

Part A

Report to: Cabinet

Date of meeting: Monday, 1 March 2021

Report author: Senior Democratic Services Officer

Title: Responding to the impacts of Covid 19 on Watford's BAME communities and street name policy review task group - final report

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 This report provides Cabinet with the final report and recommendations of the Responding to the impacts of Covid 19 on Watford's BAME communities and street name policy review task group. The full report is attached as Appendix 1.
- 1.2 The report was approved by Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 4 February 2021. An extract of the relevant minutes is attached as Appendix 2.
- 1.3 Cabinet is asked to consider the task group's recommendations for approval.

2.0 Risks

- 2.1 No direct risks to the council have been identified as a result of the task group's recommendations.

3.0 Recommendations

- 3.1 that Cabinet approves the task group's recommendations:

Responding to the impacts of Covid 19 on Watford's BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) communities

1. Watford Borough Council should agree a corporate definition of BAME. The council should also assess how well the needs of other communities, not captured in the task group's agreed definition of BAME, are understood and served.
2. The council should establish an equalities forum to include representatives of protected characteristics, as set out in the Equality Act 2010.
3. The council should develop a corporate equalities policy.

4. The template for undertaking Equalities Impact Assessments for new council policies should be reviewed to reflect best practice.
5. The council, in partnership with ward councillors, should encourage all communities to complete their Census 2021 returns and to underline the importance of this data in formulating future council policies.
6. Councillors should maximise their community role to share public health messages and particularly to encourage take-up of vaccines for Covid 19 and promote wider health screening programmes.
7. The council should provide compulsory training on equalities and unconscious bias for staff and members.

Street name policy review

1. The council should adopt a new street naming policy for the borough which sets out the process for reviewing existing street names as well as naming new streets and buildings to reflect the rich diversity of the town.
2. The council should commission Watford Museum to develop an education programme based around a new exhibition which explores the background and history of the town's road names, including those identified as having negative historic links.

Further information:

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Report approved by: Carol Chen, Group Head of Democracy and Governance

4.0 Detailed proposal

4.1 At its meeting on 23 July 2020, Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed a scrutiny proposal to form a task group to consider the impacts of Covid 19 on Watford's BAME communities. The proposal also included a focus on the council's approach to naming its streets.

4.2 The following councillors were appointed to the task group:

Councillor Favour Ezeifedi	Chair, Councillor for Holywell Ward
Councillor Dawn Allen-Williamson	Councillor for Callowland Ward
Councillor Peter Jeffree	Councillor for Park Ward
Councillor Asif Khan	Councillor for Leggatts Ward
Councillor Jennifer Pattinson	Councillor for Meriden Ward

- 4.3 An initial meeting in November 2020 agreed the terms of reference and scope of its work, including the key witnesses to approach.
- 4.4 To provide context to the impact of Covid 19, the task group heard from the Director of Public Health at Hertfordshire County Council and the Head of Community Protection at Watford Borough Council. In addition, two witness sessions were held, first with representatives of the local community and voluntary sector and second with individuals from Watford's BAME communities. The views of all members were also invited.
- 4.5 Addressing the borough's approach to street naming, the task group reviewed the policy documentation already in place and determined how this could be updated and formalised.

5.0 Implications

5.1 Financial

- 5.1.1 The Shared Director of Finance comments that if Cabinet approves the recommendation that the council should commission Watford Museum to develop an education programme, there will be cost implications and that a budget will need to be identified for this work before it commences.

5.2 Legal Issues (Monitoring Officer)

- 5.2.1 The Group Head of Democracy and Governance comments that the report makes specific recommendations for new policies to be adopted by the council that would need to be agreed by Cabinet.

5.3 Equalities, Human Rights and Data Protection

- 5.3.1 The report makes specific recommendations to the council regarding its corporate equalities responsibilities, including that it should develop a corporate equalities policy.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 Responding to the impacts of Covid 19 on Watford's BAME communities and street name policy review task group - final report
- Appendix 2 Extract of minutes from Overview and Scrutiny Committee 4 February 2021

Background papers

There are no specific background papers for this report. All background information used during the task group's work is referenced in the final report.