

## Extract from Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**4 February 2021**

Present: Councillor Parker (Chair)  
Councillor Dhindsa (Vice Chair)  
Councillors Allen-Williamson, Crout, Dychton, Jeffree, Martins,  
Mauthoor and Turmaine

Officers: Group Head of Transformation  
Senior Democratic Services Officer

### **73. Responding to the impacts of Covid 19 on Watford's BAME communities and street name policy review task group**

The Chair of the Responding to the impacts of Covid 19 on Watford's Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities and street name policy review task group, Councillor Favour Ezeifedi, was invited to introduce the task group's final report and recommendations.

Councillor Ezeifedi thanked the committee for the opportunity to lead this important task group which followed her motion to Council on 14 July 2020. She described the task group's activities, the evidence gathered from witnesses and the arguments to support the final recommendations. Councillor Ezeifedi noted that local BAME communities were keen to continue to engage with the council about how policies were shaped in the future.

Commenting on concerns raised during the witness sessions about the higher risks of infection associated with living in multi-generational or overcrowded housing, Councillor Ezeifedi suggested that whilst action was needed at a national level the council should continue to work with its partners and other agencies to tackle concerns locally wherever possible.

Councillor Ezeifedi asked for her thanks to the Democratic Services Officers who had supported the task group to be placed on record.

The scrutiny committee welcomed the task group's thorough and well-argued report which had shone a light on the experiences of local BAME communities during the current pandemic and produced a set of sensible and worthwhile recommendations. In particular, the recommendation for councillors to maximise their community role by sharing public health

messages and encouraging Covid 19 vaccination take-up was both timely and crucial.

There was wide support for the council to renew its focus on equalities issues. Scrutiny members supported the task group's recommendations in this area, including the development of the authority's existing equalities statement into a corporate equalities policy and for mandatory training on equalities and unconscious bias for all staff and members to be renewed regularly.

Addressing the task group's work on the council's street name policy, members particularly welcomed the proposal to commission Watford Museum to devise an exhibition exploring the background and history of the town's road names. It was suggested that the work might include individual histories of BAME residents who had set down roots in the town.

The Portfolio Holder for Community, Councillor Collett, congratulated the task group on its excellent work. She noted that the task group's recommendations dovetailed with the authority's Road to Renewal activities and gave impetus to the council's desire to engage with the town's diverse communities to support the town as it emerged from the Covid 19 pandemic.

RESOLVED –

that 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 be agreed and forwarded to Cabinet.

Action: Senior Democratic Services Officer