

## **Mayor's report July 2017**

As I have been receiving ongoing hospital treatment my activities as Mayor over the past month have been limited. I am grateful to my deputy Cllr Peter Taylor and my portfolio holder for community Cllr Karen Collett for representing me in my absence.

### **Partnership working**

#### **Health and Social Care**

I have met with the Chief Executive and Chair of Herts Valleys Clinical Commissioning Group. With the group formally in financial turnaround, they must achieve savings of around £45m and I raised serious concerns about how this scale of cuts would impact on frontline services.

Specifically I raised concerns regarding the decision to cut funding from Nascot Lawn Respite Centre and asked a series of questions regarding alternative funding options, partnership working with Herts County Council and alternative provision for the affected patients. I have separately written to the CCG on behalf of residents who have contacted me about Nascot Lawn and I hope to hear back with some detailed answers.

I am in regular contact with John Wood, Chief Executive of Hertfordshire County Council and will continue to raise the issue of respite care provision for current Nascot Lawn patients.

#### **West Herts Hospitals Trust**

I have welcomed the news that Herts Valleys CCG approved West Herts Hospitals Trust's strategic outline case to totally redevelop Watford General Hospital.

With plans to redevelop the WGH now agreed, the Trust can now begin work on a case for Department of Health funding.

The first new development to take place on the site should be improvements to the hospital car park. Throughout my mayoral term this has been an issue which has constantly been raised by patients, visitors and staff and I am pleased that improvement plans are now in place.

## **Fire Safety and emergency planning**

Following the tragic fire in Kensington, I wrote to the Chief Executives of Watford Community Housing Trust and Hertfordshire County Council, Chief Inspector Paul Sandwell and to the station commanders of our two fire stations.

I raised questions regarding safety checks and evacuation procedures, whether visits from firefighters and housing trust officers could take place to residents on the Meriden Estate which is home to two large towers, and whether organisations were ready to work together quickly and effectively to provide assistance and support to communities should an emergency occur in Watford.

## **Watford Workshop**

I opened Watford Workshop's new 'Learning Pod' with Cllr Taylor.

This new facility will help Watford Workshop deliver their aims of helping disabled people achieve greater independence and providing routes into employment.

The new Learning Pod (place of development) specifically will cater for training in three areas – independent living skills, safety awareness and health and hygiene in the home.

## **Big Events**

### **Imagine Watford**

This year's Imagine Watford festival of street theatre and performance took place over two weeks in June and July. Now in its seventh year the festival brought large crowds to the top of the town to watch a whole variety of different performances by artists from around the world.

The programme is chosen by Watford Palace Theatre – who I have recently congratulated on retaining their Arts Council England 'National Portfolio Organisation' accreditation. This means our theatre continues to receive arts council funding and is recognised as one of the leading arts organisations in the UK.

Headliner 'Galileo' by French artists 'Deux Ex Machina' was a spectacular display featuring fireworks, a light show and acrobats performing on a giant sphere suspended in the sky from a crane.

## **Free live music in Cassiobury Park**

A summer series of live music has started at the Cassiobury Park bandstand, featuring local bands and touring performers from all across the USA.

Cllr Collett attended a special performance by 'Electric Umbrella' - a project which brings together music industry professionals and adults with learning disabilities make music and perform together. The project aims to challenge perceptions of learning disability by allowing everyone to demonstrate their ability at performing music in a range of venues – whether in a pub, a theatre or in our park.

## **Family fun day at Harwoods Rec**

Cllr Collett attended on my behalf a family fun day at the new Harwoods adventure playground which opened in June, with a steel band, inflatables and barbecue. The fun day was well attended as children were able to try out the new play equipment for the first time.

The new equipment at Harwoods includes two zipwires, a climbing wall, tunnels, a sensory play area with music and sound effects and tall towers, bridges and slides. The playground is open all day, every day for children aged 5-15 and is free of charge.

## **Community**

### **Blue Plaque for Watford Colosseum**

I unveiled a Blue Plaque at Watford Colosseum to recognise the venue's contribution to the UK's musical history. Home to the BBC Concert Orchestra the Colosseum is renowned for its acoustics making it a perfect recording venue for film and TV soundtracks.

The plaque was awarded to the Colosseum as part of the BBC's 'Music Day' celebrations – 49 have been granted across the country to recognise exceptional venues and artists.

### **Steve Sinnott Foundation 'Education for All'**

Cllr Taylor spoke on my behalf at the Steve Sinnott Foundation's 'Education For All Awareness Day' at West Herts College. The Watford-based charity, founded in memory of the former NUT leader Steve Sinnott, works to establish literacy programmes and teacher development across developing nations.

## **Jo Cox picnic in the park**

Cllr Collett attended on my behalf a 'picnic in the park' event at Cassiobury Park, held in memory of Jo Cox MP. The event was well attended and honoured Jo Cox's work in Parliament on combatting loneliness.

## **Watford BID**

I regularly meet with Watford BID's leadership team to discuss matters affecting the Town Centre and our business community.

I am delighted that the BID businesses have once again paid for the floral displays which have proven very popular with residents and visitors to the town centre. They will remain in place until October.

## **Broken ground at new Muslim Youth Centre**

I joined Richard Harrington MP and members of Watford's Muslim community at a ground-breaking ceremony for the new Muslim Youth Centre in West Watford.

This important new project has been given a grant by Watford Borough Council to help provide a community centre led by our town's Muslim community for young people from across the Borough - both Muslims and those of other faiths too.

## **Major Projects**

### **HLF Cassiobury Park project – opening of new pools, splash area and café**

I opened Watford's Cassiobury Park hub building and refurbished paddling pools following a £2.8m investment by Watford Borough Council and the National Lottery.

As well as the pools, we have also installed a fully accessible water play area with 30 state-of-the-art splash pads, water jets and fountains.

The new hub building is constructed using sustainable methods and contains toilets, changing rooms, a community and exhibition room, education space, and a new Café – Daisy's in the Park.

There are also Changing Places facilities for disabled users, so that everyone can enjoy this wonderful water play park and community meeting place.

The new hub and refurbished pools are part of our £6.6m lottery funded improvement project for Cassiobury Park which has also seen the bandstand restored, tree planting, new flower beds, a refurbishment for the Cha café, an upgraded Rickmansworth Road entrance, works on the river bank, a programme of children's activities, new information and directional signage and much more.

## **Watford Riverwell**

The Health Campus Partnership has chosen 'Watford Riverwell' as its name for the project.

The new name reflects the importance of the River Colne that runs through the site and is in keeping with the surrounding areas of Holywell and Brightwell. The river itself will become a key feature of the new neighbourhood and is being cleaned up as part of the scheme's environmental improvements.

Watford Riverwell are holding a community exhibition at Watford Football Club Captain's Suite from 10am-2pm on Saturday 8 July and 4pm-8pm on Tuesday 11 July where latest plans will be displayed.

Latest plans for the site involve a retirement village with on-site care, space for the hospital redevelopment and expansion, new homes including affordable housing, commercial units and new public open spaces.

## **Intu update**

Hollywood Bowl and Superdry are the latest big brand names to sign up for a unit at the new intu extension.

Work on the site is progressing well and the scale of the project is now evident to visitors to the High Street as 5,000 tonnes of steel form the new building's frame.

The centre will open in time for Christmas next year and will host big names in retail, food and entertainment, anchored by Debenhams and featuring an IMAX Cineworld cinema.

While construction work is ongoing we are also working on plans to improve the streetscape of the High Street between Clarendon Road and the intu centre.