

Watford Borough Council

Member Self- Assessment 2018/19

Tudor Ward

Self-Assessment of: Councillor Stephen 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) Property Investment Board (Chair) Housing Policy Advisory Group (Chair) Finance Review Board Strategic Housing Delivery Board Town Hall Development plan steering group Major Application Review Forum

Community Facilities Review Board (chair) Town Centre Task Group

4. Membership of outside bodies:

N/A

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

GDPR Development Management Committee training Safeguarding/Human trafficking and slavery Cycle Hire study – briefing Small Sites Disability awareness

6. Attendance Record:

95%

Your work with Constituents and in the Community.**Please tell us about the work in your ward and for the council, you may wish to mention the following:**

In my own ward I spend a lot of time on casework and supporting residents. We organise various clean-up days as well as organising Poppy remembrance events and Christmas lights.

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 be tackled with more determination from a national perspective.

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
- We have taken part in the creation of the new shared, county-wide Hertfordshire Improvement Agency (HIA). We transferred 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.

7. 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.

8. 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

10. Objective(s) for 2019/20

To support the setting up of a complex need's unit within the Borough.

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