

Report to Council – 30 January 2018

Report of Cabinet – 22 January 2018

Cabinet met on 22 January 2018. The minutes will be published on the Council's website.

The following Members were present at the meeting:

Present: Mayor Thornhill (Chair)
Councillor Taylor (Deputy Mayor and Portfolio Holder for Client Services)
Councillor Collett (Portfolio Holder for Community)
Councillor Johnson (Portfolio Holder for Property and Housing)
Councillor Sharpe (Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Development)
Councillor Watkin (Portfolio Holder for Resources and Customer Service)

Non Cabinet Members: Councillor Nigel Bell (Labour)

The following was a recommendation to Council:

57. Financial Planning

Cabinet received a report of the Director of Finance. An extract of the Budget Panel minutes had been circulated from the meeting on 16 January 2018.

The Mayor commented that with regards to Budget Panel recommendations, these had been discussed. Budget Panel had recommended that burial fees for Watford residents should be frozen at current levels with proportionately higher fees introduced for non-residents. The Mayor explained that as this was a non-statutory service it should cover its costs, as was required across the council. The West Herts Crematorium was a joint committee and made a surplus. There was therefore no reason why burials should be any different. The council had already introduced higher fees for non-residents for burials and the number of non-resident burials was very few. The Mayor was mindful of the desire of the Muslim community to look at their own burials and this could be something looked at by a new Mayor particularly given the scarcity of space. Councillor Taylor commented that non-resident burial costs were already three times higher than residents.

The second Budget Panel recommendation concerned freezing the current hourly parking rates for the pay and display machines within the town's controlled parking

zones (CPZ). The Mayor responded that there was no evidence that the 10p increase in charges would make any difference to businesses. It was not an issue that had been raised and parking in Watford was cheaper than in surrounding areas. The recommendations in the budget papers therefore would continue to Full Council.

Councillor Bell commented that it was right for Budget Panel to put forward the idea of a freeze of burial costs and that some members of Budget Panel had abstained from voting as they did not have enough information. Councillor Bell questioned the 10p increase on the pay and display machines, if it did not affect the council's finance then why was it being proposed.

Councillor Sharpe explained that there were a number of smaller parking schemes coming forward in the next year which would require funding. Work on parking in the town centre, yellow lines and CPZ consultations could be at risk without the increase. Parking related matters could not be subsidised by council tax.

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

Those in favour

Mayor Thornhill, Councillors Collett, Johnson, Sharpe, Taylor and Watkin

The resolutions as set out in the report were CARRIED by 6 votes to 0

RESOLVED –

That Cabinet

1. Delegates to the Director of Finance and Portfolio Holder the ability to amend the budget figures in accordance with decisions taken at the Cabinet meeting and any minor variations that may occur before the Council meeting.

That Cabinet recommends

That Council:

2. Resolves in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) Regulations 1992, the amount calculated by Watford Borough Council as its Council Tax Base for the year 2018/19 is 32,393.9 as outlined in the report.
3. Approves the continuation of the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2018/19.
4. Approves the estimate of the surplus position on the Collection Fund.

5. Approves the budget (Attachment 1) as laid out in the report, including:
 - the base budget for 2018/19
 - the growth and savings
 - the Capital Investment Programme 2017-21
6. Approves the schedule of fees and charges (Attachment 2) and to delegate authority to the Director of Finance in conjunction with the Managing Director and the Portfolio Holder (Resources) to implement any recommendations emanating from a full review of the Council's discretionary fees and charges.
7. Approves the strategy for flexible use of capital receipts.
8. Agrees to increase the annual Council Tax for a Band D property in 2018/19 by 2.99%. This will apply to all other bands.
9. Approves the creation of an enhanced band 11 pay band for some of the section head posts within the Council. (Attachment 4)
10. Approves to delegate to the Managing Director in consultation with the Director of Finance authority to provide parental guarantees for the Council's projects as required subject to those guarantees complying with an approved business plan.
11. Notes the key risks identified and approves their proposed mitigations.
12. Notes the advice provided by the Director of Finance on the robustness of estimates and the adequacy of reserves
13. Notes the indicative budgets for 2019/20 and 2020/21.
14. Approves the Treasury Management Strategy for 2018/19 (Attachment 3). Within this strategy Council is requested to:
 - delegate authority to the Portfolio Holder, in consultation with the Director of Finance, to approve any variation to the Treasury Management Strategy during the year with the objective of maximising the Council's returns without significantly increasing risk. Any changes will be notified to Council at the earliest opportunity.
 - approve the Council's Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Strategy and Policy Statement (para 2.3 of the Treasury report).
 - approve the Council's treasury prudential indicators (para 3.3 of the

Treasury report)

- approve the Annual Investment Strategy (para 3.5 of the TMS report) including the counterparty list contained in the Annex A to the report (Treasury Management Practices 1).
- approve the flexibility for the Property Investment Board to invest treasury funds within its scheme of delegation.