

## **CABINET**

**18 JUNE 2012**

Present: Mayor (Chair)

Councillors D Scudder, K Crout, I Sharpe and M Watkin

Also present: Councillors N Bell, J Connal, J Dhindsa, S Johnson, A Khan, M Meerabux and M Mills

Officers: Managing Director  
Head of Strategic Finance and Shared Services  
Head of Legal and Property Services  
Head of Community Services  
Section Head - Parks & Open Spaces  
Property Section Head  
Property Development Project Manager  
Property Manager  
Democratic Services Manager

### **1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence

### **2 DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST (IF ANY)**

Councillor Crout and Watkin declared personal interests in Minute number 6. Councillor Watkin was an allotment holder and Councillor Crout was the partner of an allotment holder.

### **3 PETITION**

A number of allotment holders attended the meeting to present a petition to the Mayor objecting to the possible closure of Farm Terrace allotments as part of the Health Campus development. The petition had not been received in time to be included in the agenda for the meeting but the Mayor allowed those present to express their views and ask questions.

The Mayor thanked the petitioners for bringing their petition to the meeting and for the many emails she had received from them.

She stressed that it was likely to be at least three years before anything happened so there would be plenty of time for consultation and opportunities to influence. The suggestion being put forward as part of the report on the Allotment Strategy was to set up an Allotment Stakeholders' Group which would meet regularly and provide an appropriate forum for allotment holders to be kept

informed and ask questions. It was proposed that the first meeting would be held in July – before the school holidays started.

The Mayor explained that it had been clear from the start that the allotments were part of the development but it had not been clear how they would be affected. The economic situation had changed with land values plummeting and this had had an impact. The development was about the whole of the Cardiff Road site; its regeneration and the building of a new hospital. It was legitimate to use the allotment land as part of this development if required. An appraisal would be carried out and people informed of the outcome. She considered that it was better to advise people of what might happen before any formal application was submitted to allow them time to challenge and influence the outcome. A number of options would be looked at.

She went on to explain the process which would be followed: There were two potential developers and a report was being considered later at this meeting on the selection of a preferred bidder.

She again stressed that the process was at a very early stage and that the purpose of setting up the Stakeholder Group was to ensure that allotment holders could be kept fully involved. It was agreed that the National Association should also be included in the Group which would have series of meetings timed to coincide with key milestones along the way. Facilities would be provided for meetings and councillors in nearby wards invited to attend.

#### **4 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2012 were submitted and signed.

#### **5 HERTFORDSHIRE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL**

The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 introduced significant changes in police governance and accountability, in particular replacing the Police Authorities with directly elected Police and Crime Commissioners (Commissioners).

Cabinet received a report of the Head of Legal & Property Services on progress on the establishment of the Hertfordshire Police and Crime Panel.

Cabinet was asked to agree the proposed arrangements for the Hertfordshire Police and Crime Panel as a joint committee of the Local Authorities as defined in Section 28 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 and to nominate the Mayor and one substitute to the panel.

The Mayor commented that the role of the Police Commissioner was a very powerful one and the Panel was the only means of holding the Commissioner to account. In response to concerns expressed by Councillor Bell, she added that the governance arrangements around this position were very weak and urged her fellow councillors to lobby their respective political parties to push for changes.

## RESOLVED

1. that Cabinet notes the progress to date on establishment of the Hertfordshire Police and Crime Panel
2. that, subject to any amendments required by law and other minor amendments, Cabinet agrees the draft arrangements for the Hertfordshire Police and Crime Panel as a joint committee of the Hertfordshire Local Authorities and delegates final approval to the Head of Legal and Property Services in consultation with the Mayor
3. that Cabinet appoints the Mayor as the Council's representative on the Panel and Councillor Derek Scudder as substitute

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## **ALLOTMENTS FRAMEWORK AND STRATEGY UPDATE**

Cabinet received a report summarising the progress to date on updating the 2002 Allotment Strategy and the ongoing development of a new 5 year strategy.

During 2011, a major consultation and review was carried out of the Allotment service and provision of allotments generally in the town. As a result of this review and feedback received from over 40% of tenants, a new Strategy and Framework and Action Plan was being developed for the period 2012 to 2017. This would include a summary of the consultation, as well as a detailed Action Plan for 2012-2017.

Councillor Crout, Portfolio Holder for Community Services, introduced the report. He referred specifically to the consultation and the key themes developed as a result. He stressed that the Council was fully committed to retaining allotments in the borough.

The Section Head for Parks & Open spaces added that this was a prudent time to take stock and re-visit the strategy. Feedback had been good and occupancy rates were currently at their highest with waiting lists considerably reduced. He would be bringing a report back in the Autumn on how to take the strategy forward.

Councillor Meerabux asked about the level of service and the difference between "enhanced" and "standard". He asked whether the "standard service" was the same as before. The Mayor responded that there were a number of issues which were outlined in the report but that the level of standard service had been reduced.

The councillor also asked for clarification on the percentage of responses – 92% satisfaction level. It was explained that this was 92% of the 40% who responded.

He went on to talk about uncultivated plots and the problems associated with them such as litter and fencing. Councillor Mills asked about grass cutting.

The Section Head for Parks & Open Spaces explained that grass cutting was now carried out once a year. This was as a result of savings which had to be made. He added that the problem of non cultivated plots was related to the nature of allotments but was an issue which was being addressed. He agreed with Councillor Meerabux that in some areas the fencing was not particularly good and in response to a further question from the Councillor about the provision of WCs advised that all self managed allotment sites would be provided with one.

Councillors Khan said it was important that all allotment holders were involved in the stakeholders Forum. The Head of Community Services added that a lot of the issues could be picked up as part of the Forum.

#### RESOLVED

1. that Cabinet notes the progress to date and reviews the draft strategy in Autumn 2012.
2. that the Mayor establishes an Allotment Stakeholder Panel to engage with the options for future investment and help finalise the strategy and action plan.

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#### **WATFORD HEALTH CAMPUS PROGRAMME UPDATE AND PROPOSED SITE ASSEMBLY DEVELOPMENT**

The Managing Director presented a report on the current status of the project including:

- progress on selecting a private sector partner for the Watford Health Campus Scheme;
- funding bids to the Local Enterprise Partnership Board and Department of Health

The report reviewed the critical delivery timetable of the Campus Scheme in the context of the Croxley Rail Link and sought approval to take forward preparation work for the CPO of land, rights and interests where agreement could not be reached to acquire in order to implement the comprehensive regeneration of the Campus site.

Cabinet was also asked to authorise a review of the options and implications for a potential relocation of the allotment provision at the Farm Terrace allotment site at the Campus.

The Mayor stressed the need to timetable meetings of the Allotments Stakeholder Panel to coincide with the key milestones in the project. She added that the report had also been considered by the cross party Major Projects Board and thanked those who had taken part in the detailed discussion which had resulted in a consensus view.

Councillor Bell asked for a further explanation of the reference in the report to the revised master plan and areas where the original scheme needed to be revised. He asked whether this referred specifically to the allotments site.

The Managing Director responded that this was a reference to the whole site and not just the allotments. There were also issues such as ground contamination, utility provision, flood plain and earth movement to take into consideration. Developers would have to be inventive; better land use and outputs resulted in improved economic viability.

In response to a further point from Councillor Bell about consulting with allotment stakeholders, the Managing Director stressed that there was plenty of time to engage and opportunities to look at how the Council could invest more widely in allotment provision across the borough.

Councillor Dhindsa welcomed the establishment of the Stakeholder Panel. He asked for consultation to be meaningful and for there to be ample time for people to have their say.

The Mayor referred to the Council's previous consultation exercises and commented that its successful track record spoke for itself. She added, however, that it would not be possible for her to give any assurances about outcome.

## RESOLVED

that Cabinet:

- 1 notes the progress made so far in the promotion by the Council and WHHT of the Watford Health Campus Redevelopment Scheme ("the Scheme") for which outline planning permission was granted on 15 July 2010 in respect of the land edged red on the plan attached to the report ("the Land") and to welcome the allocation of £6m on behalf of the Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership to the Scheme.
- 2 notes that the Council has progressed to the best and final offer stage in the selection of a private sector partner to deliver the Campus in joint venture with the Council.
- 3 authorises the Council's Managing Director in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Property, to select the preferred bidder following evaluation of bids in accordance with the published evaluation criteria, noting that proposed terms and conditions for financial closure will be subject to approval of Cabinet in the Autumn.
- 4 agrees that, in order to facilitate an economically viable proposal which will further the economic, social and environmental well-being of this part of the Council's administrative area in accordance with the emerging Development Plan, officers be authorised to acquire by agreement and make preparations

for use of compulsory powers if required, including consideration of such land and/or rights over land as shall be considered necessary for the carrying out of the Scheme. That land referencing take place and formal requisition notices (s.16s) to those with legal interests within the Campus area

- 5 agrees that the Council appropriates for planning purposes all land in the Council's ownership forming part of the Land under the power contained in section 122 of the Local Government Act 1972
- 6 requests officers to report back to Cabinet later this year on the legal procedures required to facilitate the progression of the Scheme, such report to consider the progress of negotiations with third parties and the implications of human rights legislation.
- 7 welcomes the wider Green Infrastructure improvements planned for the Campus and the wider area at Riverside Recreation Ground and Riverside Park
- 8 endorses an option appraisal assessment of Farm Terrace Allotments, including options for re location.

## 8 **REVIEW OF THE OUTCOME OF THE SPORTS FACILITIES STUDY LEADING TO ACTION ON SPECIFIC ISSUES RELATING TO 3 KEY PARTNERS.**

As part of the policy framework for the Core Strategy but also to steer future investment choices, officers had commissioned a Sports Facilities Study (SFS) for Watford (attached as Appendix A to the report). This study needed to be consulted upon with the partners and stakeholders who had input into its creation as well as with the wider community before developing a Sports Facilities Strategy that would identify the actions and resources required to address the issues emerging.

The SFS analysis was that, given Watford was a geographically small borough, it was possible to have both a relatively small number of separate facilities and high levels of accessibility. Having a small number of high capacity facilities – as the two excellent leisure centres at Central and Woodside had demonstrated - led to economies of scale when compared with a larger number of smaller facilities. The borough also faced significant development pressures so had to make the best possible use of its limited land area.

This was the emerging policy context for the recommendations to initiate two feasibility studies that would inform the final Sports Facilities Strategy for consideration by Cabinet in spring 2013.

The policy context also recognised that the Council should take action in respect of provision that was not sustainable, and combined with the land use requirements for the Irish Centre site, it was proposed that the future of this

provision was reviewed. This was dealt with in Part B of the meeting (Minute number 10)

The Mayor commented that, in light of the cuts that the Council had been required to make, it had been necessary to review its sports facilities strategy.

The Managing Director introduced the report and explained that this was a bold report presenting a long term vision. It looked at focussing on a smaller number of high quality provision facilities attracting new users and spreading use.

He referred to proposals to develop opportunities with the Watford Cricket Club and the Fullarians Rugby Club as outlined in the report which would be consistent with the Sports Facilities Study and would support the development of the strategy, as would the proposed action in respect of the Irish Centre.

The Mayor added that the Council had to be robust about under-use and that the time had come to rationalise facilities and improve those that were left.

Councillor Bell asked what would happen if the Sports Hub proposed for Cassiobury did not happen. The Head of Community Services responded that three sites had been identified including King George V playing fields but that feasibility still needed to be looked at prior to developing a strategy and way forward.

Councillor Johnson asked what was happening about the displaced football team now that the changing rooms were not going to be built at Watford Fields. The Mayor advised that this situation had already been resolved - in good time for the next season.

RESOLVED

that Cabinet:

1. notes the Sports Facilities Study (SFS) at Appendix A and summarised in 3.3 in the report and approves the document for future consultation and to support the development of a Sports Facilities Strategy and Action Plan.
2. In relation to Woodside (para 3.4 of the report) agrees:
  - a) that, subject to the Cricket Club entering into a Community Use Agreement and an agreement to take forward a co-ordinated feasibility study for Woodside based on the community sports hub concept outlined in the study, the outstanding loan be written off (as detailed in the Part B report, minute number 10);
  - b) that a feasibility study be commissioned and funded by the Council to test the viability of a Woodside Sports Hub (including other users within Woodside Playing Fields) and to set the foundation for partner fundraising and a bid for external funding to enable its delivery

3. In relation to Cassiobury (3.5 of the report) agrees that the Council should fund and commission a feasibility study/masterplan for a multi-user Sports Hub in partnership with the stakeholders.
4. agrees that the feasibility studies are used as pilots to test the Sports Facilities Study conclusions and inform a final Sports Strategy & Action Plan to be considered by Cabinet in spring 2013
5. that In relation to Oxhey Park (3.6 of the report) the Council holds discussions with the Irish Club for the termination of the lease by 31 August 2013 on the basis set out in the Part B report (Minute number 10 of these minutes).

9            **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 items of business as it was likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the public were present during consideration of the item there would have been disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in Section 100(1) of the Act for the reasons stated in the reports.

10           **REVIEW OF THE OUTCOME OF THE SPORTS FACILITIES STUDY LEADING TO ACTION ON SPECIFIC ISSUES RELATING TO 3 KEY PARTNERS.**

Cabinet received a report of the Managing Director.

Cabinet received a report of the Managing Director. He explained the background to both the Irish Club and the Cricket Club and the rationale behind the recommendations being put to the meeting.

Questions and comments from councillors were responded to by the Mayor, Managing Director and the Head of Legal & Property Services.

RESOLVED

that Cabinet

1. notes the outstanding loan of the Cricket Club and agree to its write off on the basis set out in the reports.
2. in respect of the Irish Club, approves Council holds discussions with the Club for the termination of the lease by 31 August 2013.



3. approves that, if the surrender of the lease can be mutually agreed, the outstanding debt is written off and that once agreement on surrender is reached, the Club will not be required to make further payments.
4. approves that, if agreement cannot be reached, the Council take legal action to forfeit the lease and regain possession
5. notes the terms of the lease

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## **CHARTER PLACE RE-DEVELOPMENT**

Cabinet received a report of the Managing Director

### **RESOLVED**

Cabinet received a report of the Managing Director and a PowerPoint presentation given by the Property Section Head. A similar presentation had been received by the Major Projects Board.

The Mayor, Managing Director, Head of Legal & Property and Property Section Head responded to a number of questions and comments from councillors present.

### **RESOLVED**

that Cabinet authorises the Managing Director to:

1. abandon the current OJEU procurement with Henry Boot Developments.
2. negotiate the terms of the agreement for Lease and Lease with CSC,
3. report to Cabinet and the Major Projects Board on progress on the negotiations on the Heads of Terms, Agreement for Lease and Lease.
4. develop a programme to facilitate transfer of management responsibility for the existing Charter Place Shopping Centre and Charter Market to CSC as soon as possible for completion of binding lease agreements.
5. agree the commercial terms regarding the Satellite Car Parks, reporting on procurement and key commercial terms to Cabinet and Major Projects Board as appropriate.
6. initiate a project to explore provision, management and funding of a possible outdoor market (adjacent to St Mary's Churchyard) for traders who wish to continue to trade but for whom the "new" indoor market is inappropriate.
7. purchase any interest in Charter Place if requested to do so by CSC, subject to full funding indemnity by CSC to whom the interest will be sold

on at cost to facilitate the redevelopment without a need for Compulsory Purchase.

Mayor

The Meeting started at 7.00 pm  
and finished at 9.15 pm