

Watford Borough Council

Member Self- Assessment 2016/17

Tudor Ward

Self-Assessment of; Councillor Steve Johnson

1. Year elected:

2009

2. Reasons for becoming a councillor:

I became a Councillor because I wanted to serve the local community by representing their interests in local government. I also wanted to have more involvement at a local level in decision making. I felt this was the next step, after chairing a local Residents Association.

3. Roles in the Council:

Portfolio Holder for Housing and Property
Annual Council
Appointments Committee
Cabinet
Constitution Working Party
Council
Development Management Committee (Vice-Chair)

4. Membership of outside bodies:

5. Training & Development undertaken (Councillor's training record is listed):

18.6.09

Chairing and participating in meetings

4.11.09

DC training

30.11.09

Equalities training

29.06.10

Licensing induction

25.08.10

Leadership Academy summer school

03.09.10

Planning summer school

28.10.10

Housing briefing

22.11.10

DC enforcement training

10.02.11

Housing Briefing value for money review

Leadership Academy

07.06.11

Project Management

18.10.11

The Future of Social Housing: Ensuring fairness and transparency

31.01.12

Public realm briefing

14.06.12

Standards

27.09.12

Major Projects Briefing

06.12.12

Domestic violence briefing

10.07.13

Croxley Rail Link Briefing

11.07.13

DC training

11.09.13

Traffic regulation order briefing

10.10.13

Public speaking training

20.11.13

Individual Electoral Registration Briefing

29.10.13

Budget Panel: Local Government Finance

17.06.14

DC Training

02.07.14

New Development in Watford: the importance of good design

28.07.14

Ensuring healthy standards in Properties

07.08.14 -08.08.14

Leadership Academy summer school

20.04.15

Hertfordshire Housing Conference 2015 (at Building Research Establishment, Garston.)

15.12.14

Boundary Review Briefing

18.02.15

Domestic Violence Members' Briefing

14.07.15

New Housing Online Application System

2016

21.01.16

Leadership Essentials, Housing, Leadership Academy/LGA, Scarman Centre, Warwick University.

November 2016

Surface Pro all Member workshop

03.03.16

'Resettling Vulnerable Syrian refugees; a multi-agency approach for the East of England', Trinity Centre, Cambridge. LGA/ East of England LGA (Strategic Migration Partnership). No cost.

27.09.16

Effectively Regulating Private Housing and Tackling Rogue Landlords

24.4.17

Herts Housing Conference.

6.Attendance Record:

Note; this figure will be inputted for you and will be shown as part of your published self-assessment.

How the Councillor has met Council ambitions

'All our passion determination and team work, that is what makes Watford bold and progressive'

In this section of the Self - Assessment, the councillor explains how they have worked to fulfil, or contribute to, the Council's vision and priorities;

'Our Vision'

7. To create a bold and progressive future for Watford

In section 8. I outline how I have helped to create a bold and progressive future for Watford

'Our Priorities'

8. Identify ways to manage the borough's housing needs

As housing portfolio holder, this is an area that is very close to my heart. The South East of England is in the middle of a housing crisis. In Watford, we can react locally as best we can but the solution needs to tackle with more determination from a national prospective.

Locally we have taken a great number of initiatives to manage the boroughs housing needs.

- We have created our own housing company to help the council build homes for local residents. Our first scheme will consist of much needed affordable homes and temporary accommodation for homeless households. These new homes should be completed by mid-2018.

- We started a new Strategic Homelessness Forum in Watford which includes representatives from a wide range of voluntary and statutory external partners. The main aim of the Forum is to reduce homelessness and improve services and provision for people and households at risk of or actually homeless within the Watford Borough Council area. Its key area of work so far has been to look at ways for agencies to work together to make better use of available supported and general needs accommodation for homeless single people locally. It also oversees the government-funded prevention of rough sleeping project.

- I chair the Housing Policy Advisory Group which is a forum for Councillors to discuss strategic housing and housing-related issues relevant to the area covered by Watford Borough Council. Over the last few months, Councillors have received presentations and had the opportunity to comment on various issues including the performance of the Housing Department in delivering its services, the work of the Environmental Health Team, the provision of temporary accommodation in the borough and updates on all the strategic housing-related projects being worked on.

- With so few affordable/social rented homes available locally we reduced the number of applicants on our Housing Register from around 5,000 to under 800. We did this by introducing a residence requirement which means applicants must live in Watford at the time they apply to the Housing Register and must also have lived in Watford for five of the last six years.

- After a successful tendering exercise, we are now working with more contractors than before to help us source affordable private rented homes for both temporary accommodation (TA) for homeless households and for settled accommodation for those already in TA to move into.

- As part of the council's plans to improve TA, we have started work on York House, which is our largest TA hostel and has been in need of extensive modernisation. The work should be completed by this summer.

- We are about to apply for planning consent to build a small amount of TA within the borough using modular construction methods for the first time.

- We have taken part in the creation of the new shared, county-wide Hertfordshire Improvement Agency (HIA). We will be transferring Watford Borough Council's Disabled Facilities Grants service to the HIA in September 2017. I attended various meetings to discuss and agree the practicalities of the transfer. We believe the HIA will provide a more responsive service, enable an increased number of adaptations to properties and allow quicker discharge from hospital for residents.

- We have worked with the Building Research Establishment (BRE) to get a better understanding of the privately-owned housing stock in Watford so that we can more easily identify where to concentrate resources for improving these homes. The BRE's report should be ready by the end of May and its findings will feed into the council's new Private

Sector Renewal Strategy which will be consulted on later this year.

· After a, thorough review was undertaken last September, I am supporting the Housing Department in working through a continuous improvement plan to put in place for Watford residents the national standard for homelessness prevention and housing options services.

9. Champion smart growth and economic prosperity

As I am a member of development management committee I am very aware of the smart growth agenda. We need to take into account traffic congestion and environmental degradation. Smart growth principles are directed at developing sustainable communities that provide a greater range of transportation and housing choices and prioritize infill and redevelopment in existing communities rather than development of "greenfield"
I am a great supporter of car clubs.

10. Provide for our vulnerable and disadvantaged communities

I have overseen the creation of Shared Herts Improvement Agency (DFG's) Watford Borough Councils Disabled Facilities Grants service planned to transfer to County wide scheme in September 2017. Attended various meeting to discuss practicalities of move. By providing a more responsive service we hope to allow more adaptations to properties to allow a quicker discharge from hospital for residents.

11. Deliver a digital Watford to empower our community

I have now gone paperless and no longer need hard copies of agendas etc. Within my portfolio area I am promoting the use of more online application forms for residents to enable a more responsive service.

12. Secure our own financial future

I chair the property investment board where our task is to make our property assets generate a greater financial contribution to the council's balance sheet. As a council, we will have to become financially self-sufficient over the next couple of years as government financial support is ending.

Questions 13. and 14. for CABINET MEMBERS ONLY

How have you met these further objectives for those councillors in a leadership role?

13. Providing vision

As a member of Cabinet, I am constantly asked to consider matters of policy which in themselves set the vision for the future of Watford. Before agreeing to such proposals, I challenge and question their effectiveness before agreeing to their implementation. I provide a strategy for the way forward for housing. In my area, my objective is to ensure that all the shared services are responsive and effective and are in good shape to meet the demands facing them in the future.

14. Managing Performance

This is absolutely at the heart of everything I do in my portfolio. The work that has been done between me and the senior officers in housing. I have regular meetings with Officers to monitor performance.
Attendance as necessary at scrutiny committees
Taking up complaints and concerns raised by residents and being willing to challenge questionable performance by the council where necessary.
Setting out clear housing policy for officers

Note; members can find their objectives from last year by looking at their profile page on the council's website. In addition, a link to your last self-assessment can be emailed to you upon request to paul.bateman@watford.gov.uk

New councillors will already have received a link to last year's Annual Council report. This demonstrates how the self-assessment information is collated and presented.

15.

Objective for 2016/17	Update on progress
To oversee the implementation of our new housing joint venture with the Housing Trust.	This has now been set up.

Note; it is entirely an individual member's choice as to how many objectives they wish to set, there is no upper or lower limit.

16.

Objective for 2017/18
To monitor the progress of our first joint building companies project and the completion date of early summer 2018.

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