COUNCIL

16 March 2023

Present: Councillor A Grimston (Chairman)
Councillor S Feldman (Vice-Chair)
Councillors P Taylor, S Ahmed, N Bell, M Devonish, J Dhindsa,
A Dychton, F Ezeifedi, I Hamid, P Hannon, M Hofman, P Jeffree,
S Johnson, A Khan, P Kloss, T Osborn, J Pattinson, K Rodrigues,
A Saffery, G Saffery, B Stanton, I Stotesbury, S Trebar,
M Turmaine, D Walford, M Watkin and T Williams

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

Officers: Chief Executive Group Head of Democracy and Governance Director of Partnerships Director of Performance Democratic Services Manager Democratic Services Officer (LM)

60 Apologies for Absence

Apologies had been received from Councillors, Allen-Williamson, Clarke-Taylor, Martins, Nembhard, Shah, Smith, Stiff, Watling and Wenham.

61 **Disclosure of Interests**

There were no disclosures of interest.

62 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 31 January 2023 were submitted and signed.

63 Official Announcements

Head of Legal Shared Services

The Chairman introduced Jacqueline Hutton, the new Head of Legal Shared Services.

Related Party Transaction forms

Members were reminded to complete the related party transaction form and to return it to the Group Head of Democracy and Governance. The Group Head of Democracy and Governance had placed one on their table if it was still outstanding. They were requested to return it that evening.

Vice Chairman

The Chairman advised members that Council was due to agree the next Vice Chairman at the meeting. Nominations would be taken after the elections had been held, and the Vice Chairman would be agreed at Annual Council.

Councillor Jessica Stiff

The Chairman informed Council that Councillor Stiff and her family had welcomed their new baby, Meredith Sophia Katie and she sent congratulations to the family on behalf of the council. Meredith was born on 11 March and weighed 2.85 kilos.

Chairman's engagements

The Chairman had attended several events locally and was especially moved by the Ukraine service at St. Mary's Church. She had expressed her gratitude towards the event organisers and praised the community's efforts.

The Chairman discussed her forthcoming events. She spoke about the Rock n Roll Bingo event scheduled for Friday, 28 April, in aid of the charities Official Minds at War and Building Heroes. The event could be booked through Watford and Three Rivers Trust. Additionally, the tickets for her gala dinner at Watford FC on 12 May were available through Helen Smith.

Thank you

The Chairman wished to express her gratitude to those councillors who would be standing down at the next elections for their dedicated service to the council and the residents of Watford over the years.

64 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, Bell and Dhindsa indicated that they wished to ask questions.

The Mayor began his report by also thanking those councillors who would be standing down at the election. In addition, he announced that Watford Borough Council had recently won a Public Sector Transformation Award, coming first in the People, Value, and Culture category. He then thanked the officers for their hard work and contributions that led to the award. He introduced his report and welcomed any questions.

 Councillor Bell asked the Mayor about the initial site of the mobile CCTV cameras and whether this program would be rolled out across the borough. Council Officers had confirmed the sites for the pilot program CCTV as Queens Avenue, Queens Road and Francis Road.

The Mayor replied that the three CCTV cameras were part of a pilot program to assess their effectiveness and determine whether they should be expanded across the borough. Additionally, he stated that this initiative was aligned with his manifesto.

Councillor Bell posed a follow-up question, highlighting that the prolonged neglect of the two sites selected for the CCTV pilot in the Central ward reflected poorly on the track record of the Liberal Democrats during their tenure in power.

The Mayor responded that the question from Councillor Bell was contradictory. He had explained that 300 cameras in the borough were already monitored 24/7 and that the council was working with the police to review their effectiveness. Furthermore, he pointed out that some Hertfordshire councils did not have council-funded cameras.

2) Councillor Turmaine asked the Mayor about a recent article in the Watford Observer on January 23rd, which reported that Watford's application for the Levelling Up Fund had been unsuccessful, which raised concerns about its potential impact on the council's plans.

The Mayor responded that the current system of councils bidding for funding was inefficient and a waste of officers' time. He cited that 80% of councils who applied for the Levelling Up Fund were unsuccessful at the second stage. With regards to the specific situation in Watford, he had explained that part of the funding, which was allocated for the Watford Colosseum, had already resulted in the council reallocating funding to secure the delivery this project. As for part two, due to the loss of funding amounting to £16 million, the council would need to re-evaluate its plans and be less ambitious in its objectives. The Mayor stated that the council would need to review its options and determine what it could deliver.

3) Councillor Dhindsa had inquired of the Mayor about the Neighbourhood Grants program, specifically inquiring about the number of ethnic minorities who had applied, the number of successful applicants, and the total amount awarded. He had requested that this information be sent to him at a later time. Additionally, he had a second question for officers concerning the delivery of post for councillors.

The Mayor responded that he would investigate the matter raised by Councillor Dhindsa regarding the neighbourhood CIL grants. He further stated that the grant scheme had received 16 successful applications, which were well-distributed among the communities of Watford. Some of the successful examples included the Random Café, the CCTV pilot, and the Everett Rovers FC. The Mayor noted that the scheme had been wellreceived by residents and deemed successful and would be expanded in the coming year.

65 Questions by Members of the Council under Council Procedure Rule 10.0

No written questions had been received from members.

66 Questions by Members of the Public under Council Procedure Rule 11.0

No questions from the public had been received.

67 Petitions presented under Council Procedure Rule 12.0

A petition with the requisite number of signatures from Watford residents had been received as set out in the agenda.

The petitioner, Ms Sheraze Benbakir, was invited to present the petition. She contended that Cassiobury Park was a crucial resource for families and contributed to the community's well-being. She acknowledged, however, the prevalence of anti-social behaviour in the area. Ms Benbakir shared a personal experience of being assaulted in November of the previous year at 6:30 pm when visibility was low. She urged the committee to consider measures to prevent such incidents in the future. Ms Benbakir recognised that additional lighting could negatively impact the animals and natural environment of the park. Nevertheless, she highlighted that commuters regularly used the route from Cha Cafe into town. The existing lighting infrastructure was deemed insufficient, which would make it difficult for people to use the route safely. Improving the

lighting in this area was, therefore, critical to enhancing the safety of the park for the community.

The Chairman invited councillors and the Mayor to debate the petition.

After Ms Benbakir 's presentation, the councillors applauded her bravery and expressed their appreciation for her efforts to make Cassiobury Park safe for everyone. They acknowledged that the route from Cha Cafe to town was popular for commuters and discussed the need for improved lighting to enhance safety in this area. However, they also noted that there was no need for lights across the entire park and that addressing gaps in the CCTV coverage could be a more effective way to prevent incidents.

The councillors raised concerns about the potential impact of additional lighting on wildlife and discussed the nine CCTV cameras currently in place in the park. They emphasised the council's commitment to working with the police to ensure the safety of park visitors and noted that incidents were rare. Members agreed to investigate further the feasibility of improving CCTV coverage while also exploring options for targeted lighting that would minimise negative impacts on wildlife.

Councillor Dychton formally responded to Ms Benbakir 's concerns by stating that, after liaising with the council's Community Safety Team and the police, it was confirmed that Cassiobury Park was not considered a crime or anti-social behaviour hot spot nor a high-risk area for crime. However, given the high footfall around the entrances and exits of the park, these locations were on a standing police patrol plan that varied in resourcing to meet seasonal demands. Councillor Dychton also highlighted that Watford's community safety partnership involved several key agencies, including the council and the police. The partnership's four strategic objectives included tackling violence against women and girls (VAWG), which would remain a priority objective overseen and monitored by the partnership through the 2024/5 plan. The council was now an accredited White Ribbon organisation, as part of an international initiative to prevent violence against women and girls. Councillor Dychton concluded by hoping that these initiatives would reassure the community regarding the measures being taken to keep everyone safe.

Following the debate, the Chairman thanked Ms Benbakir for attending the meeting.

68 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.

69 Council Pay Policy Statement 2023

Council received a report of the Executive Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development which set out the Council's Pay Policy Statement for 2023.

RESOLVED –

that the Council Pay Policy Statement be approved.

70 Motions submitted under Council Procedure Rule 13.0

Council was informed that five motions had been received.

Motion 1

The following motion had been proposed by Councillor Ezeifedi and seconded by Councillor Khan:

"Selling Vaping Product to Children and Young people in Watford

In the past few years, vaping among adolescents has risen sharply, both nationally and internationally. Action on Smoking Health (ASH) data shows that 8.6% of 11- to 18-year-olds in England vaped in 2022, compared with 4% in 2021. The charity also reported that among those who tried vaping, 40.1% had never smoked before.

Recent Chartered Trading Standards Institute research found that 60% of local trading standards services report high street shops selling vapes or vaping products to children. Trading standards teams reported a significant rise in underage vape sales last year, with more than a fifth of youngsters buying vaping products from newsagents while 16.3% buying them from a supermarket. Watford seems to mirror this trend with most secondary schools seizing vaping products in school premises as well as a high number of shops selling these products to underage.

The effects of e-cigarettes and vaping are still not yet fully understood - which is especially important in the context of young people, as their lungs are still

developing. There is growing evidence that e-cigarettes can help people manage their nicotine cravings – but this isn't without risk. While research has shown vaping poses a small fraction of the risks of smoking, it is deeply worrying that more and more children – who have never smoked – are starting vaping.

The LGA has called on its members to step up enforcement to deal with growing numbers of shops selling vapes to children despite the 18 age limit, with many "especially concerned" by child-friendly marketing, including colourful packages.

This council agrees the following: that the Mayor should

Write to the Secretary of state for tighter regulations on the marketing of vape products, including a ban on brightly-coloured packaging and a review of the flavours vape companies use which are likely to appeal to children.

Call for harsher punishments for companies which flout advertising rules to promote their products on social media, and for more licensing powers to allow local authorities to ban the sale of e-cigarettes in shops near schools.

Also resolves that the Mayor to write to the County Council Trading standards to:

- Carry out regular test purchases and have seized products and issued fixed penalty notices when a business has been found to be in breach of the law.
- Implement mandatory age-of-sale signage on vaping products.
- Implement sanctions for breaching these rules should also be the same as penalties handed out under tobacco display regulations."

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

"A 2022 report by Action on Smoking Health cited evidence from the Smoking Toolkit Study (an ongoing series of monthly surveys of the adult population of England) that shows a "clear association between changes in population rates of quitting smoking and prevalence of e-cigarette use". The study estimated that the use of e-cigarettes may have led to 69,930 additional ex-smokers in England in 2017. They also cited a randomised control trial which found that vaping was nearly twice as effective as Nictotine Replacement Therapy in helping smokers quit. Growing evidence shows that vaping is significantly less harmful than smoking, but is not risk-free. This means that local and national government have important roles in regulating vape use, especially in under 18s.

Despite laws that set the legal age of vaping at 18, In the past few years, vaping among adolescents has risen sharply, both nationally and internationally. Action

on Smoking Health (ASH) data shows that 8.6% of 11- to 18-year-olds in England vaped in 2022, compared with 4% in 2021. The charity also reported that among those who tried vaping, 40.1% had never smoked before.

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The LGA has called on its members to step up enforcement to deal with growing numbers of shops selling vapes to children despite the 18 age limit, with many "especially concerned" by child-friendly marketing, including colourful packages.

This council:

Supports Action on Smoking and Health's work with schools, parents and youth services which provide education materials, posters and guidance to support young people to make informed choices about their health in relation to smoking and vaping.

Calls on the Secretary of state to implement tighter regulations on the marketing of vape products, including a ban on brightly-coloured packaging, which are likely to appeal to children, and for vaping products to be kept out of sight behind the counter.

Calls on the government to tax disposable vapes which are the cheapest and most popular vape for children and are not environmentally friendly.

Calls for strict enforcement of rules around the advertising of products on social media and asks that County Council Trading standards:

Carry out regular test purchases, seize products where necessary and issue fixed penalty notices when a business has been found to be in breach of the law.

Implement mandatory age-of-sale signage on vaping products."

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

On being put to Council the motion was agreed.

RESOLVED -

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Implement mandatory age-of-sale signage on vaping products.

Motion 2

The following motion had been proposed by Councillor Turmaine and seconded by Councillor Bell:

"Support for Passivhaus standards.

This council notes that:

Watford Borough Council declared a climate emergency in 2019. It has also set a goal of being carbon neutral by 2030.

The council has a partnership with Watford Community Housing to deliver homes, including those for social rent and affordable rent.

This council recognises that:

Passivhaus homes are very energy efficient and can reduce energy bills by huge margins. The Passivhaus approach to building homes, retro-fitting homes and designing office space is sustainable and growing in popularity.

The cost-of-living crisis and the climate crisis are both emergencies that Watford Borough Council can have a direct impact on through its policies and activities.

Local authorities are using Passivhaus properties to provide housing that is more environmentally sustainable and reduces the costs of energy for their tenants.

This council resolves to:

Initiate conversations with its housing partners and developers to explore the use of a Passivhaus approach to its buildings for the future.

To propose a review of its existing buildings, together with its partner housing providers, with regard to retro-fitting to Passivhaus standards."

Councillor G Saffery moved an amendment to the motion, which was seconded by Councillor Stotesbury.

"This council notes that:

Watford Borough Council declared a climate emergency in 2019. It has also set a goal of being carbon neutral by 2030.

The council has a partnership with Watford Community Housing to deliver homes, including those for social rent and affordable rent.

Watford Community Housing has assessed the EPC ratings of its properties and is working through the worst performing properties to upgrade them to a higher EPC.

This council recognises that:

The cost-of-living crisis and the climate crisis are both emergencies that Watford Borough Council can have a direct impact on through its policies and activities.

Passivhaus homes are very energy efficient and can reduce energy bills by huge margins. The Passivhaus approach to building homes, retro-fitting homes and designing office space is sustainable in many cases and growing in popularity.

In cases where Passivhaus standards would be prohibitively expensive to achieve, retrofitting homes to improve their energy efficiency rating to a higher standard short of Passivhaus can help residents with their energy bills and reduce carbon emissions. Some homes are also not able to be retrofitted to Passivhaus standard.

Local authorities are using Passivhaus properties to provide housing that is more environmentally sustainable and reduces the costs of energy for their tenants.

Watford's recently adopted local plan sets high environmental standards for new homes including energy efficiency. For example Policy CC8.3: Sustainable Construction and Resource Management requires new builds to be designed so they can be adapted to be carbon neutral and sets the most ambitious targets for carbon emissions that would be acceptable to the Inspector of the local plan.

This council resolves to:

Continue to engage constructively with its housing partners and developers to explore the use of a Passivhaus approach to its buildings where appropriate and cost effective for the future, as well as other energy efficiency options if they are more appropriate."

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

On being put to Council the motion was agreed.

RESOLVED -

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Motion 3

The following motion had been proposed by Councillor Stotesbury and seconded by Mayor Taylor:

"Tackling the climate emergency

Council notes

- On 29th March 2023, the Climate Change Committee, created as a result of the Climate Change Act 2008, will present its biennial Adaptation Progress Report to parliament. This will outline what progress has been made in preparing the UK for the consequences of climate change and set out what the government should do to tackle the climate emergency.
- Thanks to Liberal Democrat policies in government between 2010 and 2015, the UK made major strides in cutting emissions from power generation, with wind power is now the cheapest form of electricity generation. However, little progress has been made since.
- Last year's heatwave demonstrated that the UK already faces significant challenges from the changing climate; these will intensify as warming continues. The ongoing war in Ukraine and its impact on fuel costs has also highlighted the need to move to renewable energy sources. So far, the Government has been too slow to react to the issue of clean energy and energy security.
- That Watford Council declared a climate emergency in 2019 and an ecological emergency in 2021.

Council welcomes:

- The recent creation of the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, reversing the Conservative government's short-sighted and damaging decision to disband the Department for Energy and Climate Change in 2016.
- The decarbonisation works on the Town Hall which will reduce the council's carbon footprint and reduce running costs, saving local taxpayers £300,000 per year.
- The work by Watford Borough Council to create its new environmental strategy. This includes undertaking a wide-ranging consultation on a draft strategy and creation of a final strategy and delivery plan to become a net zero carbon town by 2030.
- The significant capital investment in sustainability and biodiversity improvements agreed as part of the 2023/4 budget, including:
 - Funding for our green spaces strategy £150,000
 - \circ Continuation of our tree planting programme £50,000
 - River Colne restoration works £250,000
 - Cassiobury Park Wetlands project £75,000
 - Shrub replacement in open spaces £25,000
 - Supporting sustainable transport through our Transforming Travel in Watford Strategy - £100,000
 - electric vehicle charging programme £100,000
- The further funding through the council's revenue budget, including £500,000 to implement the Environmental Strategy Delivery Plan and £421,000 as part of the sustainability reserve.

Council calls for:

- Funding from the government to be increased and made available to enable councils including Watford, to reach zero carbon town by 2030.
- The Mayor to write to the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero to outline the work Watford is already doing and lobby for more support for local councils so they can achieve their net zero carbon objectives."

Members debated the motion.

On being put to Council the motion was agreed.

RESOLVED -

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Motion 4

The following motion had been proposed by Councillor Stotesbury and seconded by Councillor Feldman:

"Bus services in Watford

Council notes:

- Bus services in Watford and across Hertfordshire are causing significant distress to residents. The Mayor and ward Councillors regularly receive complaints from residents who are frustrated that buses are being cancelled, are irregular and are not well maintained.
- Since 2020 the number of miles covered annually by buses have decreased by one third and even before the COVID pandemic was static or falling over a period of a decade. Despite recovery of passenger numbers since the pandemic, services are not increasing in line with this.
- Many residents who had previously using bus services in Watford are being forced to use their cars and alternative methods such as taxis. For

some this is increasing their monthly outgoings at a time of a cost-ofliving emergency.

• Watford Council have been proactive in supporting bus services in Watford through the Arriva Click demand-responsive bus service but wider changes are necessary to provide the level of bus service they deserve.

Council believes:

- A cheap and reliable bus service is vital to support modal shift from polluting private vehicles to more sustainable forms of transport.
- For many people, including the elderly and young people going to school, buses provide independence and freedom for individuals who otherwise would not have that opportunity.
- The TfL model of transport delivery allows for more regular services that are tailored to the needs of residents, not shareholders and is preferable to the system used in Hertfordshire and most parts of the country.
- The unfair imposition of ULEZ by the Labour Mayor of London, which will have knock-on effects locally, underlines the importance of fixing public transport.

Council calls for:

- The Mayor to write a letter to the Leader of Hertfordshire County Council and demand better services for Watford.
- The Mayor to write to Ministers at the Department for Transport to ask what is being done to improve bus services nationally and what plans they have to allow other areas to apply a TfL model for bus services across the UK."

Members debated the motion.

On being put to Council the motion was agreed.

RESOLVED -

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- The Mayor to write to Ministers at the Department for Transport to ask what is being done to improve bus services nationally and what plans they have to allow other areas to apply a TfL model for bus services across the UK."

Motion 5

The following motion had been proposed by Councillor Pattinson and seconded by Councillor Trebar:

"Watford Borough Council notes that:

- i. 51 per cent of the UK population will directly experience the menopause during their lifetime;
- ii. Over 13 million women in the UK are either menopausal or perimenopausal at any time;
- iii. 4.5 million of those 13 million women are in the workplace;
- iv. Three out of four women experience menopause-related symptoms with one in four experiencing serious symptoms;
- v. 1.6 million working days are lost to menopause symptoms annually as a result.

Menopause can see women experiencing a wide range of symptoms including hot flushes, fatigue, anxiety, disturbed sleep, heavy and erratic periods, mood swings, rage, heart palpitations, and itchiness.

The intensity and combination of some of these symptoms can be unsettling. In particular, when oestrogen levels decrease in the lead up to menopause, cognition suffers. Women may struggle with memory, word retrieval, and other cognitive activities. For some, the change in cognitive function is so pronounced they fear they are developing dementia or Alzheimer's. These changes can also reduce their confidence to manage their work, home and social life.

Hormone levels may exacerbate existing conditions such as ADHD, and medication and strategies for managing those conditions may not work as effectively as they once did.

Many menopausal women are finding it difficult to obtain Hormone Replacement Therapy medicines due to increased demand and supply chain issues, adding to their anxiety.

Support for women with menopausal symptoms in the workplace is variable and understanding by managers and other employees is often limited. In some cases, understanding and empathy is so poor that women receive insults and rude comments from colleagues and managers. As a result, many women end up leaving their workplace as they feel unable to continue in their role. Watford Borough Council welcomes steps taken by the Council's HR department in developing and implementing menopause support for its staff.

Watford Borough Council asks its partner organisations, to review their People Management policies to ensure that their staff and WBC retained staff going through the menopause have the understanding and support they need.

The Council also commits to:

- i. Campaign for menopause support to form a central part of the next national Women's Health Strategy;
- ii. Working with Hertfordshire County Council and other local health organisations to ensure that support for those experiencing menopause is a central part of the next Hertfordshire Health and Wellbeing strategy;
- iii. Supporting the #MakeMenopauseMatter campaign which is calling for:
 - a) Mandatory menopause training for all GPs and menopause to be taught as part of every medical school curriculum,
 - b) Menopause guidance and support in every workplace,
 - c) Menopause to be added to the Relationships, Sex and Health Education curriculum for schools throughout the UK."

Members debated the motion.

On being put to Council the motion was agreed.

RESOLVED -

Watford Borough Council notes that:

- i. 51 per cent of the UK population will directly experience the menopause during their lifetime;
- ii. Over 13 million women in the UK are either menopausal or perimenopausal at any time;
- iii. 4.5 million of those 13 million women are in the workplace;
- iv. Three out of four women experience menopause-related symptoms with one in four experiencing serious symptoms;
- v. 1.6 million working days are lost to menopause symptoms annually as a result.

Menopause can see women experiencing a wide range of symptoms including hot flushes, fatigue, anxiety, disturbed sleep, heavy and erratic periods, mood swings, rage, heart palpitations, and itchiness. The intensity and combination of some of these symptoms can be unsettling. In particular, when oestrogen levels decrease in the lead up to menopause, cognition suffers. Women may struggle with memory, word retrieval, and other cognitive activities. For some, the change in cognitive function is so pronounced they fear they are developing dementia or Alzheimer's. These changes can also reduce their confidence to manage their work, home and social life.

Hormone levels may exacerbate existing conditions such as ADHD, and medication and strategies for managing those conditions may not work as effectively as they once did.

Many menopausal women are finding it difficult to obtain Hormone Replacement Therapy medicines due to increased demand and supply chain issues, adding to their anxiety.

Support for women with menopausal symptoms in the workplace is variable and understanding by managers and other employees is often limited. In some cases, understanding and empathy is so poor that women receive insults and rude comments from colleagues and managers. As a result, many women end up leaving their workplace as they feel unable to continue in their role.

Watford Borough Council welcomes steps taken by the Council's HR department in developing and implementing menopause support for its staff. Watford Borough Council asks its partner organisations, to review their People Management policies to ensure that their staff and WBC retained staff going through the menopause have the understanding and support they need.

The Council also commits to:

- i. Campaign for menopause support to form a central part of the next national Women's Health Strategy;
- Working with Hertfordshire County Council and other local health organisations to ensure that support for those experiencing menopause is a central part of the next Hertfordshire Health and Wellbeing strategy;
- iii. Supporting the #MakeMenopauseMatter campaign which is calling for:
 - a) Mandatory menopause training for all GPs and menopause to be taught as part of every medical school curriculum,
 - b) Menopause guidance and support in every workplace,
 - c) Menopause to be added to the Relationships, Sex and Health Education curriculum for schools throughout the UK.

Chair

The Meeting started at 7.30 pm and finished at 9.30 pm