

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

15 November 2023

Present: Councillor Grimston (Chair)
Councillors Ahmed, Devonish, Hill, Khan, Kloss, Nembhard
and Osborn

Officers: Chief Executive
Associate Director of Planning, Infrastructure and Economy
Associate Director of Property and Asset Management
Property Development Project Manager
Democratic Services Manager
Senior Democratic Services Officer

Also present: Councillor Mark Watkin, Portfolio Holder for Property,
Resources and Customer Service
Toby Hyde, Chief Strategy and Collaboration Officer, West
Herts Teaching Hospital Trust (minute numbers 45 to 50)
Alex White, Chief Redevelopment Officer, West Herts
Teaching Hospital Trust (minute numbers 45 to 49)
Cllr David Tutt and Steve Mullineaux, LGA Peer Challenge
Team (minute numbers 45 to 49)

45 **Apologies for Absence/Committee Membership**

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Ezeifedi.

46 **Disclosure of interests (if any)**

There were no disclosures of interest.

47 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 October 2023 were submitted and signed.

48 **Call-in**

No call-in had been received.

49 **Hospital redevelopment**

The committee received a presentation by Alex White, Chief Redevelopment Officer and Toby Hyde, Chief Strategy and Collaboration Officer of West Herts Teaching Hospital Trust. The presentation covered the agenda, approach and model of care to be implemented in the new hospital.

Responding to a question about the impact of inflation, it was noted that the project had been modelled to 2028 on a mid-point and included inflationary considerations. The programme had been allocated the required funding. Any potential change in government could not be predicted but the Treasury had committed to the project. The next stage was to have the outline business case approved. The contingency was to maintain the current estate to a good standard, as it needed to operate for at least five more years.

Comparing Watford to other new hospital programmes, members were advised there was not necessarily a priority order but this project was more ready than others in line for funding. There were no issues with RAAC in the estate. One advantage of the Watford programme was that it would be a single-phase development once the pathology department had been relocated, other projects would require a phased approach to decant facilities due to the development footprint.

Turning to stakeholder engagement, the committee were reassured that the trust was committed to ongoing engagement both formally and informally to obtain meaningful feedback. It was further noted that good access arrangements were in place for the construction. Thomas Sawyer Way would remain the access for emergency vehicles and potentially construction traffic with a traffic management plan and a blue light plan in place. Further discussions were required with Watford Borough Council about one piece of land. There was ongoing dialogue with neighbours and the Considerate Contractors scheme would be in place.

New models of care would be in place to enable a smooth transition. Staff had become used to working in sub-standard facilities and discussions were taking place about what was needed in the new facility for the best outcomes. Patient flows were being built in with a higher number of single beds which reduced the length of stay and improved infection control. The facility was designed to be future-proof, building digital infrastructure into the hospital to improve patient outcomes.

The services at the hospitals in Hemel Hempstead and St Albans would also be reimagined as part of the programme; it was unlikely that staff or patients would routinely require transport between the sites. Other local hospitals provided a shuttle service from the nearest station and the trust was amenable to this suggestion.

The plan for the remaining estate was to provide key worker accommodation, other uses were subject to further consultation but could include space for biosciences and other healthcare amenities once the site had been vacated and demolished.

The Portfolio Holder asked about the confidence level that the business case would be approved and other major threats were overcome. The trust remained extremely confident and felt that the key threats were political.

The committee thanked the team for their presentation.

RESOLVED –

That the trust provides a written update on progress in six months' time and returns to the committee for a formal update in 12 months.

50 **Health integration update**

The committee received a presentation by Toby Hyde, Chief Strategy and Collaboration Officer and Donna Nolan, Chief Executive of Watford Borough Council. The presentation provided the context of the reorganisation of NHS structures, the local integrated care system and the collaboration journey locally. An overview was also provided of Watford Borough Council's increasing engagement over the last year and potential opportunities.

Discussing how this piece complemented wider council work, the Chief Executive noted that an internal exercise had been undertaken to consider how the core services contributed to health and the findings were that the council had a major role in the prevention of ill-health which had gone unrecognised in the system.

Other partners had responded very positively to the engagement from Watford including the county council and other districts.

The biggest future obstacle would be funding and capacity. It was a complex system with a large number of organisations involved and the NHS had moved from a focus on competition to collaboration.

The local mental health provider was Hertfordshire Partnership Foundation Trust who worked in acute services. The aim was to provide alternative ways of supporting those with mental health concerns outside A&E as well as addressing the other physical health conditions that they might be experiencing.

The committee noted that public health sat with Hertfordshire County Council and asked why this was a priority for Watford Borough Council. The Chief Executive noted that the top concern in the residents' survey was health and social care, so it mattered to residents. The Council Plan also included commitments around a 'Happy and Healthy Town', but there should be a focus on the best outcomes rather than who did what. It remained important that the funding was allocated in the right way in order to maximise this opportunity to create a new approach in the health system for the next generation of healthcare.

Turning to the measures of success, the key metrics were what mattered to patients as well as costs. This might include, for patients experiencing complex frailty, reduced time spent in hospital. It was also important that there was no wrong door for accessing support and that collective resources were maximised. The costs for the proposed projects had not yet been identified, as these were early stages.

Approaches like this were operating at different stages in other places; the best ideas would be considered as the evidence base was being developed and then the implementation models could be reviewed. It was vital that there was a commitment across the system to ensure that momentum was maintained even when personnel changed.

The focus needed to be to start with the issues that caused the most problems and did not represent value for the taxpayer. This would involve undertaking pilots to prove concepts and gain confidence.

The pandemic had demonstrated how partners could work across organisations to achieve common goals and the barriers

between organisations had not reformed in Watford which provided a sound foundation for this work.

The Chief Executive held responsibility for this at Watford Borough Council and she was linked in with other chief executives across the country who had similar ambitions as well as the District Councils Network who were bringing together the work nationally. The local NHS leaders were engaged with the emerging evidence testing of these new ways of working. The Chief Executive of the NHS had recently visited Watford to discuss this work and had noted this was the 'most joined up health system we have been to see' which was a reflection of the quality of the relationships.

Responding to a question about working with education authorities, it was noted that this linked in with other work taking a long-term approach to a vision for Watford, which brought together 20 key anchor organisations and had a link to health.

The committee thanked the guests for their update.

RESOLVED –

that the update be noted and that a further update be brought back to the committee in 12 months.

51

Watford Business Park

The committee received a presentation from the Associate Director of Property and Asset Management and the Property Development Project Manager. The presentation provided an overview of the scheme, the rationale, the letting strategy, the financial undertakings and the risks and challenges faced.

Members asked about confidence levels in reaching the lettings' target; officers noted that work with lettings agents was ongoing and they were actively looking at enquiries in the market. There was not a significant supply of industrial accommodation in Watford and the range of units provided an opportunity to meet different needs. The forecasting was prudent but the team were encouraged by demand levels.

Noting that the park looked to provide a 4-5% return on investment, the committee asked about the lifecycle of the warehouses. Members were advised that it should be at least 40-50 years and the structure made them flexible for different

uses. In response to a question about letting to the voluntary sector, the project was principally an investment venture as part of the commercial investment portfolio. As such, it was not specifically geared to the voluntary sector and had planning consent for industrial and storage uses.

Developing the discussion around rates of return, officers noted that costs had been projected against rents. Advice on viability had been sought and regular checks and changes were made to this assessment. The industrial market remained robust and the business park represented a net gain in capacity as well as providing job creation opportunities.

The committee asked about the process to procure an operator for the onsite café. The scheme was always instead to sit within the investment portfolio and this had been an open market letting process. The offers that had come in had been assessed on the basis of financial benefit and heads of terms had been agreed with a national chain. Other more community-focused opportunities within the town's parks had been highlighted to other parties in the bidding process.

Noting the sustainability credentials of the park, it was hoped that this would set a precedent in industrial developments as it had been awarded a BREAM very good rating. The leases also included green clauses to hold tenants to account.

Turning to transport, the officers noted that cycling had been embedded in the development with a shower in every unit, cycle storage and Beryl stands. The bus service was outside of the council's remit but there were routes to Croxley Park as well as car parking available onsite.

Members asked how the opportunities for this development being next to Croxley Park were being maximised. The two parks had very different aims and were managed separately. Lambert Smith Hampton provided the property management services which enabled coordination.

Responding to a question about building types, it was noted that there was not the land value to justify a multi-storey approach but that the units provided the flexibility to add a mezzanine if needed.

The Portfolio Holder commented that this had been a great seed funding project in an area that previously had been underfunded.

RESOLVED –

That the presentation be noted.

52 **Executive Decision Progress Report**

The scrutiny committee was invited to review the current Executive Decision Progress Report for 2023-24 and consider whether any further information was required.

RESOLVED –

that the current 2023/24 Executive Decision Progress report be noted.

53 **Hertfordshire County Council's Health Scrutiny Committee**

The Chair, as the council's appointed representative on Hertfordshire County Council's Health Scrutiny Committee, noted that no meetings had taken place.

RESOLVED –

the update be noted.

54 **Work Programme**

Members were invited to review Overview and Scrutiny Committee's draft work programme for 2023/24. The committee supported the approach to questioning taken in this meeting to be taken forward; providing members remained free to raise other questions too.

RESOLVED –

That the Chair works with officers to incorporate members' suggestions into the 2023/24 work programme.

55 **Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting would be on Wednesday 13 December.

Chair

The Meeting started at 7.00 pm
and finished at 9.15 pm