Officer (JG)  
Mayor's Political Assistant  
Democratic Services Manager  
Democratic Services Officer (IS)

### 33 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies had been received from Councillors Devonish, Stanton and Stiff.

### 34 **Disclosure of Interests**

There were no disclosures of interest.

### 35 **Minutes**

The minutes of the Council meeting held on 19 July 2022 were submitted and signed.

## **Official Announcements**

### **Black History Month**

The Chairman informed the Council that there were a number of events taking place in October to mark Black History Month. These included a special exhibition at the Watford Museum. Further information was available at [watfordblackhistorymonth.co.uk](http://watfordblackhistorymonth.co.uk).

### **Rock 'n' Roll bingo**

The Chairman thanked all those who attended the event and commented on a successful evening that raised £1,420 for her two charities.

### **Centenary Event**

On 18 October at 11.30 am at the flag pole, the Mayor and Chairman would be raising the Centenary flag. The flag had been designed by local schoolchildren. Everyone was welcome to attend.

### **Remembrance**

The Chairman informed Council that the Remembrance ceremony would take place on Sunday 13 November and would include a parade from St Mary's Church to the Town Hall. Councillors were asked to meet at St Mary's from 1.45 pm for the parade or at 2.45 pm at the Town Hall to join the ceremony there. They were advised that further details were available from the Events Manager and they were urged to attend this important event.

### **Chairman's engagements**

The Chairman gave a brief overview of her activities, since taking up the role and added that it had been an honour to pay respects on behalf of the council to her late Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II, and to mark the reign of his Majesty, King Charles III.

Other events have included many which celebrate our diverse community, both young and old:

- An event for South Asian heritage month
- Herts Pride
- Hindu festival at the manor
- Chase Care Home summer fair
- Monkey Puzzle nursery graduation

The Chairman expressed her delight at her participation in events which recognised the achievements and service of our residents and local organisations, including:

- Prince's Trust TEAM programme
- Samaritans Open Morning
- Afternoon tea event at Watford Museum

She added that the council had celebrated Watford's rich heritage and culture and she had attended:

- Glitterball Show and Little Women at the Palace Theatre
- Watford Fringe
- Watford Centenary Film

The Chairman had also represented Watford, both regionally and as part of national events and attended events including:

- Raising the flag for Merchant Navy Day
- High Sheriff's garden party
- Hertsmere Civic Service
- The local proclamation of the new sovereign.

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### **Mayor's Report**

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 Turmaine, Trebar, Watling, Dhindsa, Bell, Martins and Watkin indicated that they wished to ask questions.

The Mayor presented his report. He paid tribute to the service of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and thanked the Director of Performance and the Events and Filming Manager for their hard work on the council's Platinum Jubilee celebrations and Centenary events.

1. Councillor Turmaine asked how hopeful the Mayor was that he would receive a response from the Prime Minister Liz Truss about the future of Watford General Hospital, now that the source of power seemed to be with the former Health Secretary and new Chancellor, Jeremy Hunt.

The Mayor replied that together with the Chief Executive, he had met with the Hospital Trust, who were pleased to learn that he had written so early on in her leadership of the Conservatives. The Mayor pointed out that some of the first business dealt with by the new Minister for Health,

was to visit Watford General Hospital to see the conditions. He added that all members were united in wanting to see investment in our hospital and he would continue to make the case for the benefit of Watford residents and the wider region.

2. Councillor Trebar described the problems with fly tipping in the borough and explained that she had been contacted by a resident of Chester Road, a notorious area for fly tipping. She added that now CCTV had been rolled out, as well as the mobile unit, would it be possible to obtain CCTV at Chester Road.

The Mayor agreed that it was important to place CCTV at target hotspots and explained that this was being progressed by Councillor Williams and he was hopeful that progress would soon be made. He stressed the importance of reporting such offences, so that the matter could be investigated and where evidence was uncovered, to prosecute the perpetrators. He concluded by assuring Councillor Trebar that Councillor Williams would have noted her request.

3. Councillor Watling stated that at a previous Council, he had asked the Mayor regarding an evaluation of the Beryl bike scheme, particularly collection and the time taken for bikes to be repaired. He asked if there was a meeting planned to look at this and if so what would be on the agenda.

The Mayor assured him that there had been meetings about this very matter, adding that with Councillor Stotesbury, he had met with officers from Beryl bikes only recently and he assured the member that they remained committed to ensuring that there were enough Beryl bikes and they were correctly distributed. There were 2,500 to 3,000 journeys per week on Beryl bikes. The Mayor remarked that the officers from Beryl had commented that Watford was the first town of its size to have such a bike scheme.

4. Councillor Dhindsa pointed out that when he was standing as a candidate for Mayor, he had raised the Liberal Democrat Group's lack of reflection of the Watford community. He acknowledged that the numbers had increased but asked why the group's black and Asian councillors were seated in the back row of the Council Chamber.

The Mayor responded with amazement that despite the relative infrequency of Mayor's questions, the main issue appeared to be the seating arrangements in the Chamber. He went on to thank Councillor Dhindsa for recognising that the Liberal Democrat group was increasingly

diverse and increasingly large, noting that the number of Liberal Democrat Councillors had continued to grow.

5. Councillor Bell gave tribute to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and King Charles III on behalf of the Labour Group.

He went on to describe his previous question at the last Council meeting, regarding violence in the town centre and asked for an update on progress made.

The Mayor agreed that this was an important issue and explained that he had asked for more police officers out in the in town centre, serving local residents. This had been raised with the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC). The PCC was due to visit Watford very soon and the Mayor assured the Council that this was an issue that once again he would be raising with him. The Mayor stressed that whilst there were still issues to address, Watford was a safe town and stated that he wanted everyone who visited Watford to have a pleasant experience. There was an undertaking to increase police, but the Mayor commented that he needed to see that happen.

Councillor Bell thanked the Mayor and added that there was clearly still an issue and asked what policy and/or powers did the Mayor have to deal with this.

The Mayor emphasised that it was a decision for the PCC, who had said it was an operational matter and therefore not within his authority, but the Mayor asserted that he felt it was not merely an operational matter, but a strategic concern. He added that from the crime statistics, Watford was clearly a busy place and he would continue to make the case to the PCC.

6. Councillor Martins commented that the recent press reports on the violence in the town centre was appalling and pointed out that there used to be a police liaison committee, consisting of residents, councillors and police. Councillor Martins suggested that it might be beneficial if this was reinstated.

The Mayor agreed this was a good suggestion and assured the member that he was happy to take that away and raise with the local Chief Inspector and the PCC.

7. Councillor Watkin commented about the current cost of living crisis and asked for an update on the situation with branded school uniforms.

The Mayor thanked the member and agreed that the cost for branded school uniforms was often extortionate. He pointed out that the government had introduced guidance and legislation to move away from branded school uniforms. The Mayor stressed that he had raised the issue with the leader of the County Council and would continue to do so.

38 **Questions by Members of the Council under Council Procedure Rule 10.0**

No written questions had been received from members.

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

No questions from the public had been received.

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

No petitions had been received.

41 **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.**

The Chief Executive explained that there was one item of urgent business that related to the member attendance rules, and it had been agreed with the Chairman that it was urgent and should be considered at this meeting of Council. The matter for debate was whether to increase the six month limit for non-attendance for a specific member. The Chief Executive informed Council that the issue had arisen just prior to the meeting and she was seeking a waiver and extension of time limit for Councillor Stiff who was unable to attend meetings due to significant ill-health.

She requested that under Section 85(1), Local Government Act 1972, Councillor Stiff was granted an extension to 8 May 2023.

The Chair moved that Councillor Stiff be granted a waiver of the six month attendance rule, in accordance with Section 85(1) of the Local Government Act 1972, and an extension of the time limit to 8 May 2023 be approved. Upon being seconded, the motion was approved by Council.

RESOLVED –

that Councillor Stiff be granted a waiver of the six-month attendance rule, in accordance with Section 85 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972, and an extension of the time to 8 May 2023 be approved.

**Appointment of Chair to Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Council received the report of the Democratic Services Manager which requested the appointment of Councillor Tom Osborn as Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Additionally, Council was asked to appoint Councillor Osborn to the Hertfordshire Health Scrutiny Committee. Both of these appointments would be until the end of the 2022/23 municipal year or until Councillor Feldman returned.

RESOLVED –

1. that Councillor Tom Osborn be appointed as Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the remainder of 2022/23 or until Councillor Simon Feldman returns.
2. that Councillor Tom Osborn be appointed to the Hertfordshire County Council Health Scrutiny Committee for the remainder of 2022/23 or until Councillor Simon Feldman returns.

**Watford Local Plan**

Council received the report of the Spatial Planning Manager which sought approval for the adoption of the Local Plan. This was a statutory planning document to guide decision-making when considering development proposals in the borough. It set out the growth strategy to 2038, including planning policies used to determine planning applications and identifying development sites that would enable growth needed in the borough. It was noted that the Democratic Services Manager had circulated some amendments to the Local Plan prior to the meeting, which had also been published on the council's website.

RESOLVED –

1. That, Council adopts the Watford Local Plan as attached as appendix A in accordance with S23(3) of the 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (as amended);
2. That delegated authority be given to the Associate Director of Planning, Infrastructure and Economy in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Partnerships and Planning to undertake revisions to formatting of the Local Plan.

**Council Scheme of Delegation**

Council received a report of the Group Head of Democracy and Governance setting out the necessary updates to the Council's Scheme of delegation, to reflect new posts and responsibilities.

It was also necessary to update the Budget and Policy Procedure Rules and Contract Procedure Rules to again reflect the change of posts.

RESOLVED –

1. that the Council Scheme of Delegation at appendix 1 be approved.
2. that the Budget and Policy Procedure Rules at appendix 2 be approved.
3. that the Contract Procedure Rules at appendix 3 be approved.

**Motions submitted under Council Procedure Rule 13.0**

Council was informed that three motions had been received.

**Motion 1**

The following motion was proposed by Councillor Watling and seconded by Councillor Bell:

“This council resolves that the Mayor write to Watford's MP Dean Russell to speak up on behalf of his residents on issues such as the cost of living crisis, the disastrous effects the mini budget has had on the pound and the huge profits made by energy companies whilst his constituents' bills & mortgage costs continue to rise.”

Members debated the motion.

On being put to Council the motion was agreed.

RESOLVED –

That this Council resolves that the Mayor write to Watford's MP Dean Russell to speak up on behalf of his residents on issues such as the cost of living crisis, the disastrous effects the mini budget has had on the pound and the huge profits made by energy companies whilst his constituents' bills & mortgage costs continue to rise.



## **Motion 2**

The following motion was proposed by Councillor Turmaine and seconded by Councillor Khan:

“Warm Banks in Watford

This Council also notes that:

Many individuals and families will not be able to warm their homes this winter due to the cost of energy, despite the government's deferred payment energy unit price cap. Increasingly, councils like Watford are creating ‘Warm Bank’ schemes, to give residents a place to stay warm and keep the cost of bills at home down after school and during evenings and weekends.

This Council believes that:

No one should go cold in Watford. Fuel poverty in the United Kingdom is disgraceful and a shaming indictment of the policies of the Conservative government. People should be able to affordably warm their own homes

This Council resolves:

That Watford Council will develop an emergency plan for the use of ‘Warm Banks’ across the borough. This includes the opening of community centres, leisure centres and other suitable buildings to provide support.

To work closely and provide extra funding for charities that are combating poverty such as food banks, children’s and pensioners’ poverty charities.

Work with local businesses across Watford this winter so that they too, can help with dealing with the emerging fuel crisis.

That Watford Council will write to Dean Russell, Watford’s MP, to demand the government does more in dealing with fuel poverty in the town by providing funding to councils to cope this winter.”

Mayor Taylor moved an amendment to the motion, which was seconded by Councillor Dychton.

“This Council notes that:

Many individuals and families will not be able to warm their homes this winter due to the cost of energy, despite the government's deferred payment energy unit price cap. Increasingly, councils including Watford are creating ‘Warm Bank’ schemes, to give residents a place to stay warm and keep the cost of bills at home down after school and during evenings and weekends and give an opportunity to meet others.

Watford Council declared a cost of living emergency at a previous meeting. In response to the emergency, the Mayor has convened a Cost of Living Forum to bring together key organisations, groups and individuals who, together, can have a real impact on those finding it hard to manage through these difficult times. It has also created an online cost of living hub to help residents find the resources and access the organisations they need to deal with the cost of living emergency.

This Council believes that:

No one should go cold in Watford. Fuel poverty in the United Kingdom is disgraceful and a shaming indictment of the policies of the Conservative government. People should be able to affordably warm their own homes

This Council resolves:

That Watford Council will implement its plan for the use of 'Warm Banks' across the borough. This includes the opening of community centres, leisure centres and other suitable buildings to provide support.

To work closely and continue to provide extra funding for charities that are combating poverty such as food banks, children's and pensioner's poverty charities through the Watford Community Fund and other sources.

Continue to work with local businesses across Watford this winter so that they too, can help with dealing with the emerging fuel crisis.

That Watford Council will write to Dean Russell, Watford's MP, to demand the government does more in dealing with fuel poverty in the town by providing funding to councils to cope this winter."

Councillor Turmaine accepted the amendment. Members then debated the substantive motion.

On being put to Council the motion was agreed.

RESOLVED –

This Council notes that:

Many individuals and families will not be able to warm their homes this winter due to the cost of energy, despite the government's deferred payment energy unit price cap. Increasingly, councils including Watford are creating 'Warm Bank' schemes, to give residents a place to stay warm and keep the cost of bills at home down after school and during evenings and weekends and give an opportunity to meet others.

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This Council believes that:

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This Council resolves:

That Watford Council will implement its plan for the use of 'Warm Banks' across the borough. This includes the opening of community centres, leisure centres and other suitable buildings to provide support.

To work closely and continue to provide extra funding for charities that are combating poverty such as food banks, children's and pensioner's poverty charities through the Watford Community Fund and other sources.

Continue to work with local businesses across Watford this winter so that they too, can help with dealing with the emerging fuel crisis.

That Watford Council will write to Dean Russell, Watford's MP, to demand the government does more in dealing with fuel poverty in the town by providing funding to councils to cope this winter."

### **Motion 3**

The following motion was proposed by Councillor Stotesbury and seconded by Councillor Williams:

"Council notes with concern recent reports that all 980 staffed ticket offices in England could be closed, following discussions between the Department for Transport and the Rail Delivery Group and changes to the Government's guidance relating to ticket office opening hours.

Council believes that ticket offices provide a vital service to residents in Watford. Having a clearly sign-posted place in the station for people with ticket enquiries provides certainty and confidence for customers who may struggle to otherwise locate station staff.

Not all residents are able to use station ticket machines, or have the means to book a ticket in advance. Complicated journeys involving connections are likely to require human assistance to ensure customers purchase the most appropriate and cheapest tickets, and do not incur penalties from mis-booked tickets.

Council is concerned the closure of ticket offices will disproportionately affect elderly and disabled residents in Watford – as well as those with poor literacy and IT skills. Council also notes the possible implications for current station staff and the concerns that have been raised over possible staff redundancies.

Council therefore resolves:

That the Mayor to write to write to the Secretary of State for Transport, and the Government Railways Minister, expressing Council's opposition to the possible closure of staffed rail ticket offices – and in particular the office at Watford Junction.

That the Mayor to write to London North Western Railway expressing the Council's opposition to any plans to close the staffed ticket office at Watford Junction."

Members then debated the motion.

On being put to Council the motion was AGREED.

RESOLVED –

Council notes with concern recent reports that all 980 staffed ticket offices in England could be closed, following discussions between the Department for Transport and the Rail Delivery Group and changes to the Government's guidance relating to ticket office opening hours.

Council believes that ticket offices provide a vital service to residents in Watford. Having a clearly sign-posted place in the station for people with ticket enquiries provides certainty and confidence for customers who may struggle to otherwise locate station staff.

Not all residents are able to use station ticket machines, or have the means to book a ticket in advance. Complicated journeys involving connections are likely to require human assistance to ensure customers purchase the most appropriate and cheapest tickets, and do not incur penalties from mis-booked tickets.

Council is concerned the closure of ticket offices will disproportionately affect elderly and disabled residents in Watford – as well as those with poor literacy

and IT skills. Council also notes the possible implications for current station staff and the concerns that have been raised over possible staff redundancies.

Council therefore resolves:

That the Mayor to write to write to the Secretary of State for Transport, and the Government Railways Minister, expressing Council's opposition to the possible closure of staffed rail ticket offices – and in particular the office at Watford Junction.

That the Mayor to write to London North Western Railway expressing the Council's opposition to any plans to close the staffed ticket office at Watford Junction.

Chair

The meeting started at 7.35 p.m.  
and finished at 9.20 p.m.

# Minute Item 42

Part A

**Report to:** Council

**Date of meeting:** Monday, 17 October 2022

**Report author:** Democratic Services Manager

**Title:** Appointment of Chair to Overview and Scrutiny Committee

## 1.0 Summary

1.1 Council is requested to approve the appointment of the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee as detailed below.

1.2 In addition, Council is asked to approve the change of appointment for the Hertfordshire County Council Health Scrutiny Committee.

## 2.0 Risks

### 2.1

Nature of risk	Consequence	Suggested Control Measures	Response (treat, tolerate, terminate or transfer)	Risk Rating (combination of severity and likelihood)
Appointment to HCC Health Scrutiny Committee is not agreed	Watford Borough Council would not be represented on the Health Scrutiny Committee and not be involved in scrutinising health services that affect Watford residents.	Council approves the nominated councillor.	Treat	1

## 3.0 Recommendations

3.1 that Councillor Tom Osborn be appointed as Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the remainder of 2022/23 or until Councillor Simon Feldman returns.

3.2 that Councillor Tom Osborn be appointed to the Hertfordshire County Council Health Scrutiny Committee for the remainder of 2022/23 or until Councillor Simon Feldman returns.

**Further information:**

Sandra Hancock  
sandra.hancock@watford.gov.uk  
Tel: 01923 278377

**Report approved by: Carol Chen, Group Head of Democracy and Governance**

**4.0 Detailed proposal**

- 4.1 At Annual Council on 24 May 2022 Council agreed the appointment of Councillor Simon Feldman as Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee and as the council's representative to the Hertfordshire County Council Health Scrutiny Committee.
- 4.2 At the end of July Democratic Services was informed that Councillor Feldman needed to take a period of extended leave in accordance with the Members' Leave Policy which was approved by Council at its meeting on 24 January 2022. It is currently not yet known when Councillor Feldman will be able to return. Officers are in regular contact with Councillor Pattinson, the Liberal Democrat Group Leader, to ensure they are aware of the latest position.
- 4.3 At Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 21 September 2022 it had been agreed that Councillor Osborn would chair that particular meeting in the absence of Councillor Feldman. However, Council is required to appoint members to the position formally. In accordance with the leave policy both Councillors Feldman and Osborn are entitled to receive the Special Responsibility Allowance that is attached to the role of Chair.
- 4.4 The appointment to the Hertfordshire County Council Health Scrutiny Committee requires the council's representative to be a member of one of the council's scrutiny committees, therefore they would not be a member of the Executive. In addition, the appointed representative must not be employed by the County Council or have any other conflict of interest, for example employed by one of the health trust's scrutinised by the Health Scrutiny Committee. Officers have contacted Councillor Osborn for confirmation he has no interest. It has been agreed that Councillor Osborn will attend the next Health Scrutiny Committee as a substitute for Councillor Feldman, as it was due to take place prior to Council. Council is required to formally appoint the council's representative.
- 4.5 Council is therefore requested to formally appoint Councillor Tom Osborn to the role of Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee and as the council's representative on the Hertfordshire County Council health Scrutiny Committee.

## 5.0 Implications

### 5.1 Financial

5.1.1 The Shared Director of Finance comments that there are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

### 5.2 Legal Issues (Monitoring Officer)

5.2.1 The Group Head of Democracy and Governance comments that appointments to chairs and vice chairs of committees and council appointed outside bodies is done by council. Failure to appoint a replacement for Councillor Feldman would mean the vice chair chairing overview and scrutiny committee until his return.

## Appendices

None

## Background papers

The following background papers were used in the preparation of this report. If you wish to inspect or take copies of the background papers, please contact the officer named on the front page of the report.

- Members Leave Policy
- Establishment of Committees and Appointment of Chairs and Vice Chairs report to Council on 24 May 2022
- Appointment of representatives of the Council on outside organisations 2022/23 report and appendix
- Emails