



**WATFORD
BOROUGH
COUNCIL**

COUNCIL MEETING

18 July 2023

7.30 pm

Town Hall, Watford

Contact

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10 July 2023

Councillor

You are hereby summoned to attend a meeting of the Council of the Borough of Watford to be held on Tuesday, 18 July 2023 starting at 7.30 pm at the Town Hall, Watford to take into consideration and determine upon the following subjects, namely: -

1. Apologies for Absence

2. Disclosure of Interests

3. Minutes

The [minutes](#) of the meeting held on 23 May 2023 to be submitted and signed.

4. Official Announcements

5. Mayor's Report (Pages 7 - 12)

6. Questions by Members of the Council under Council Procedure Rule 10.0

7. Questions by Members of the Public under Council Procedure Rule 11.0

8. Petitions presented under Council Procedure Rule 12.0

9. 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.

10. Financial Monitoring Report - Year End 2022/23 (Pages 13 - 33)

Report of the Head of Finance

11. Constitution Update - Virement Rules (Pages 34 - 47)

Report of the Head of Finance

12. Scrutiny Annual Report 2022/23 (Pages 48 - 54)

Report of the Senior Democratic Services Officer

13. Neighbourhood Locality Fund Annual Report 2022/23 (Pages 55 - 58)

Report of the Democratic Services Officer (LM)

Motions submitted under Council Procedure Rule 13.0

14. Motion - More resources to combat crime and anti-social behaviour

The following motion has been proposed by Councillor Bell and seconded by Councillor Trebar:

“This Council resolves that the Mayor writes to the Home Secretary and Hertfordshire’s Police and Crime Commissioner to urgently call for more resources to combat the increasing crime and antisocial behaviour which we and our residents have seen not only in the Town Centre in recent months but across Watford.”

15. Motion - A Diverse Council

The following motion has been proposed by Councillor Turmaine and seconded by Councillor Khan:

This council notes:

Councillors represent their community, and it is important that they reflect the diversity within their communities, particularly those with protected characteristics (such as age, disability, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, gender, and sexual orientation).

The work of political parties, including the Co-operative Party and the Local Government Association (LGA) in developing a declaration for councils aimed at increasing diversity in local government.

The council has already made much progress, which should be acknowledged and celebrated and has undertaken several aspects of the proposals on its journey towards best practice.

This council believes:

Diversity in representation makes for good decision making.

Political engagement is precarious and turnout figures in the recent local elections demonstrates that there is some way to go in offering a representative voice to all in our town’s demography.

This council resolves:

To adopt the Diverse Councils Declaration to increase diversity in our local government, including the nine objectives within it:

1. Provide a clear public commitment to improving diversity in democracy.
2. Demonstrate an open and welcoming culture to all, promoting the highest standards of behaviour and conduct.
3. Set out a local Diverse Council action plan, ahead of the next local elections.
4. Work towards the standards for member support and development as set out in the LGA Councillor Development Charter and/or Charter Plus.
5. Demonstrate a commitment to a duty of care for councillors.
6. Provide flexibility in council business by regularly reviewing and staggering meeting times.
7. Ensure that all members take up the allowances and salaries to which they are entitled, particularly any reimbursement for costs of care.
8. Ensure the council adopts a parental leave policy, setting out members' entitlement to maternity, paternity, shared parental and adoption leave and relevant allowances.
9. Ensure that councillors from under-represented groups are represented whenever possible in high profile high influence roles.

16. Motion - Ticket Office Closures

The following motions has been proposed by Councillor Turmaine and seconded by Councillor Watling:

“This council notes:

With dismay the news that the Department for Transport and the 13 train operating companies it manages have announced plans to close almost all staffed ticket offices in England, totalling nearly 1000, following changes to the Government's guidance relating to ticket office opening hours and operation.

Statutory Consultations began on 5th July and will close on 26th July.

This council believes:

That ticket offices provide a vital service to residents in Watford and support passenger safety, security and accessibility. Having a central place in the station for people requiring advice and assistance provides certainty and confidence for customers who may struggle to otherwise locate station staff and also acts as a point of safety for passengers.

At many stations, access to facilities such as toilets and waiting rooms is reliant on ticket office staff. Many travellers trying to get to Watford Junction will find themselves without help and support finding their way and this could have a detrimental effect on the local economy – for example, tourists visiting the Harry Potter studios.

Not all residents are able to use ticket vending machines or online ticketing platforms. Many journeys require human assistance to ensure customers purchase the most appropriate and cheapest tickets, and do not incur penalties from mis-booked tickets. Ticket office staff have a wealth of knowledge which ensures that customers get appropriate advice for their whole journey.

This council is concerned the closure of ticket offices will disproportionately affect disabled, Deaf and older residents in our town – as well as those with poor literacy and IT skills or on lower incomes. Council also notes the possible implications for current station staff and believes that the closure of ticket offices could lead to a de-staffing of rail stations.

This council resolves to:

- Instruct the Chief Executive to write to the Secretary of State for Transport, expressing Council’s opposition to the possible closure of staffed rail ticket offices – and in particular the office/s at Watford High Street and Bushey.
- Instruct the Chief Executive to write to London North Western Railway, expressing the Council’s opposition to any plans to close the staffed ticket office/s at stations within Watford.
- Request that all councillors respond to the consultations before 26th July to confirm their support for ticket offices remaining open and for properly staffed rail stations.

[\(https://www.rmt.org.uk/campaigns/rail/save-ticket-offices/\)](https://www.rmt.org.uk/campaigns/rail/save-ticket-offices/)”

17. Motion - Protecting Train Services

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

“Council:

1. Regrets the announcement by the Department for Transport and Train Operating Companies that ticket offices are due to close over the next three years.
2. Believes that many people require extra support when buying tickets, particularly those who are over 65, have disabilities, or lack access to a

smart phone. Council also believes that the current ticket regime in England is needlessly complicated, increasing the need for support to buy the correct ticket at the cheapest price possible.

3. Notes that there will be a complete closure of the ticket office at Euston and that the replacement ticketing support will cover fewer hours.
4. Acknowledges that Watford Junction Station has been designated as a “hub” station and will therefore have some ticket office provision. However council is concerned that this is not yet defined and could lead to a significant reduction in service and jobs.
5. Is concerned that in the long term, ticketing provision will also be removed from these hub locations, having negative consequences for those who are not able to order online or require extra assistance.

Council calls for:

1. The government to rethink this decision and reflect upon the consequences for the most vulnerable of closing ticket offices.
2. A simpler and more passenger-friendly ticketing structure to reduce confusion and ensure all passengers get the best value for money.
3. The Mayor to write to the railways minister to re-state our opposition to these plans.”

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'Donna Nolan', written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Donna Nolan, Chief Executive