

Report to Council – 26 January 2021

Report of Cabinet – 18 January 2021

Cabinet met on 18 January 2021. The minutes are published on the council's website.

The following members and officers were present at the meeting.

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

Also present: Councillor Bell, Labour Group Leader
Councillor Matt Turmaine, Chair of Finance Scrutiny Committee
Councillors Dychton and Ezeifedi

Officers: Managing Director
Interim Director of Finance
Group Head of Democracy and Governance
Group Head of Transformation
Group Head of Place Shaping
Executive Head of Strategy and Communications
Head of Housing
Head of Planning and Development
Head of Enterprise Programme Management Office
Housing Solutions Manager
Change Manager
Interim Senior Regeneration Manager
Mayor's Political Assistant
Democratic Services Manager

Minute 66 included a recommendation to Council

66. Financial Planning

Cabinet received a report of the Section Head – Financial Planning and Analysis providing service level expenditure, funding and council tax levels for the medium term 2021/22 to 2023/24.

The Mayor invited Councillor Watkin, Portfolio Holder responsible for Finance, to introduce the report.

Councillor Watkin advised that in current times it was difficult to predict the future. He highlighted some of the key points in the report. The administration had kept to its commitment to residents and there was a small change in fees and charges. He noted that there had been changes to the base budget and it was not expected that the council would achieve the same level of collection. It was also felt that there would be an increase in the number of households requesting Council Tax relief. It was recommended that council tax would be increased by 1.7%, equivalent to 9p per week on a Band D property. Councillor Watkin felt the council was prudently using its resources.

The Mayor invited Councillor Turmaine, Chair of Finance Scrutiny Committee to present the committee's views.

Councillor Turmaine reported that Finance Scrutiny Committee met on 12 January and reviewed the report before Cabinet. Members had noted the impact of Covid-19 on the council's budget and its unpredictability. The commercial income from the business parks appeared to be steady. Members raised questions about Covid-19 grants, SLM, parking in the town and the Council Tax recommendation. The scrutiny committee would monitor the fees and charges over the coming year.

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

Those in favour

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

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

RESOLVED –

1. that Cabinet 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 on 18 January 2021 and any minor variations that may occur before the Council meeting.

That Cabinet recommends to Council that it

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 2021/22 is **32,786.1** as outlined in the report.
3. approves the continuation of the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2021/22.
4. approves the budget (**Attachment 1 to the report**) as laid out in the report, including:
 - the budget for 2021/22
 - the Capital Investment Programme 2020-24
5. approves the schedule of fees and charges & income charging policy (**Attachment 2 to the report**).
6. approves the Capital Strategy for 2021/22, amended as necessary for the decisions of Cabinet on 18 January 2021, and delegates to the Director of Finance and Portfolio Holder Resources responsibility for agreeing and maintaining the Treasury Management policy. (**Attachment 3 to the report**).
7. agrees to increase the annual Council Tax for a Band D property 2021/22 by 1.7%. This will apply to all other bands.
8. notes the key risks identified and approves their proposed mitigations.
9. notes the advice provided by the Director of Finance on the robustness of estimates and the adequacy of reserves.
10. notes the indicative budgets for 2022/23 and 2023/24.