

CABINET

4 September 2023

Present: Mayor Taylor (Chair)
Councillor Dychton (Deputy Mayor and Portfolio Holder for Community)
Councillor Pattinson (Portfolio Holder for Housing and Wellbeing)
Councillor G Saffery (Portfolio Holder for Planning)
Councillor Stotesbury (Portfolio Holder for Transport and Sustainability)
Councillor Watkin (Portfolio Holder for Property and Resources)
Councillor Williams (Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services)

Also present: Councillor Bell, Labour Group Leader
Councillor Rodrigues, observer

Officers: Chief Executive
Director of Finance
Director of Performance
Group Head of Democracy and Governance
Associate Director of Customer and Corporate Services
Associate Director of Property and Asset Management
Intelligence, Performance and Improvement Lead
Economic Development Lead
Democratic Services Manager

The Mayor welcomed everyone to the Cabinet meeting.

16 **Apologies for absence**

There were no apologies for absence.

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

Councillor Bell advised that his daughter worked for a tenant in the building that would be considered in the exempt report (minute number 24). Following advice, he confirmed that he would leave the meeting before the start of the item.

18 **Minutes of previous meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 July 2023 were submitted and signed.

19 **Conduct of meeting**

The Mayor confirmed that Cabinet would consider the items in the order as published in the agenda.

20 **Performance and Progress Report: Q1 2023/24**

Cabinet received a report of the Associate Director of Customer and Corporate Services, Delivery Support Lead and the Intelligence, Performance and Improvement Lead which provided the update of performance for the first quarter of 2023/24 covering:

- The Council Plan 2022-26 and Delivery Plan 2022-24;
- Key performance indicators for Q1 of 2023/24;
- Key corporate strategies.

The Mayor introduced the report and thanked the officers for their work in compiling the information. He noted some of the highlights including:

- The new car club launching in the autumn.
- The continuing improvements to the River Colne.
- The completion of the new crematorium.
- The launch of the Watford Lottery.

The Mayor invited Councillor Watkin to provide additional information about the key performance indicators.

Councillor Watkin stated that the key performance indicators were critical to the management and oversight of the council. The community was able to see quickly and clearly the council's commitments. They provided an overall impression that the council understood where it was and how it was progressing. The results showed the council was a well-run authority. He wished to credit the Associate Director of Customer and Corporate Services and his team for their work.

The Mayor noted that the report would also be presented to Overview and Scrutiny later in the month. He asked the officers about the satisfaction rate for the website.

The Associate Director explained that this was often the contact channel which attracted the lowest satisfaction rating. The team reviewed the results of the satisfaction rates and found that usually the comments related to statutory processes and services rather than the website's content. However, if there were any comments about the website content, these were referred to the web team for resolution.

Councillor Bell commented on the increase in numbers accommodated in temporary accommodation. He asked whether the council had sufficient resources to manage the increase. He also asked about the green investment bond scheme. In addition, he referred to the number of indicators that were now red.

The Mayor responded that the report provided explanations for the changes in rating; some required a marginal shift to move them from a green to red rating. He invited Councillor Pattinson to respond about the Housing service.

Councillor Pattinson explained that the increase in the numbers being accommodated in temporary accommodation was as a direct result of the cost-of-living crisis. The Housing service had just been through a restructure to ensure it was able to support people in crisis.

Councillor Stotesbury responded to the questions about the green investment bond scheme. He confirmed that the council did not intend to explore the bonds locally at this time. However, the council would offer support packages where it could and apply for grants when appropriate. He added that when the time was right there would be a platform where residents could get involved in the green agenda.

The Mayor thanked everyone for their comments and asked Cabinet to vote on the recommendations in the officer's report.

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 key performance indicator results for Quarter 1 of 2023/24 (Appendix B)
 - The council's key corporate strategies (Appendix C)
2. that the report be presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 20 September 2023.

21

Communications and Conversations Strategy 2023-26

Cabinet received a report of the Communications and Engagement Lead which set out the details of the proposed Communications and Conversations Strategy and its Delivery Plan.

The Mayor introduced the report. He said the council was ambitious and should be proud of its work. He stressed it was important to engage with residents. He wanted to highlight 'conversations; the council was also here to listen to the community. The digital channels continued to grow. He added that diversity ran throughout the strategy to ensure it remained inclusive. The strategy set out four themes.

Councillor Bell welcomed the updated Equality Impact Analysis which included the latest census data. He noted that Watford was a young town, but the council should not forget about older people in the community. He asked whether the council would be introducing citizen forums.

The Director of Performance confirmed that the council recognised that some people still preferred to meet face to face or to have printed information. The council still carried out a great deal of outreach work with face-to-face meetings. In addition, some people preferred online surveys whereas others preferred to talk. There would be a People's Panel. The council would grasp all opportunities to communicate including through social media.

In response to a further question from Councillor Bell regarding the People's Panel, the Mayor commented that at various events he had attended recently, the Museum team were there seeking the community's views. He understood there had been a high level of interest in the panel and many had applied to take part. It showed a lot of people were engaged with their local community.

The Director of Performance confirmed that the council had sought applications to register for the panel in different ways.

The Mayor invited Cabinet to vote on the officer's recommendations.

RESOLVED –

1. that the draft Communications and Conversations Strategy 2023-26 and associated Delivery Plan (set out in Appendices 1 and 2 of the report) be approved.
2. that delegated authority be granted to the Elected Mayor, as Portfolio Holder, to approve any final amendments / updates before publication, in consultation with the Director of Performance and the Communications and Engagement Lead.
3. that Cabinet notes the Strategy and Delivery Plan will be monitored in line with the council's approach to performance management and with regular reports to the Portfolio Holder and Cabinet on progress.

22

UK Shared Prosperity Fund Phase 2 Proposals

Cabinet received a report of the Economic Development Lead which set out Phase 2 proposals for the allocation of Watford's UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

The Mayor introduced the report and the proposals for the allocation of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. He reported that a third would be distributed to the Hertfordshire-wide projects which were being led by the LEP (Local Enterprise

Partnership). Two thirds would be allocated to new local economy, business support and skills projects. He highlighted some of the projects which were set out in the report. He thanked the Economic Development Lead and her team for their work.

The Economic Development Lead had welcomed the funding which would enable the team to target local projects. A range of projects would be supported through the fund.

Councillor Bell noted the Mayor had referred to CCTV in Cassiobury Park and asked whether this would cover everything the petitioner had asked for at Council earlier in the year.

The Mayor advised that officers would be speaking with the Police and local ward councillors. In addition to the CCTV it would look at the lighting and vegetation.

Councillor Watkin, who was also the county councillor covering the park, added that the project would not cover the whole park but would concentrate on the recognised routes crossing, it would enhance the installations already in place.

Councillor Bell referred to the abolition of the LEP and asked about future funding for schemes.

The Mayor responded that he had been a member of the Hertfordshire LEP. The government instruction was to concentrate on the local area. However, he felt the Hertfordshire LEP had been successful.

The Chief Executive added that officers and members were waiting for details of the new proposals from the government.

The Mayor invited Cabinet to vote on the officer's recommendations.

RESOLVED –

1. that the allocation of Watford's UK Shared Prosperity Fund to all proposed project concepts be approved, enabling the team to then develop these proposals into fully scoped projects and progress them through to delivery.
2. that the Phase 2 proposals, as set out paragraph 4.4 of the report, to allocate funds to new local projects which would be utilising the remainder of year 2 and year 3 funding, be agreed.
3. that Cabinet notes that the allocations to year 2 and year 3 Herts-wide projects will be transferred to Herts LEP once funds are received from DLUHC.

23 **Exclusion of press & public**

RESOLVED –

that, under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business as it was likely, in view of the nature of the discussion, that if members of the public were present during consideration of the item there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in Section 100(1) of the Act for the reasons stated in the agenda in terms of Schedule 12A.

There was a short adjournment whilst the webcasting was stopped. Councillor Bell left the meeting.

24 **Letting at Croxley Business Park**

Cabinet received a report of the Associate Director of Property and Asset Management setting out information about a letting at Croxley Business Park, which was outside of the current Business Plan.

RESOLVED –

That the Associate Director of Property and Asset Management, in consultation with the Shared Director of Finance and the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Resources be delegated to complete the lease upon completion of all necessary company due diligence and on the basis the rental and capital commitment thresholds are not exceeded, as outlined in the report.

Mayor

The Meeting started at 7.00 pm
and finished at 7.30 pm