

## COUNCIL FUNCTIONS COMMITTEE

22 February 2024

Present: Councillor D Walford (Chair)  
Councillor D Allen-Williamson (Vice-Chair)  
Councillors A Dychton, S Johnson, N Shah and K Rodrigues

Officers: Chief Finance Officer  
Democratic Services Manager  
Democratic Services Officer (LM)

### 1 **Apologies for absence/ committee membership**

There was a change of membership for this meeting: Councillor Rodrigues replaced Councillor Watkin.

Apologies were also received from the Executive Head of HR and OD, who was unable to attend at the last minute due to unforeseen circumstances.

No apologies were received from Councillor Dhindsa.

### 2 **Disclosure of interests (if any)**

There were no disclosures of interest.

### 3 **Minutes**

Councillor Johnson raised an inquiry concerning the minutes from the previous session. Several questions were posed during the committee, which remained unanswered. The councillor emphasised the importance of addressing outstanding queries and sought an explanation for the delay in providing the requisite information. It was acknowledged that the answers had not been distributed to the committee.

The Democratic Services Manager inquired whether the minutes could be signed when the previous year's committee queries had been addressed. The committee reached a consensus and affirmed their agreement to agree on the minutes at a later date when the questions had been answered.

RESOLVED –

That the minutes of the meeting held on 22 February 2023 be signed at a later date, following receipt of the responses to the questions posed at that meeting.

#### 4 **Workforce Monitoring Report 2023**

Councillor Rodrigues had expressed concerns regarding the report, citing difficulties due to a significant number of the workforce not responding, with 52.9% reported as having provided answers. He remarked that the report did not offer substantial insights, leaving uncertainty regarding its message. He emphasised the need for leadership within the council to address these issues effectively.

On a positive note, the report highlighted that 48.1% of applications came from BAME candidates, which was encouraging. Additionally, it was noted that 63% of these applicants were female.

Councillor Johnson supported the concerns raised by Councillor Rodrigues, noting the recurrent nature of the issue. He emphasised that the same point was raised every year, with six questions consistently going unanswered over the course of a year. Expressing frustration, he highlighted a sense of apathy regarding the subject matter, further noting the absence of anyone present to explain the report.

The Democratic Services Manager confirmed that the Executive Head of HR & OD could not attend the evening's meeting due to an emergency. He had been unable to arrange for a replacement.

The Chief Finance Officer, while discussing the statutory requirement concerning workforce data, acknowledged the limitations of the report as a result of the incomplete data set. She emphasised that efforts to improve availability of data were limited to encouragement rather than compulsion as staff are not under an obligation to disclose the information to their employer. Additionally, she apologised for the absence of the Executive Head of HR & OD who had been unable to attend and assured the committee that feedback would be conveyed to the leadership, with active encouragement advocated.

The committee deliberated on whether there was a timeline for the report and whether it would have been beneficial to reconvene at another time to pose questions to the Executive Head of HR & OD. They reached a consensus to postpone the noting of the report.

RESOLVED –

That an Extraordinary Council Functions Committee be convened once the responses from the previous meeting are circulated to the committee.

## 5 **Setting the Council Tax for 2024/25**

The Chief Finance Officer presented the report to the committee. This report concluded the final part of the process for setting the council tax for the new financial year, effective from April 1, 2024. Precept demands had been received from Hertfordshire County Council and the Police and Crime Commissioner in Hertfordshire. The council had established its budget and council tax requirements during its meeting on January 30<sup>th</sup>. The report served to bring together the values, accounts, and taxes, ultimately determining the total council tax figures for Watford residents for the upcoming year.

In response to a question, the Chief Finance Officer clarified that the tax increase was proportionate, as everyone set their tax based on Band D. The proportions are in ninths, with the ratio provided within paragraph 4.2 of the report.

In accordance with the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 the votes were recorded as follows –

### **Those voting in favour of the recommendations:**

Councillors Allen-Williamson, Dychton, Johnson, Rodrigues, Shah and Walford.

There were no abstentions or votes against the recommendation.

The recommendation as set out in the report, was CARRIED by 6 votes to 0.

RESOLVED –

That the Committee formally sets the total Council Tax for Watford Borough Council, which includes the precepts for Hertfordshire County Council and the Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire, as set out paragraph 4.2 of the report.

Chair  
Council Functions  
Committee

The Meeting started at 6.30 pm

and finished at 6.45 pm