

## **CABINET**

**6 November 2017**

Present: Mayor (Chair)

Councillors P Taylor, K Collett, S Johnson, I Sharpe and  
M Watkin

Also present: Councillors N Bell and K Hastrick

Officers: Managing Director  
Deputy Managing Director and Director of Place Shaping and  
Corporate Performance  
Shared Director of Finance  
Head of Community and Environmental Services  
Head of Service Transformation  
Head of Corporate Strategy and Communications  
Legal and Democratic Section Head  
Planning Policy Section Head  
Democratic Services Manager

30 **Apologies for Absence**

No apologies were received.

31 **Disclosure of Interest (if any)**

There were no disclosures of interest.

32 **Minutes of previous meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 September 2017 were submitted and signed.

33 **Conduct of meeting**

Councillor Bell spoke on behalf of the Labour Group.

The Mayor made some changes to the order of items on the agenda.

## **Supplementary Planning Document - Commuted Sums for the Provision of Affordable Housing**

Cabinet received a report from the Planning Policy Section Head. Councillor Sharpe introduced the report and explained the Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) would become part of planning policy. It would enable the council to provide better quality affordable housing to meet the needs of families. The essence of the current policy was to insist on 35% affordable housing in a development. This was compromised by the government's insistence on viability, therefore, if developers could demonstrate that 35% was not viable then developments could go ahead with fewer affordable units. The mechanism for delivering affordable housing was relatively recent and the council needed to ensure the policy evolved to meet the housing need. Not all development schemes provided the accommodation needed to house people on the register.

Councillor Sharpe referred to the recent application at Development Management Committee on Clarendon Road which would have offered studio flats when the need was for affordable small family units. The SPD provided a way forward for the council to negotiate with developers to be able to provide affordable homes. The new partnership with Watford Community Housing did enable the council to deliver the affordable homes. A formal consultation process had been carried out on the document and the responses were set out in the report - Councillor Sharpe thanked those who had taken part. At a time when government planning rules were compromising the council's ability to deliver affordable homes through the planning process, this policy would help to counter this.

The Deputy Managing Director emphasised that the SPD was an important tool to help with delivery of affordable housing. The criteria of 35% affordable developments still remained; the commuted sum was for exceptions. The sums received could be used with a partner such as Hart Homes to go alongside a grant. The commuted sums would be another addition to achieving the housing the council needed.

Councillor Bell commented that the SPD could mean more two bed family units which were flats or houses. He referred to policy HS3 Affordable Housing of the Local Plan Core Strategy (2013) which would still remain and the other changes should go around this in acceptable circumstances.

The Mayor pointed out that provision of affordable housing had changed and associations such as Watford Community Housing had to build properties for full market rent in order to subsidise affordable and social housing.

Councillor Johnson commented that the commuted sums helped the authority to be flexible and to make the best of the chances available. The council should ensure that it pushed for the fullest amount of the commutable sum in order to have money available to reinvest.

Cabinet thanked the planning policy team.

RESOLVED –

1. That Cabinet approves the Supplementary Planning Document-Commutated Sums for the Provision of Affordable Housing.
2. That Cabinet agrees that minor changes ahead of publication can be agreed by the Deputy Managing Director in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning.

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### **The Central Meriden Redevelopment by Watford Community Housing Trust (The Trust )**

Cabinet received a report of the Head of Democracy and Governance. The Legal and Democratic Section Head explained that the report related to Central Meriden redevelopment proposals. The council had been requested by Watford Community Housing (WCH) to promote a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) for properties, rights and interests in land in Central Meriden in order to progress redevelopment of the area. WCH had agreed to enter into an indemnity agreement with the council to cover the costs of the council promoting the CPO and payment of compensation.

The Legal and Democratic Section Head outlined the key points of the proposed development which would be to demolish the central shopping parade to enable the site to be redeveloped. This would provide 133 new homes, a new shopping parade and upgraded infrastructure. In order for the project to go ahead smoothly, a CPO would be needed to cover the relevant area to ensure that rights to properties could be obtained. WCH were trying to get agreement to deal with interests in the land, however, in the event that agreement could not be reached then they could use the CPO. The scheme was approved by Development Management Committee in 2015 and the report was attached as appendix E. WCH had undertaken a tender process for the developer and expected to appoint a contractor by the end of December. With regards to Human Rights Act considerations as set out in paragraph 16 of the report; human rights had been considered and although interference would take place as a result of the CPO, the scheme sought to improve economic, environmental and social well-being. It was considered that the CPO was necessary and proportionate. An equalities impact assessment had been undertaken.

In response to a question from Councillor Hastrick, the Mayor and Managing Director explained that the delegation requested in the recommendations to the Head of Property and Regeneration was for a high level of technical detail as the CPO had to be very precise and it would be burdensome to keep returning changes to the Portfolio Holder.

In response to a question from Councillor Bell, the Mayor explained that the CPO was a technical legal process; the WCH was dealing with individual people and their properties. The CPO was there to ensure that people would not hold up a development. Councillors would be working to assist individuals with WCH.

RESOLVED –

1. To make all necessary Compulsory Purchase Order(s) to acquire compulsorily all of the properties shown outlined red on the plans attached at Appendix A entitled Watford Borough Council (properties at Central Meriden, Watford) Compulsory Purchase Order Plans 1 to 4, all rights and interests affecting the properties in order to enable the implementation of the Central Meriden redevelopment.
2. To delegate to the Head of Property and Regeneration:
  - 1.1 to agree the wording of the Compulsory Purchase Order(s) and CPO Map, including the Statement of Reasons and to take all steps necessary to make and confirm the Order(s); and
  - 2.2 to take all steps to seek to acquire the necessary interests in land by agreement or by utilising compulsory acquisition powers.
3. If the Secretary of State authorises the Council to do so, confirm any Compulsory Purchase Order(s) made.

CPO	Address	Property Details
1	158 The Gossamers	Long leaseholder -3 bed maisonette over shops
2	124 The Gossamers 148 The Gossamers	Meriden Café and tied 3 bed maisonette accommodation over shops
3	128 The Gossamers 146 The Gossamers	Meriden Post Office and tied 3 bed maisonette accommodation over the shops
4	136 The Gossamers	Meriden Fish and Chip Shop

4. To utilise, where appropriate, either the general vesting declaration procedure under the Compulsory Purchase (Vesting Declarations) Act 1981 or the notice to treat procedure under Section 5 of the Compulsory Purchase Act 1965 in respect of confirmed compulsory purchase order(s).
5. That in doing so the Cabinet has considered the provisions of the Human Rights Act 1998 contained in section 16.4 and 17 of this report so far as they might be applicable in deciding whether or not to make the Compulsory Purchase Order(s) and all other statutory powers that the Council seeks to exercise and resolves the following:
  - (a) With regard to Article 8 it is considered that in balancing the rights of the individuals who are affected by the Order(s) against the benefit to the community of proceeding with the Order(s), the making of the Order resulting in the interference with the individuals rights is justified in the interests of improving the economic, environmental and social well-being of central Meriden.
  - (b) With regard to Article 1 Protocol 1, it is considered that the interference with the individual's property is justified by the advantages accruing to the public by proceeding with the Scheme particularly taking into account the fact that there is a legal right to compensation for the property taken and any rights extinguished under the Order(s).
6. Approve the entering into of a CPO Indemnity Agreement with the

Trust to reimburse the council for all costs and liabilities arising as a result of the Compulsory Purchase Order.

7. Agrees to transfer to the Trust the interests it acquires in order to enable the Trust to implement the development.

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### **Watford Borough Council Commercial Strategy**

This item was discussed jointly with the minute number 37.

Cabinet received a report of the Head of Community and Environmental Services and the Head of Service Transformation.

Councillor Watkin set out the context that there were massive financial challenges facing the council. The commercial strategy and Watford 2020 were there to see if the council could be smarter and more business-like in the way in which it operated. The aim was to increase revenue and reduce costs in the context of what that would mean for residents. There would be review and assessment then determination as to whether the council was operating effectively and were fees and charges reflecting the service. Any commercial suggestions may be passed to Watford Commercial Services Ltd if appropriate and if they were likely to generate a financial return. The council had already been trading and the commercial strategy was pulling this together into a cohesive document. Watford 2020 was the underpinning activity to enable the council to identify and represent what the council would have to look to be in the future. There was a process to look at every department to see what could be done smarter and better. The work was well under way, and it was expected there would be more specific information in 2018.

The Mayor emphasised that it should not be seen as just a cost cutting exercise, it was about doing business better and it was important that members were on board, particularly when it came to implementation. Councillor Watkin pointed out that there was also an underpinning human resources strategy to ensure the council had the right people in place with the right skills.

The Head of Service Transformation explained that the Watford 2020 report set out the vision and design principles for the current work. There would be a report back to Cabinet in March to show the emerging findings. The commercial strategy was the first of three supporting strategies which underpinned the current work, the ICT and people strategies would be coming to future Cabinet meetings.

In response to a question from Councillor Bell, the Head of Service Transformation explained that the discovery work was being carried out currently with the findings being reported to Cabinet in March 2018, this would include the first proposals on the opportunities available.

The Managing Director highlighted how important both strategies were and how they would underpin the business going forward. In signing off Watford 2020 including the design principles this would influence the look of services and the corporate plan. The commercial strategy presented an overview and there would be specific progress by the end of the financial year. The commercial strategy would also inform budget setting and the policies would drive recommendations going forward.

RESOLVED –

1. That the Commercial Strategy, attached at Appendix A, subject to any amendments at Cabinet, is approved for adoption by the Council.
2. That any future minor amendments are delegated to the Head of Community & Environmental Services or the Head of Service Transformation in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Resources and Customer Services

### 37 **Watford 2020 Programme**

Cabinet received a report of the Head of Service Transformation, the discussion was included as part of the previous item.

RESOLVED –

1. That the Cabinet approve the proposed Watford 2020 Vision and Design Principles
2. The regular highlight reports are taken to Overview and Scrutiny for the duration of the Programme.

### 38 **Exclusion of press & Public**

RESOLVED –

That under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business as it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the public were present during consideration of the item there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in

Section 100(1) Schedule 12A of the Act for the reasons stated in the reports.

39

**To agree to provide a Parent Guarantee to a loan for the Riverwell Development**

Cabinet received a report of the Shared Director of Finance. The Shared Director of Finance introduced the report and responded to questions from Cabinet members.

RESOLVED –

That Cabinet agrees the recommendations.

Mayor

The Meeting started at 7.00 pm  
and finished at 7.50 pm