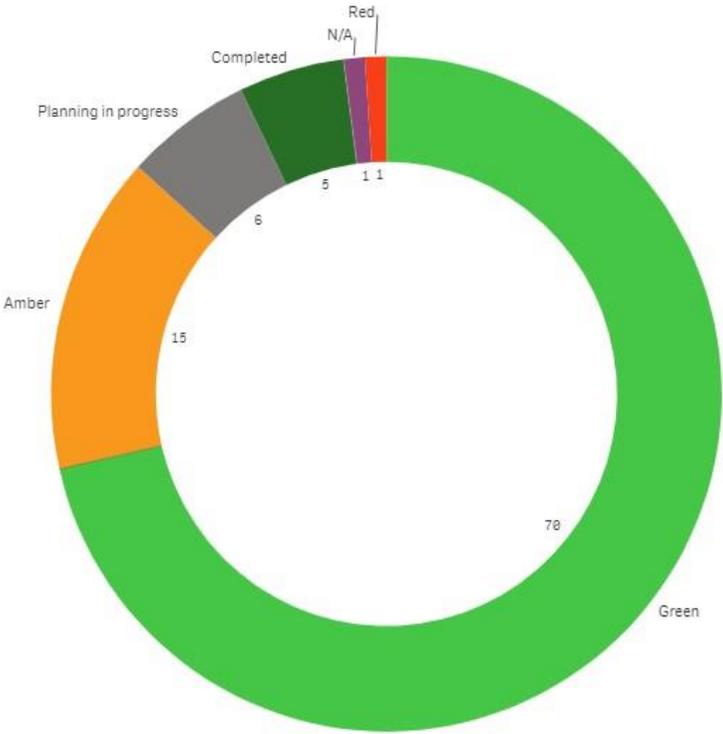


Delivery Plan Progress Update



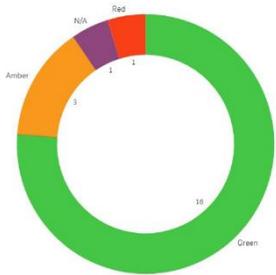
Delivery Plan Overview



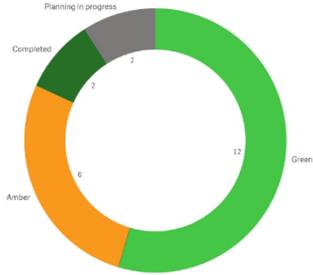
Key

- Green – Completed
- Green – On track
- Amber – Potential Risks / Some uncertainty
- Red – Challenges

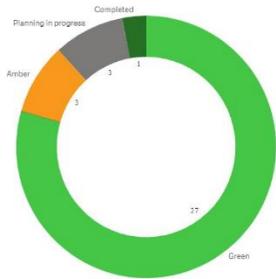
Council Plan Theme - A greener, brighter future



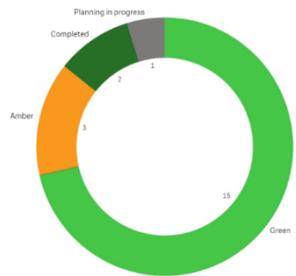
Council Plan Theme - An inspiring, thriving and creative town



Council Plan Theme - A diverse, happy and healthy town

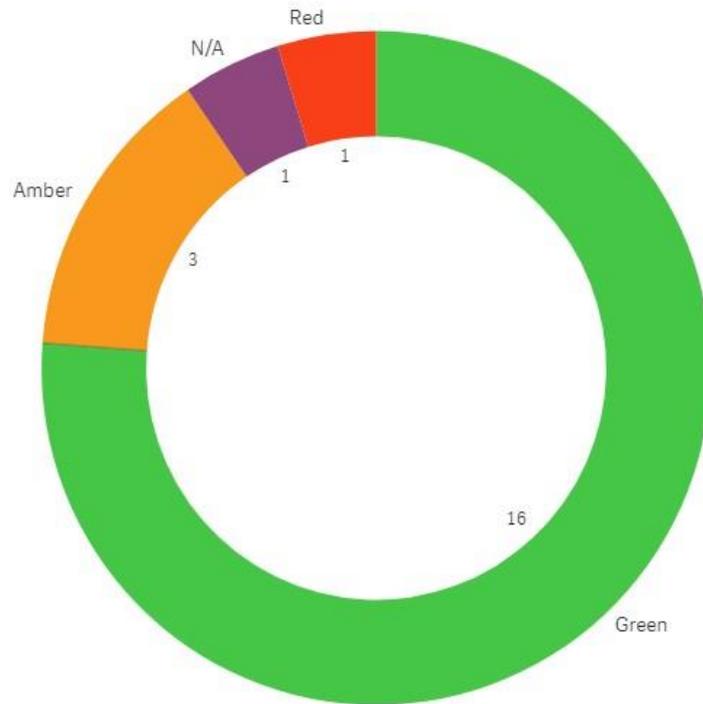


Council Plan Theme - A Council working for our community and serving our residents



THEME: A greener brighter future

Overview



Key achievements over this period

- Phase 1 and 17 out of the 38 sites for electric vehicle charge point installations have been completed. This initiative will support Watford's commitment for investing in sustainable transport and aligns with our Transforming Travel in Watford and Environmental Strategies.
- Treescape Funding to support our commitment to increase Watford's green canopy has been secured and will enable 121 trees and 300 whips to be planted this winter. In addition to this, it is expected that approx. 9,500 trees will be given away in December at the annual tree giveaway event, a joint initiative with HCC.
- A number of engagement activities have been delivered through our 'Tales of the Rivers' workstream within the overall Rediscovering River Colne programme. This includes Wildplay Sessions which had a total of 138 participants and, Junior River Champion sessions with approx. 120 pupils.
- Planned work at Cassiobury Park Wetlands, to improve and enhance the site, is progressing well and is on track to complete by next quarter.

| Commitment | Activity | BRAG' Rating | Trend | Headline |
|---|--|---|---|---|
| <p>Encourage people to make greener travel choices, reducing congestion and improving the health and wellbeing of the town</p> | <p>1. Investigate greener travel and transport solutions that work for Watford</p> | <p>We will continue to investigate the potential for a low-carbon transport hub in Watford town centre to encourage more use of public transport, reducing congestion and improving air quality for everyone.</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">Green</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">↔</p> <p>Through our ambitious Transforming Travel in Watford (TTIW) Strategy we have continued to make steady progress in our investigation for a low-carbon transport hub in the town centre. The initiative will support the Strategy's overall objectives including reducing congestion and providing green ways of travel. In this quarter the scheme masterplan was developed and shared with members and the pre-application was submitted. In the next quarter we will prepare the consultation strategy for the masterplan and progress the scheme through the pre-app stage.</p> |
| | <p>2. Promote ways of to travel that support people make greener choices</p> | <p>We will explore initiatives such as secure cycle parking and school travel plans to give people options other than using their car for every journey.</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">Green</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">↔</p> <p>We are continuing to explore, progress and deliver initiatives through our ambitious TTIW Programme that will provide residents with options other than using their own cars for short and long journeys. In this quarter:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New sites for our Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIP) were identified for improvements and outline designs produced. The sites have been agreed in principle by Herts County Council (HCC). - We will explore development of a School Travel Plan with HCC for The Grove Academy, in order to resolve some of the issues faced by residents during school drop-off and collection times. - The Watford Car Club launch has been moved to March 2024 to enable us to progress the Distributor Network Operator (DNO) process, which will ensure charge points are connected to a power network. Once launched, the scheme will provide six electric or hybrid vehicles for hire, offering an affordable, convenient and environmentally friendly option for residents. Our scheme partner, Enterprise Car Club, attended a Croxley Connect business engagement event by the Chamber of Commerce in July 2023. <p>Further information on how the council is progressing delivery of its Transforming Travel in Watford Strategy is included within Appendix C4.</p> |
| | <p>3. Champion sustainable travel initiatives and greener vehicles options</p> | <p>We will introduce initiatives such as electric vehicles, e-cargo bikes, electric charging points and e-car clubs to encourage more use of green transport, reducing congestion and improving air quality.</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">Green</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">↔</p> <p>We completed Phase 1 of the electric vehicle (EV) charging point installations and commenced delivery of Phase 2. Out of the 38 sites identified, 17 sites are now complete. Leaflet delivery to residents has resulted in large amount of feedback and requests for additional EV charge points. In the next period we will consider a new On-Street Residential Chargepoint Scheme (ORCS) bid application which, if successful, will enable us to deliver further EV charge points. HCC's Active Travel Team are progressing the Cargo Bike pilot scheme and have agreed to deliver 2 cargo bikes to Cassio Infants School and Watford Cycle Hub. Delivery of the cargo bikes is expected in the next quarter.</p> |

| Commitment | Activity | | BRAG' Rating | Trend | Headline |
|--|---|--|--------------|-------|---|
| | 4. Work with our partners to improve our cycling and walking network, including designing and implementing a green loop | We will work with Hertfordshire County Council and our cycling and walking communities to improve the cycling and walking network across our town so more people choose to cycle and walk. | Green | ↔ | We are progressing plans to improve our cycling and walking network. Outline designs have been produced for the new identified sites, which HCC have agreed in principle. We will define the sites to progress in the next quarter, which will be subject to feasibility studies. We are exploring signage and road markings along the Green Loop to align with our Wayfinding Strategy and to create a comprehensive solution. |
| | 5. Champion proposals for a sustainable transport option for Watford Junction to Croxley | We will work closely with Hertfordshire County Council on the Watford to Croxley Link, examining the feasibility of options to secure the best transport system for our town, offering greater choice for our residents, visitors and commuters to travel sustainably. | Green | ↔ | We are continuing to work closely with HCC in line with the council's commitment to support proposals for sustainable transport across the town. The Watford to Croxley Link stage 2 work, the final stage in the options and feasibility study, is now complete and the draft report is expected to be finalised in the next quarter. |
| Promote improvements to Watford's biodiversity to enhance the range of habitats, plants and wildlife in the town | 6. Set out our commitments to improving Watford's biodiversity | We will develop our Strategy and Biodiversity Action Plan, recognising the importance of our range of habitats across the town and setting out how we will improve and enhance these for future generations. | Green | ↔ | The development of our Biodiversity Strategy is on hold until the new Green Spaces Strategy and HCC's Local Nature Recovery Strategy are developed. We have, however, developed the first principles report on the Biodiversity Duty which is going to Cabinet in December 2023 and which will map out the path for the Biodiversity Strategy development. A range of work is also underway to support our commitment to biodiversity including improvements to the River Colne, Cassiobury Park Wetlands and our Tree Planting Programme. |
| | 7. Enhance and extend our green canopy, through our proactive tree planting initiative | We will work with our community to plant 20,000 trees across the town by 2026, increasing our green canopy, making Watford a more pleasant place to live, work and enjoy recreation time. | Green | ↔ | We are progressing our Tree Planting Programme for 2023/24. In this quarter, £75k Treescape funding was provisionally secured which will enable us to plant 121 new trees this season. In addition, we have received just over £800 Treescape funding to plant 300 whips this winter. Planning for the tree giveaway event, a joint initiative with HCC, is underway and will take place at Woodside in December 2023. |
| | 8. Rediscover the River Colne to enhance the river, the river corridor, as a place for our community to enjoy | We will improve the River Colne through Watford to make it a more appealing place for local people to enjoy and a better environment for plants and wildlife to flourish. | Amber | ↔ | We are continuing to deliver improvements, environmental monitoring and engagement activities at the River Colne. In this quarter, we delivered a number of engagement activities through the engagement and Tales of the River workstreams. We held a successful River Festival at Knutsford, Junior River Champion sessions engaging with approx. 120 pupils, 12 Wildplay sessions with a total of 138 combined participants, 5 Travelling Tales sessions and River Ambles with Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust (Bat Walk), Mencap and the Watford Blind Group. We held a balsam bash event at Little Munden Farm, completed a balsam hunt survey along the full stretch of the WBC River Colne boundary with support from volunteers and completed an EA fish survey at Radlett Road. We recorded our first Podcast with West Herts College and launched ReciteMe, an accessibility tool. |

| Commitment | Activity | BRAG ¹ Rating | Trend | Headline | |
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| | | | | This activity is reporting Amber as the EA permit for the in river works along the northern section of the river this autumn / winter has not yet been issued. There is a risk that the required work will not be delivered as planned since the work is subject to the spawning season and must be completed by 15 March 24. The EA are fully supportive of the scheme and although they are not in a position to issue a full permit at this time, as there are still questions regarding the flood risk model submitted for the overall scheme, they have indicated they would be willing to consider a separate permit for a smaller scope of works, which if approved, would allow us to deliver incremental benefit to the health of the river this winter. A new permit for Timberlake Allotment site is currently being compiled and will be submitted in the next week for EA consideration with the wider scheme continuing to be assessed in parallel. | |
| | 9. Reinvigorate the Cassiobury Wetlands as an important part of our natural environment | We will improve the wetland and habitat of the former watercress beds on the River Gade in Cassiobury Park to enhance biodiversity, water quality and preserve and protect relevant related historical features. | Green | ↑ | The improvement works to Cassiobury Park Wetlands are progressing well, and the planned works are due to be completed by end of October 2023, putting the site on track to reopen in Spring 2024. We have secured S106 funding to support delivery and submitted an EA application for a further £50k funding. We are working with Friends of Cassiobury Park and HMWT to agree the onsite signage. In the next quarter we will commence work on creating the site management plan. |
| | 10. Celebrate and enhance Whippendell Woods as a site of special scientific interest | We will protect Whippendell Woods, a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), in order to preserve its 'favourable condition' status. | Green | ↔ | In line with our commitment to sustainability, works remain ongoing in Whippendell Woods. To preserve the SSSI status of Whippendell Woods we are working with Bike Park Chilterns, a Community Interest Company, to find a new location for the unofficial mountain bike trail that had been in use in the woodlands. Bike Park Chilterns have shared a proposed trail and business plan for review. To ensure the ongoing management of the site, we are working with the Forestry Commission, Natural England and Maydencroft to develop a management plan. |
| | 11. Promote healthy and sustainable gardening across the town | We will continue compost give-aways using our green waste recycling to bring back the organic material as free, nutrient-rich compost for Watford residents to grow plants and vegetables. | Green | ↔ | In line with our commitment to promote healthy and sustainable gardening across the town, the council's popular Compost Giveaway will continue on an annual basis, encouraging and supporting our residents to grow plants and vegetables. The tree giveaway will take place every 2 years. The HCC tree giveaway event will take place at Woodside in December 2023. |
| | 12. Provide clear guidance on improving biodiversity in the town | We will set out guidance for developers on how to improve and enhance biodiversity in developments so they contribute to the | N/A No longer being progressed | | Whilst a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for how developers can contribute to our vision and ambition to enhance biodiversity across the town had been drafted and a briefing session held with councillors, new government legislation is expected to come into effect from January 2024 |

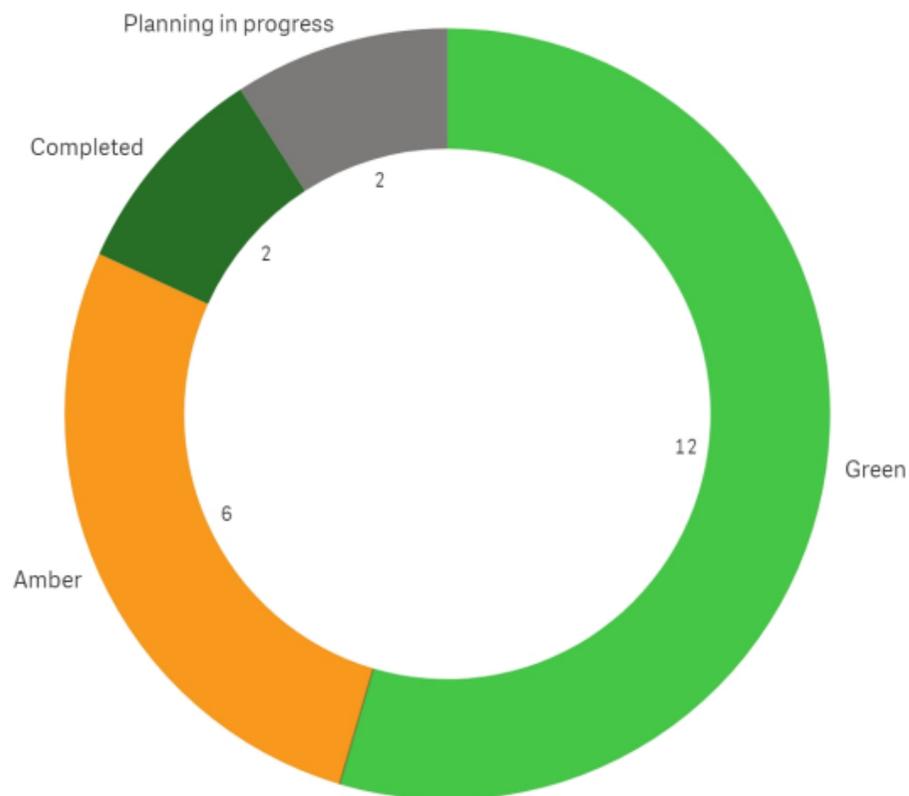
| Commitment | Activity | | BRAG' Rating | Trend | Headline |
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| | | town's goals for better habitats and environmental diversity | | N/A | which will remove the need for implementation guidance through planning policy. The activity is no longer being progressed and ceased as such. Guidance will be required on how Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) funds will be invested. Discussions with the Green Space team continues to clarify where the remit resides. |
| Work alongside our community and businesses to find the right ways to reach net carbon neutral, seeking not just to learn from others but to explore innovative solutions that will work for Watford | 13. Develop and implement our new Sustainability Strategy | We will work with our community and businesses to develop and implement our new Sustainability Strategy, now called Watford's Environmental Strategy: addressing the climate and ecological emergency, which will set out how together, we can contribute to our target to be a net carbon neutral borough by 2030. | Green | ↔ | Now that the council's Environment Strategy is approved, delivery of the Delivery Plan is well in progress via a designated Sustainability Programme, however the commitment to achieve net carbon zero by 2030 and the promotion and enhancement sustainability is a key objective in other projects and programmes such as the River Colne and Town Hall Quarter Programmes. Further information on how the council is progressing delivery of its Environment Strategy is included within Appendix C3. |
| | 14. Prepare for legislative changes to help protect our environment | We will respond to the requirements of the Environment Act 2021 to ensure we deliver on our role in improving air quality, tackling waste, improving biodiversity and making other environmental improvements. | Green | ↔ | The council's Environmental Strategy, which takes into account the requirement of the Environment Act 2021 and sets out our ambition and plan for achieving new carbon zero by 2030 was adopted in March 2023, and delivery is in progress. Further information on how the council is progressing delivery of its Sustainability Strategy is included within Appendix C3. |
| | 15. Explore opportunities that will contribute financially to our green commitments and goals | We will explore innovative, economically viable ideas that contribute to net carbon zero tapping into emerging trends, including investigating the possibility of green bonds to raise funds for planned projects. | Red | ↔ | As previously reported, due to the current economic climate and the rise in interest rates the proposal for the Green Investment Bond Scheme has been deferred until the economic climate improves, hence the red rating. We are unable to test and determine the viability of the Electric Super Hub on council-owned sites until resource is available to progress the options appraisal. |
| | 16. Investigate generating energy from renewable sources | We will examine including sustainable energy generation in council developments so we lead by example and demonstrate how it can work effectively. | Green | ↔ | Following completion of the extensive decarbonisation works to the Town Hall and Colosseum, we have now successfully appointed sustainability consultants to undertake a review of council assets and to identify further opportunities for sustainability measures, as well as external funding opportunities. A final report is expected by spring 2024. |
| | 17. Improve the energy performance of the Town Hall and Watford Colosseum | We will carry out extensive de-carbonisation works to our Town Hall and Colosseum to improve their energy efficiency and ensure they have a reduced carbon footprint. | Amber | | The decarbonisation work and fabric repairs to the Town Hall and Colosseum, funded by the £3m central government grant, is now complete. As part of the initiative, the council has installed 144 state-of-the-art photovoltaic (PV) panels on the roof of the Town Hall and 36 on the Colosseum to harness renewable energy, reducing the reliance on |

| Commitment | Activity | | BRAG' Rating | Trend | Headline |
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| | | | | | <p>traditional power sources. It is expected to save 24 tonnes of carbon dioxide (CO2) per year. In addition a 30% saving in gas bills and carbon emissions is expected due to the new cavity wall insulation and a further 166-tonne annual saving in carbon through the replacement of lights with LED equivalents and installation of new roof insulation.</p> <p>The activity is reporting an amber status due to the delay in completing the final windows snagging. However, it is expected that this will be completed over the next quarter.</p> |
| | 18. Ensure the council's own buildings are energy efficient | We will explore ways to improve the energy performance of all properties within our portfolio. | Green | ↔ | <p>In line with our ambition to lead by example, we have appointed a consultant to assist in the data collection and assessment of energy usage at Croxley Business Park and to act as a case study for potential wider roll out across the Council.</p> <p>We have also appointed a sustainability consultant for works to improve the energy efficiency of our operational and community estate. Our application for PSDS funding for the planning year 2024/25 to improve the energy efficiency of our operational and community properties was not successful however we are preparing an application for the round 4 application.</p> |
| | 19. Promote sustainable construction in our own developments | We will actively encourage the use of sustainable materials in any of our new developments so we can role model to others who develop in our town. | Amber | ↔ | <p>As with the Town Hall and the Colosseum, the council is continuing to encourage the use of sustainable materials in new developments with a BREEAM rating of 'Very Good' targeted for direct development of Inspire (Gateway Zone) at Watford Business Park and Riverwell Industrial Zone North. We have completed the EPC assessments across our community estate and are assessing opportunities to further improve EPC bands at Croxley and across our other investment portfolio. We are also working with joint venture partners to assess and implement the most efficient and viable energy solutions in residential projects.</p> <p>The amber rating reflects viability challenges which will reduce our ability to consider additional works over and above the new set of building regulations that came into force in July 2023. This will also put further onus on developers and contractors to improve the energy efficiency of residential properties.</p> |
| Encourage residents and businesses to recycle more, reusing materials | 20. Increase how much our residents recycle and reduce the waste we throw away as a town | We will build on the success of our waste and recycling scheme to boost household recycling rates across the borough, introducing the opportunity for food waste collections for all households and setting targets that reflect our sustainability ambitions. | Green | ↔ | <p>The waste and recycling service changes introduced in 2020 has resulted in an increase of recycling rates for the council. The council and its contractor will strive to deliver the new target for recycling rates over the next 4 years. The food waste collection in flats programme went live on 16 October 2023 in some blocks of flats in the borough where the service is being used by the residents.</p> |

| Commitment | Activity | | BRAG' Rating | Trend | Headline |
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| <p>and reducing waste and what they throw away</p> | | | | | <p>At this stage the service will be available as an 'opt in' service and an update on the implementation date for blocks that have signed up will be provided in the New Year.</p> |
| | <p>21. Support our partners to reduce waste and increase recycling</p> | <p>We will work with our partners, including our environmental services provider and leisure services provider to deliver the next step change in reducing waste and increasing recycling, particularly through campaigns and changing behaviours.</p> | <p>Green</p> | <p>↔</p> | <p>We are working with our key contractors across the borough, such as Watford Market and leisure centres, to reduce the amount of waste created and seek to increase the recycling rates. Our new Environmental Strategy 2023-30 is a key tool and will support us to achieve our ambitions. We have committed to reducing waste by 50% by 2030 and with recycling making up at least 60% of the waste. We have also committed to reducing the council's own waste to near zero by 2030.</p> |

THEME: An inspiring, thriving and creative town

Overview



Key achievements over this period

- Through the 'Watford Fit to Bid' project we have supported well over 60 Watford businesses to improve their bidding and tendering skills and capacity. The first Meet the Buyer event was a great success and was attended by buyer representatives from big organisations such as Berkeley Homes, Morgan Sindall and Veolia as well as 70 SMEs. The Watford Net Zero project is already supporting around 140 businesses on their decarbonisation journey.
- We have agreed amendments to the long-term vision of the Joint Strategic Partnership (JSP) alongside other South West Herts LPAs. The amendments which will enable us progress to the next stage of the JSP which is to propose and test spatial development options.
- As the completion of the new Watford Business Park units draws near, the park marketing strategy has been launched and we are seeing a promising level of interest in the units. Heads of Terms are currently being progressed with one unit. The new facility is expected to be completed in the next quarter.
- 12 social rented 2-bedroom properties have been delivered in Q1 and Q2 of 2023/24, putting the council on track to deliver our target of 120 properties over 4 years in order to support the housing needs of the most vulnerable members of our community.
- Our Shop and Eat Local campaign, which aims to support our diverse range of unique independent shops and hospitality outlets, was launched in November 2023.

| Commitment | Activity | BRAG ¹ Rating | Trend | Headline | |
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| Position Watford as a town where start-ups and business innovation can thrive, supported by strong local skills, generating a range of job opportunities, including for our young people | 22. Deliver our Innovation and Incubation Hub | We will provide a new Innovation and Incubation Hub, as part of our Town Hall Quarter, which will support start-up businesses in the town and give our key sectors a boost, tapping into the significant opportunity provided by the flourishing creative sector and drawing businesses into the borough. | Amber | ↔ | Following confirmation that the council's bid for Levelling Up Funding had been unsuccessful, work has been underway to develop a lower cost, scaled down business model for the proposed new business hub. We will ensure that we can still support Watford start-up businesses and give our key sectors a boost, whilst making efficient use of the Town Hall and Annexe. Whilst a third round of Levelling Up Funding which, if awarded to Watford, would allow us to fulfil this commitment, was announced by the Chancellor in March, no further information has been provided. |
| | 23. Develop a skills and employment plan for Watford that supports the current, and future, needs of our local businesses and life chances of residents | We will work with our business community and education partners, linking to the Hertfordshire LEP Skills and Employment Plan to develop and deliver a Watford Skills and Employment Plan, connecting local skills to business needs. | Green | ↔ | The Hertfordshire Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) has now been published by Herts Chamber of Commerce, having been approved by central government. This sets the framework for skills strategy and funding allocations across the county for the next couple of years. West Herts College has applied to Government for the Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF) to help delivery against the LSIP. This prioritises support for key sectors including creative and media, life sciences, digital, sustainability and NHS workforce training. The Watford Skills and Employment Plan will be considered within the context of this wider Herts plan and Watford specific dynamics. |
| | 24. Maximise economic potential and harness new opportunities from Watford's future growth sectors | We will engage with our successful business sectors and partners at local, county and regional levels, building on the economic drive our sectors provide for Watford's economy, promoting clustering where it makes sense for our town to create greater growth and encourage inward investment. | Green | ↔ | The Sectors Action Plan will be progressed in Q1 of 2024/25 due to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) taking priority, although the evidence has been gathered and sub-regional work is underway with parties around creative and screen industry potential. However, the UKSPF projects are automatically supporting key sectors as they are cross-cutting. |
| | 25. Make the most of our Shared Prosperity Fund allocation | We will use our Shared Prosperity Fund to boost our ambitions for prosperity, jobs and skills, spreading opportunities and building our sense of community pride. | Green | ↔ | The Watford Fit to Bid project is going very well with over 60 Watford businesses being supported to improve their bidding and tendering skills and capacity. The first Meet the Buyer event was a great success, the buyer representatives included Berkeley Homes, Bugler Developments, Herts and West Essex ICS NHS Procurement, Veolia, PWC, Morgan Sindall and the Council, with around 70 SMEs in attendance. The Watford Net Zero project is already supporting around 140 businesses on their decarbonisation journey; the Growth Springboard project, to help micro businesses with their next stage growth, is due to commence this month. The Herts LEP-led countywide projects and services are on track with quarterly progress and impact reporting in place from Herts LEP. |
| Tell Watford's story as a great location for businesses | 26. Promote what makes Watford a great location for business, connecting to building pride in | We will work with partners to shape our place narrative and brand, sharing what is great about Watford, attracting more | Green | ↔ | Our place brand and narrative has been developed and shared with a range of partners. A report and Watford's Place Brand, Narrative and Strategy were taken to Cabinet in July 2023 outlining the progress made to date and |

| Commitment | Activity | | BRAG' Rating | Trend | Headline |
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| <p>where they can invest, grow and succeed as part of our flourishing business community and networks that connect people</p> | the town and our profile as a great place to visit | visitors and supporting our local economy, putting the town on the map as a great place for business. | | | the next steps. We are aiming to launch the Strategy in autumn 2023 and this will be supported by a website and social assets. Arrangements have been made to meet with a business task group to support implementation. |
| | 27. Ensure there is a strong voice for local businesses by fostering effective business networks and forums | We will engage with Watford businesses, encouraging an empowered business community that can be a strong voice for the town, making the most of opportunities and new ventures and encouraging vibrant networks and forums that bring businesses together in a meaningful and effective way. | Green | ↔ | Business engagement is a day-to-day activity for the Economic Development Team and the team regularly meet with a wide range of Watford's businesses. Over the last quarter the team have engaged with several new businesses on Clarendon Road and based in Croxley Park. A successful Business Connect event was held with 70 business attendees and some great business support connections made. A Business Leaders task group is now being established to gather business input into some key council initiatives. UKSPF continues to provide opportunities to engage with businesses in different ways, for example a well-attended Meet the Buyer event was held as part of our Watford Fit to Bid project, which involved seven big organisations opening up their buying power to connect with potential suppliers from Watford's SME community. |
| | 28. Engage with wider economic, business and planning partnerships to make sure Watford's interests are represented | We will work closely with our partners in Hertfordshire LEP, Herts Growth Board and the South West Herts Joint Strategic Partnership to shape and influence wider discussions on our economic role and impact. | Green | ↔ | We have agreed amendments, which are expected to be straightforward, to the long-term vision of the Joint Strategic Partnership (JSP) alongside other South West Herts LPAs. The agreement of the vision by all LAs will enable us to progress to the next stage of the JSP which is to propose and test spatial development options, and which will indicatively show areas for long term development. Draft studies to determine if the respective infrastructure and green belt assessments used by each South West Herts Local Authority can be aligned has been received and is being reviewed. |
| <p>Create a distinctive and successful neighbourhood at the heart of our town, providing space and time for residents, businesses and the community to enjoy and experience</p> | 29. Progress our transformational plans for the Town Hall Quarter | We will take forward plans to revitalise the north end of Watford High Street to create a vibrant and attractive neighbourhood within our Town Hall Quarter for our residents to enjoy, as well as establishing a new area in the town for culture to flourish. | Amber | ↔ | Work with our preferred joint venture partner, Mace Develop, on the New Neighbourhood scheme continues to progress with de-risking activities for utilities, highways and financial viability. The highways de-risking work is close to completion and no major issues have been identified. Having previously secured £55k funding for investigatory work, engagement with Homes England to discuss further funding opportunities continues and we have provided further information to enable them to progress their stage 2 assessment. The activity status remains amber due to the ongoing current economic climate which has delayed the anticipated investment. |

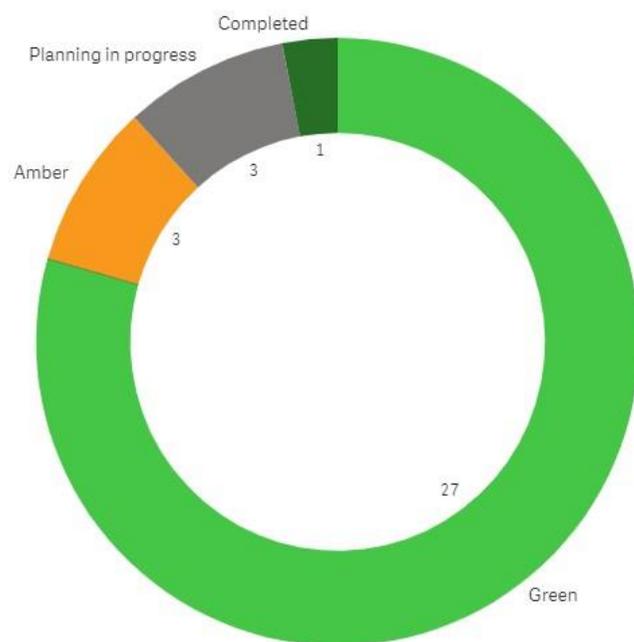
| Commitment | Activity | BRAG' Rating | Trend | Headline | |
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| | 30. Secure the future of Watford Colosseum, improving the heritage building and attracting a new operator | We will refurbish the Watford Colosseum so it remains a first-class entertainment venue, attracting a new operator to bring an exciting and diverse range of performances and creative events to boost the town's cultural offer and local economy. | Amber | ↔ | Having completed the decarbonisation and enabling works to the Colosseum, the contract for the main refurbishment has been completed and signed. Works will recommence on site in early November with completion expected in Autumn 2024. Council officers continue to meet regularly with the new Colosseum operator, AEG, to plan for the reopening of the venue, although the final operator contract remains subject to negotiations and has not yet been signed, hence the amber rating for this activity. |
| | 31. Enhance a sustainable town centre with a mixed economy that will have a broad appeal to all ages and interests | We will develop our Town Centre Framework to ensure that our vibrant and diverse town centre continues to attract residents, businesses and visitors to live, work, shop, eat, drink and enjoy spending time. | Complete | ↔ | Following a significant level of public engagement, the Town Centre Strategic Framework consultation was completed and approved by Cabinet in March 2023. |
| | 32. Enhance our outdoor public spaces to make them welcoming and attractive | We will improve a number of our public spaces to provide excellent, safe and attractive outdoor spaces that support a greener Watford. This work will include the enhancement of key areas of our town such as St Mary's Churchyard, Market Street, Queens Road and St Albans Road. | Green | ↔ | Since the approval of the Delivery Plan, the council has already delivered a range of public realm improvement works, including in Market Street, Queens Road and Clarendon Road, supporting local businesses and visitors to the area. Plans are underway to review further public realm improvements at St Mary's Churchyard and at some of the district shopping parades within the borough. |
| | 33. Promote the appeal of our town centre and all it has to offer | We will continue to deliver our 'Shop and Eat Local' campaign to attract people to our town centre, supporting our local businesses and their unique appeal. | Green | ↔ | We are continuing to engage with new businesses and encouraging local people to nominate businesses to appear in campaigns. We are also working with Watford BID and Atria to understand when new businesses arrive and to arrange a 'Watford Welcome'. Our 'Shop and Eat Local' campaign was launched in November 2023. |
| | 34. Promote Watford Market and our offer as a market town | We will support our local traders by continuing to run our popular 'Market Late' events, showcasing the great range of food and drink stalls in the market and trialling specialist markets. | Green | ↔ | The procurement exercise to identify a new operator for Watford Market is complete. The new operator will take on the day-to-day management of the market, including the Market Lates and Specialist Markets events, and support our local market traders who provide a wide variety and wonderful stalls for our residents and visitors such as food and beauty services. The Market Lates and Specialist Markets, which provide a great opportunity for local traders to showcase their diverse food and drink offer, will continue in 2023/24. In this quarter we held two Market Lates events and a private NHS event. |
| Ensure the right mix of facilities, services and transport links as part of new developments to create successful, | 35. Take forward plans for the Watford Junction Quarter | We will bring landowners together so we can progress with our long-term plans to create a new Watford neighbourhood that successfully combines new homes, station facilities, jobs, public space, school provision and community facilities for both our existing and new residents. | Green | ↔ | Whilst the council does not own the land around Watford Junction, we are committed to improving the local amenities to create a new neighbourhood and have continued to liaise with key landowners and stakeholders on the redevelopment of the area. The council is in conversation with Network Rail (NR) regarding future improvements of the station and on a development strategy. |

| Commitment | Activity | BRAG' Rating | Trend | Headline | |
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| well-designed new communities | | | | We are waiting to hear from NR operations on funding for design work on the station to improve the journeys of many of our residents who use Watford Junction every day. | |
| | 36. Continue our transformation of Watford Business Park | We will complete the Gateway development at Watford Business Park to continue our plans to create new and high quality business space to maximise local employment opportunities and generate income for the council to support its wider priorities. | Amber | ↔ | <p>Following the sign off of our ambitious and exciting plans to develop Watford Business Park into a new and high-quality business space, the main contract works are progressing and completion is expected in Q3 of 2023/24. The new facility will provide modern and flexible commercial units, a number of which will be fitted out for office accommodation to meet the requirements of potential businesses.</p> <p>The marketing strategy has been launched and we are seeing a promising level of interest in the units. Heads of Terms are currently being progressed with one unit. We are also progressing the appointment of a tenant for the café unit.</p> <p>The amber status reflects further delay in practical completion and the s278 agreement with HCC, and the budget implication in light of additional remediation works required, design changes and an EOT claim.</p> |
| | 37. Continue to deliver the neighbourhood at Riverwell | We will continue to develop the Riverwell scheme to deliver a high quality mix of new homes, jobs, open spaces and community facilities, maintaining an income source for the council to support its wider priorities. The work at Riverwell will support the opportunity for West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust to deliver its ambition for an acute hospital in Watford. | Amber | ↔ | <p>The joint venture partnership is managing the impact of the current economic climate and inflationary pressures on the Riverwell scheme. KIER Construction have been commissioned to complete the remaining works on the Avenues phase 1 development. Sales of the Avenues Phase 1 are progressing strongly and Belway has sold out.</p> <p>The programme is amber rated as the partnership continues to review all Riverwell development phases to understand the ongoing economic impacts and explore options to maintain progress and delivery.</p> |
| | 38. Achieve the right long-term balance of development, services and transport links for our town | We will adopt our new Local Plan for Watford which will shape how the town will develop sustainably over the next 30 years and make sure that key development sites are underpinned with creative, sustainable and well considered planning frameworks. | Complete | ↔ | The Watford Local Plan 2021-2038 was adopted in Q2 of 2022/23 and will provide the council with the opportunity to influence local and sustainable development across the town. |

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| Make sure we have quality homes to meet the needs of residents, including housing that is affordable through direct ownership, private rental, affordable and social rent housing | 39. Deliver a new Housing Strategy for Watford | We will deliver a Housing Strategy that sets out the strategic direction for housing activity in Watford for the next five years. The delivery of housing growth, bringing inward investment into the borough, ensuring existing homes are of good quality, and preventing homelessness will all contribute to meeting the housing challenges faced by our residents. | Planning in progress | ↔ | Significant work has been undertaken over the last period to strengthen our housing service so that it is best positioned to manage the challenges of the future. It is crucial that our future strategy is aligned to this work and so a paper on the approach to delivering the Housing Strategy, including an outline project plan will be taken to Portfolio Holders in Q3 and the formal work to develop the strategy will commence in Q4 of 2023/24. |
| | 40. Review and refresh our Nominations Policy | We will deliver a new Nominations Policy for Watford to help our residents apply to our housing register, how we manage the register, your choice about where you live, how we assess applications and allocate properties. | Green | ↔ | In this quarter we have continued to develop the Nominations Policy and held a briefing with members. A consultation plan has been developed and an Equalities Impact Assessment is in development to accompany the policy. The implementation date has been revised to June 2024, after the consultation plan is delivered. |
| | 41. Improve housing provision for those local families who need homes that are affordable | We will work with partners to deliver high quality new homes for social rent, for local families who need them the most and support the housing needs of the most vulnerable members of our community. | Green | ↔ | The Steering Group to deliver social rented homes across the town is developing a strategic action plan to consider regeneration opportunities and proposals for spend of commuted sums to deliver social rented homes. There are ongoing delays to the Ascot Road development, however the Yeatmans development will be occupied during October 2023, several months after planned occupation. We delivered 12 social rented 2 bed properties in Q1 and Q2 and another 23 properties are due in Q3 and Q4 of 2023/24. We are on track to deliver our target of 120 properties over 4 years. |
| | 42. Develop planning guidance to ensure developers provide new homes that support local needs | We will provide guidance to inform how new homes and buildings should be designed so they meet the needs of Watford and are built to a high standard. | Amber | ↔ | Following discussions with Development Management, issues have been refined and prioritised for inclusion in the Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), however the guidance is further delayed, reflecting the uncertainty until national guidance is clarified. This may result in the SPD no longer being applicable for LPAs. |
| | 43. Deliver a refreshed Private Sector Renewal Policy | We will review and refresh our Private Sector Renewal policy to support the improvement of Watford's housing stock, setting out how we can help the private sector improve and maintain housing quality in the town. | Planning in progress | ↔ | A stock condition assessment is being undertaken which will be used to inform the refresh of our Private Sector Renewal policy. Following release of the census 2021 data we are on track to complete the stock survey by the end of 2023. We will aim to present the findings in early 2024 and set up workshops to inform the new policy, which will be completed towards the end of 2024. |

THEME: A diverse, happy and healthy town

Overview



Key achievements over this period

- The Hemel Hempstead Crematorium was officially opened in September 2023. The new state of the art facility has exceptional features including a chapel that can accommodate 140 people, layout that provides complete privacy for mourners, extensive landscaping, changing places facility, memorial gardens and a tranquillity pool.
- We are delivering regular engagement days to reassure and inform the Watford community through Safer Watford, the town's Community Safety Partnership. This quarter we delivered an ASB Awareness Week, Older Persons Active Learning Sessions, Hate Crime Awareness Week and a reassure and inform event at Watford General Hospital. We have successfully secured PCC funding to address violent youth crime. A project will be delivered in local schools to empower young children to make positive choices.
- The Healthy Hub service continues to support residents with their health and wellbeing needs, including mental health. As well as HCC's core offer, the hub offers health checks and face to face appointments to support clients.
- Our Discount and Exemptions form went live this quarter and enables our residents to apply online for a council tax discount or exemption. In some cases residents will receive a decision immediately, improving the customer experience, providing greater flexibility and improving service efficiency.
- We have drafted the Watford Business Charter and are preparing for consultation with businesses and stakeholders this autumn / winter. The Charter will encourage businesses to do more in 5 areas: recruit local, buy local, go green, connect with community and be an employer of choice.
- Our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and Delivery Plan were approved by Cabinet in 2023.

| Commitment | Activity | | BRAG' Rating | Trend | Headline |
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| Continue our investment in our outstanding parks and open spaces so they remain the best in the area | 44. Deliver improvements to Meriden Park | We will, in consultation with our residents, improve the popular and well-loved Meriden Park, including providing new paths, planting and landscaping, for the whole community to enjoy. | Green | ↔ | We are continuing to deliver improvements to our popular Meriden Park. In this quarter we placed an order to replace the park benches and we are continuing to manage footpath repairs. The wildflowers that were planted earlier this year are growing well. Bulb planting is being planned for autumn 2023 with community involvement and a local school. |
| | 45. Continue our programme of investment and improvements in Watford's parks | We will carry out a range of improvements across our award winning parks and open spaces, including improving footpaths, refurbishing grass tennis courts, and carrying out cycling path repairs. In addition, we will promote the 'cycling code of conduct' and associated engagement programme to support considerate cycling. | Green | ↔ | We are continuing to deliver improvements to our popular Cassiobury Park. We are progressing plans to repair the park pathways and are currently reviewing and comparing the costs of delivery. The temporary Beryl Bike bay trial was completed at the end of September 2023 with no adverse feedback. In the next period we will carry out a formal review of the temporary bay. The Green Spaces Strategy, which will also incorporate our Play Strategy, is currently on hold whilst we prioritise delivery of the council plan. |
| | 46. Enhance Woodside Playing Fields so it offers improved facilities and opportunities for leisure and sport | We will invest in Woodside Playing Fields to enhance the activities on offer, including improvements to both the current boxing and cricket facilities. | Green | ↔ | Good progress has been made with plans to enhance Woodside Playing Fields. In this quarter we advanced the technical design, engaged with building users (Watford Town Cricket Club (WTCC) and Watford Amateur Boxing Club) and submitted the planning application in August 2023, which has now been approved. We have also advertised an Expression of Interest for the public toilet block and changes places toilet, to deliver fully accessible facilities for our users. We have engaged with the Princes Trust team to carry out a community project to clean and decorate the OWLS clubhouse for use by WTCC. |
| | 47. Complete our work in partnership for a new crematorium for south west Hertfordshire | We will complete the new crematorium and agree future running arrangements, with our partner local authorities, to deliver enhanced facilities, including a remembrance chapel and gardens. | Green | ↑ | The Hemel Hempstead Crematorium was officially opened in September 2023 and funerals are being held. The new state of the art facility provides additional capacity, alongside West Herts Crematorium, and gives our residents and those of the Joint Committee a choice in where they can say goodbye to their loved ones. The new accessible facility has exceptional features including a chapel that can accommodate 140 people, layout that provides complete privacy for our mourners, extensive landscaping, changing places facility, memorial gardens and a tranquillity pool. |
| Celebrate and promote our town's rich and diverse culture and creativity | 48. Reimagine our Museum and its place in telling the history of our town | We will develop proposals for a modern, inspiring Heritage and Museum service based in our historic Town Hall that engages and educates our residents and visitors by telling the story of our town and its rich and diverse history, including ensuring that the | Green | ↔ | The plans to create the new museum service, based at the Town Hall, have continued over the last period. In the last quarter we launched 'Watford Museum on tour', a series of pop-up museums, which will consist of a series of free and exciting events for our young residents. In the next quarter we will continue the move to the Town Hall and this includes consultation with Watford Market and West Herts College, |

| Commitment | Activity | | BRAG' Rating | Trend | Headline |
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| | | service and sacrifice of fallen service men and women is recognised. | | | finalising the costs for packaging and transporting museum artefacts and finalising the draft Retail Strategy for review. |
| | 49. Celebrate 100 years of Watford Borough, building a legacy for future generations | We will lead a programme of celebrations across the town commemorating 100 years since the formation of the borough of Watford. | Green | ↔ | Whilst this activity is now complete, we are however continuing to celebrate 'centenary heroes' through 2023 and launching a time capsule in autumn 2023. |
| | 50. Bring our local heritage to life for our community | We will create a new innovative heritage trail across the town to recognise Watford's rich culture and past. | Green | ↔ | Our Town Centre pilot Heritage Trail was successfully launched in March 2022, providing a digitally interactive route along the High Street. The expansion of the Heritage Trail will be undertaken via the Wayfinding project, which will ensure that our maps and signage outline the landmarks and destinations of heritage importance. Our successful bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund also means that a heritage trail will form part of the 'Tales of the River' project. |
| | 51. Enhance the town's creative and cultural appeal through a new Public Art Strategy | We will develop a Public Art Strategy for Watford, to explore how art in all its forms, can animate and enhance our public spaces, building on Watford's strong sense of identity and creativity and linking to improved wayfinding across the town. | Green | ↔ | Our Public Art Strategy will be a key tool in enhancing our public spaces and attracting visitors to our High Street. The draft strategy has been reviewed and comments fed back to the appointed consultant. |
| | 52. Commemorate the town's links to our past | We will introduce a Blue Plaque scheme which will commemorate links between our historic buildings and famous residents, events or former buildings. | Planning in progress | ↔ | This scheme will build on the '100 People Who Made Watford' initiative. This provides a range of information on some of those Watfordians who have made exceptional contributions to the town. The project has been scoped by looking at areas where similar schemes have been implemented and understanding how learning could be applied to Watford. We will also link into the new Museum and Heritage Service and explore options including virtual blue plaques. |
| | 53. Mark and reflect on Watford's response to COVID-19 | We will install a public memorial providing a place for reflection and commemoration to build on the community spirit and recognising the outstanding work across the town during the COVID-19 pandemic. | Green | ↔ | The location for a general space for reflection and contemplation has now been agreed and will be delivered alongside the improvements works to St Mary's Churchyard. |
| | 54. Enhance our town's historical features and character | We will develop a series of conservation management plans to enhance and protect the historical features, and character, of different areas across the town. | Amber | ↓ | The Conservation Areas Management Plan was approved by Cabinet in June 2023, alongside the Action Plan. The programme for the delivery of the plan has been delayed due to turnover of staff, hence the amber rating. Resources to deliver the plan will be considered as part of the budget setting process in January 2024. |

| Commitment | Activity | | BRAG' Rating | Trend | Headline |
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| <p>Promote our welcoming and respectful town</p> | <p>55. Ensure everyone feels welcome, included and safe in Watford</p> | <p>We will continue to make sure people feel welcome and safe in Watford, working closely with our partners to bid for funding that will support ways to have a positive impact on levels of violence against women and girls.</p> | <p>Green</p> | <p>↔</p> | <p>Safer Watford, the town's Community Safety Partnership, is continuing to deliver regular engagement days to reassure and inform the Watford community. This quarter we delivered an ASB Awareness Week, Older Persons Active Learning Sessions, Hate Crime Awareness Week and a reassure and inform event at Watford General Hospital. Upcoming engagement days include Safer Business Awareness Week and a NTE event as part of our 16 Days of Action (Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)).</p> <p>We have successfully secured PCC funding to address violent youth crime. A project will be delivered in local schools to empower young children to make positive choices.</p> <p>We are also progressing VAWG environmental improvement aims identified in the original SS4, as well as Victoria passage, to tackle hotspots in the town centre for ASB crime. OP square has been rolled out with multiple inter-agency actions to counter ASB and CSE in the town centre and has been reported back and making notable improvements to the location.</p> |
| | <p>56. Establish our commitment to the wellbeing of women and girls</p> | <p>We will deliver 'White Ribbon' accreditation for Watford Borough Council as a part of our ongoing commitment to tackle violence against women and girls, and continue our productive engagement with our One Watford partnership, which is bringing together all strands of this work across the town.</p> | <p>Green</p> | <p>↔</p> | <p>Following our successful White Ribbon accreditation last year, the Steering Group, which is chaired by the Elected Mayor, completed and submitted an action plan to White Ribbon in the summer. We delivered a training session for members in July 2023.</p> <p>Watford will be marking 'White Ribbon Day', a global campaign, on 22 November 2023 and planned activities include flag raising, walk for victims and training for staff.</p> |
| | <p>57. Make sure our town remains clean and free from litter</p> | <p>We will trial a new mobile CCTV approach, as part of our overall CCTV review, which allows us to target litter and fly-tipping hotspots and obtain evidence so that we can prosecute offenders, helping to keep our streets clean and litter-free.</p> | <p>Amber</p> | <p>↔</p> | <p>We are continuing to progress the remedial actions identified in the CCTV Review undertaken in 2022. This includes the staffing contract award and relocation of the CCTV Control Room, which is progressing to plan, and is expected to be completed by February 2024.</p> |
| | <p>58. Develop a range of information and signposting to create a 'welcome to Watford' resource</p> | <p>We will develop a digital 'welcome to Watford' resource for new residents, setting out how they can be fully involved in the life of the town and make the most of Watford and all it has to offer.</p> | <p>Planning in progress</p> | <p>↔</p> | <p>A revised timetable has been agreed for the delivery of our 'Welcome to Watford' resource for new residents. The project will be scoped in Q4 of 2023/24 for launch in 2024/25. The resource will link into our Place Brand work, building on the narrative and key messages about Watford.</p> |
| <p>Listen to and hear the diverse voices of Watford</p> | <p>59. Engage with our community to support better outcomes for our town and residents</p> | <p>We will develop our strategic approach, setting out how we will proactively work and engage with our community and our voluntary and community sector.</p> | <p>Green</p> | <p>↔</p> | <p>The Community Engagement and Participation Strategy is drafted to provide strategic direction and action planning on a council-wide approach to how we engage with our community. The Strategy was shared with voluntary and community sector groups in Q1 and was presented to Cabinet in July 2023 for approval, followed by consultation and final Cabinet approval in autumn 2023.</p> |



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| | | | | | Further information on how the council is progressing delivery of its Community Engagement and Participation Strategy is included within Appendix C5. |
| | 60. Continue to engage with our community so we actively listen to their views and ideas | We will continue to run our Pensioners Forum to provide support, guidance and companionship for our older residents, who contribute so much to the life of our town. | Green | ↔ | Recognising the valuable contribution our elderly residents made to the town, and mindful of the additional support they may need, our Senior's Forum continues to be held regularly, supported by Watford and Three Rivers Trust. |
| | 61. Understand and support specific groups within our community | We will introduce a new Veterans Forum for ex-forces personnel, who have done so much for our town and country, building on our commitment to the Hertfordshire Armed Forces Covenant, which provides support between our civilian community and local Armed Forces community. | Planning in progress | ↔ | We are working closely with community groups and organisations to support Veterans in Watford. Cllr Grimston has been appointed as the Veterans champion for the council. We are working with the new formed 'Watford Royal British Legion' on Remembrance Service 2023. |
| | 62. Support the voluntary sector in Watford to provide positive outcomes for our residents | We will develop a new Voluntary Sector Commissioning Framework and work in partnership with charitable, community and voluntary organisations focused on helping our residents live healthy, happy and independent lives, understanding and meeting their needs through initiatives such as opening up the Town Hall to wider community use. | Green | ↔ | We have progressed development and co-design of the new Voluntary Sector Commissioning Framework (VSCF) through extensive engagement with commissioned organisations. This approach will ensure that we review community needs against commissioned services and identify gaps in service provision. The themes and funding for a 4-year cycle have been agreed by Member Steering Group. The new VSCF is expected to go to Cabinet in October 2023 for sign off. Following engagement with local voluntary sector groups, we have identified 4 organisations who would potentially be interested in using the proposed Town Hall community space, including the small meeting rooms, space for AGMs and training events. |
| | 63. Ensure our community buildings benefit local residents | We will work with our community tenants to ensure our community buildings are well maintained, and, that our buildings maximise the benefits for local people. | Green | ↔ | Our bid for Low Carbon Skills Fund for a heat decarbonisation plan was unsuccessful, however we are continuing to ensure our community buildings are well maintained and have completed 99% of all EPC surveys. We are in the process of appointing a consultant to develop a Sustainable Asset Strategy through a procurement process. We will be identifying the repairs and maintenance works that need to be conducted across our community asset portfolio over the next 5 years. The development of our Community Asset Strategy is underway. The draft principles of the Community Lettings Policy were considered by the Community Facilities Review Board. |

| Commitment | Activity | | BRAG' Rating | Trend | Headline |
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| | 64. Deliver our Equality and Diversity policy so it underpins what we do and how we engage with our community | We will develop an Equality and Diversity policy for Watford, making sure it reflects our diverse town and our commitment to being a place where everyone can thrive. | Green | ↔ | The Census 2021 figures underpins the council's approach to its Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) policy. The EDI Policy and Delivery Plan, which were developed with an internal and external focus, covering the council's role as an employer as well as a service provider and convener of place, was approved by Cabinet in October 2023. |
| | 65. Work with partners to end rough sleeping on the streets of Watford | We will continue to deliver our Homelessness Strategy for Watford, reviewing this on an annual basis and adapting it regularly to ensure that it remains innovative and effective, supporting our target of minimising rough sleepers on the streets of Watford. | Green | ↔ | Significant progress has been made to reduce homelessness across the town in the last few years. We are continuing to monitor delivery of the updated and refreshed Homeless and Rough Sleeping Strategy Action Plan. Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities advisors are visiting the council in October 2023 and we are also engaging with HCC to ensure recommissioning of support aligns with WBC's priorities. The new Housing Service structure will be implemented in Q3 to further develop prevention work, and to ensure effective spend of grant and other budgets. We are reviewing the Temporary Accommodation Strategy. |
| Support improved health and wellbeing across the town | 66. Encourage Watford to develop as an age friendly town | We will work towards making Watford an age-friendly town which residents and visitors of all ages can enjoy, ensuring local services are accessible to and inclusive of older people with varying needs and capacities. | Amber | ↓ | The design code (guidance) for older peoples housing is temporarily on hold until government clarifies its guidance for local authorities. SW Herts Authorities are progressing a local housing needs assessment that includes provisions for older people, expected to be finalised early 2024. We are exploring how Watford could become an age friendly community in consultation with the Centre for Ageing Better and the UK Centre for Age-Friendly Communities. Further work is being undertaken to consider how this could be resourced and developed. |
| | 67. Tackle digital isolation so residents can effectively engage using new technology | We will work with our partners, volunteers and community groups to support residents who do not have access to technology, choose not to do so or do not currently have the skills to use IT so that they have the same opportunities as others in our town. | Green | ↔ | An updated proposal to continue tackling digital isolation, include working with Watford and Three Rivers Trust and other Hertfordshire CVSs who have secured NHS and lottery funding to provide skills and equipment to residents. Over the next period, we will use our Welcoming Spaces, staff as volunteers and the council's CSC to support residents who are digitally isolated. |
| | 68. Develop services to support our residents' health and wellbeing | We will work closely with our partners to develop a mental health strategy for Watford, ensuring the right support is available for residents who need it. Watford's Healthy Hub will provide a pivotal link to assistance and guidance, including opening up conversations about the menopause and for those needing help with mental health issues. | Green | ↔ | Mental Health is embedded within the Healthy Hub service offer and the mental health community support officer is currently working at capacity. The Healthy Hub ensures that interactions support our residents' mental health and wellbeing at every opportunity. Examples of recent events include the Multi-Cultural Centre women's only health awareness sessions and Watford Muslim Family festival fun day. The Hub continues to provide advice and support on the menopause and new leaflets are being distributed at appropriate events. |
| | 69. Engage with health partners to improve public health and | We will engages across our health partners to make sure the health and wellbeing | Green | | Engagement with our health partners continued during Q2. Through the Summer Food project, we delivered sessions to families and combined low- |

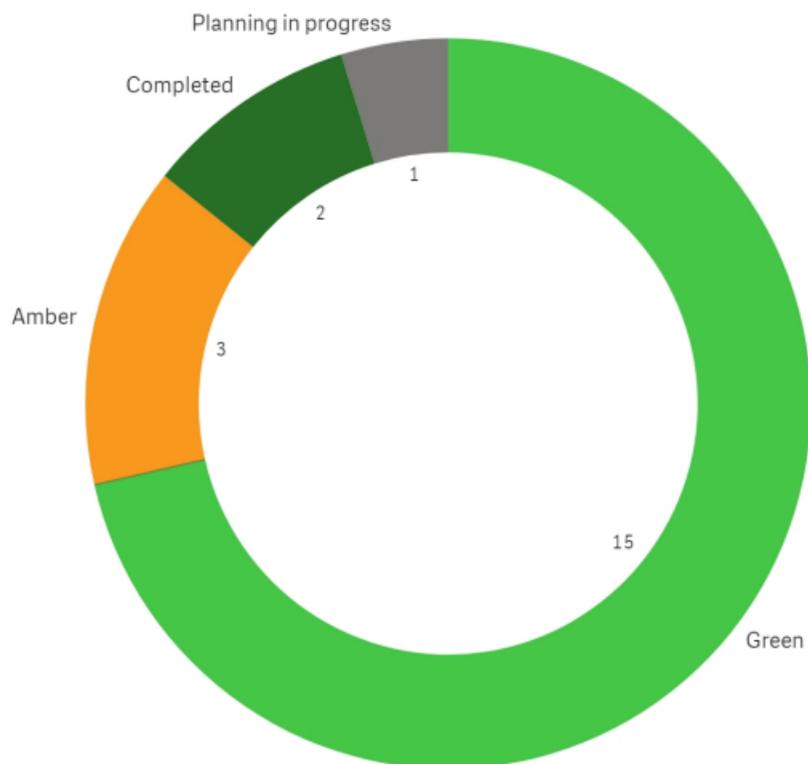
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| | health inequalities for our residents | needs of Watford are represented in new health structures and commissioning of services. | | | <p>cost healthy eating, alongside encouraging fun physical activity sessions for children. A project to increase the uptake of cervical screening has been approved by the Integrated Care Board. Funding will be provided to recruit an officer to work with GPs to encourage screening uptake.</p> <p>The Healthy Hub service provision continues to be developed to deliver HCC's core offer. In conjunction with the Hub, health check appointments were undertaken, and alongside these, the Hub offered face to face support to the client in order to discuss the action plan and provided information on further services that may be of assistance to the client.</p> <p>The Health Inequalities/Healthy Hub service attended flu and covid vaccination sessions at Garston Medical Centre and Bridgewater Surgery. These clinics allowed engagement with over 200+ patients and information regarding bowel and breast cancer and screening was delivered to patients.</p> |
| | 70. Support single homeless people to access accommodation and support | We will continue to establish and embed our single homelessness pathway, focusing on the root causes of homelessness and working closely with our partners to support individuals on every part of their journey into independent living. | Green | ↔ | The Single Homelessness Project (SHP) was initiated in 2021 to bring together all temporary accommodation providers into a multi-agency team and to provide a holistic view of Watford's approach to accommodating and supporting single homeless people and was formally completed in the last quarter of 2022/23. Since its inception, the SHP project has effectively reduced the number of people sleeping rough in Watford from 80+ to a handful. The formal pathway has been in place since April 2021 and through this over 300 single homeless clients have been provided with a safe, secure, welcoming physical environment with access to the most appropriate support that meets their individual needs, such as mental health, substance abuse and debt advice. |
| ring together ways to help our residents who might be struggling financially | 71. Make sure residents are aware of what help we offer to support them manage their finances | We will promote our council tax discount scheme so residents know support might be available to help them pay their bills. | Green | ↔ | <p>The Council Tax Discount and Exemptions form which went live in the last quarter, enables residents to apply online for a discount or exemption and in some cases they will receive a decision immediately, improving the customer experience, providing greater flexibility and improving service efficiency.</p> <p>We are in the process of implementing 'Arrangements Manager', a self-serve tool for customers to make payment arrangements themselves on-line. This tool is expected to go live in October 2023.</p> <p>We have purchased an Experian tool which will assist us to identify areas in the borough where benefit uptake is low and deliver targeted campaigns for the uptake of Council Tax Support and other benefits. The campaigns will commence following further testing of the tool in Q3.</p> <p>A new Council Tax Support scheme is being considered for 2024/25 and consultation for the new scheme will be undertaken in November / December 2023.</p> |

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| | 72. Coordinate advice in the town for those seeking information on how to cope with the cost of living crisis | We will work with partners to ensure people can access the advice and information they need when they face financial difficulties, particularly those who are vulnerable or are dealing with debt. | Green | ↔ | The 'Cost of Living' page on the council website continues to provide information to local people who may be facing financial difficulties. This is in addition to the 'Cost of Living Forum' which was convened with local voluntary and community organisations to work together on a response for Watford. Partners are collaborating to make sure support is coordinated. We are also continuing to engage with Hertfordshire County Council to link into county support and ensure local residents are accessing all the help available. Our well established 'Welcoming Spaces' will continue to provide support for our more vulnerable residents. The Community Fund is still available to provide cost of living support of up to £2k. |
| | 73. Use innovative ways to support our local community financially | We will build upon the success of our COVID-19 Fund, Ukraine Community Funds and Watford Community Fund to investigate a new local lottery to support our local community so that they can continue their good work in our town. | Complete | ↔ | The Watford Community Lottery was successfully launched in June 2023 and to date 52 local good causes, including Watford Palace Theatre, Watford Social Centre for the Blind, Citizens Advice Bureau and Watford Women's Centre, have joined the scheme. Whilst ticket sales have declined which is expected for this type of scheme, regular weekly draws are taking place and Gatherwell, our partner, have confirmed that Watford are performing 2-3% above expectations. The scheme will ensure that at least 60% of all tickets sold goes towards supporting our local community and good causes. |
| | 74. Welcome the whole town and visitors to our Big Events | We will deliver our exciting, free programme of Big Events across the town, including our Big Screen, Big Beach and Fireworks, bringing our community together regularly in our town centre and parks. | Green | ↔ | We have delivered the Big Beach, Big Screen, Big Sports and Big Fireworks events for this year. The events are successful in attracting and bringing together many of our residents together. We will review the programme for 2024/25 and line this up into the work of our Cultural Leaders. |
| | 75. Provide an appealing and lively programme of holiday activities for young people | We will continue to offer our young people exciting things to do during the Easter and summer holidays so they can be engaged and involved in an enjoyable range of free activities. | Green | ↔ | We delivered the free Easter 2023 holiday programme and piloted a scheme offering sessions to families via a local voluntary organisation, for which there was a good uptake. A review of the data indicates the majority of people who benefitted from the scheme are Watford residents from across the community. The Cost of Living Forum with groups and organisations convened to bring together the support available and to make sure local people are aware of where to go for help, is now the 'Community Support Group'. The forum is bringing together data and information to build understanding of the extent of the crisis within Watford and make sure Watford is coordinating with county, regional and national support and campaigns. The 'Welcoming Places', which are supported by the Watford Community Fund, are continuing as they have proven to be very successful and are meeting a range of community needs. The government's Household Support Fund 4 for 2023/24 will be used at district level to support food charities and energy support. Initial meetings |

| Commitment | Activity | | BRAG' Rating | Trend | Headline |
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| | | | | | have been held with invited community groups and organisations and a robust action plan developed. |
| | 76. Improve private sector housing across the town, focusing on how it can contribute to both environmental and community benefits | We will support the sustainability of the town's privately owned homes making use of Energy Company Obligation funding to improve the energy efficiency and warmth of those who are vulnerable or on low incomes. | Green | ↔ | The Energy Company Obligation (ECO), which aims to tackle fuel poverty and help reduce carbon emissions, will be delivered through to the end of March 2026. Targeted marketing has taken place in multiple areas, making use of WCH projects to market adjacent properties. We have set up relations with a significant number of new installers to engage and attract ECO in our area. We have systems in place and are now actively using the GB Insulation scheme available this autumn as another offshoot from ECO. Our Statement of intent has been updated and re-published to reflect this. |
| | 77. Help our community better access the benefits of Watford's economic growth | We will explore ways to create a resilient and inclusive economy that benefits our community, building on foundations from the Hertfordshire Community Wealth Building project, linking local people with opportunities and supporting our voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector link to make a greater economic contribution. | Green | ↔ | The draft Watford Business Charter is complete and ready for consultation through this autumn/winter with businesses and stakeholders, followed by the launch by end of March 2024. The Charter will encourage businesses to do more in 5 areas: recruit local, buy local, go green, connect with community and be an employer of choice. We are creating a 'Resource Bank' to help businesses deliver upon this, with signposting to information advice and guidance, best practice, and to connect them with other businesses. The Resource Bank is expected to be launched alongside the Charter end of March 2024. |

THEME: A council working for our community and serving our residents

Overview



Key achievements over this period

- Automated surveys for telephone customers to the council has been launched and provide a way of obtaining greater feedback on our services and our customers' experiences with the council. The data that we collate will feed onto our processes for continuous improvement.
- Occupier interest is increasing at Croxley Park and we have recently let 20,000 sq ft at Building 1.
- In line with our ambition to provide resilient and efficient services, work continues to review opportunities for a HR & OD Shared Service with neighbouring LAs, which will provide additional opportunities to reduce ongoing costs.
- The implementation of the council's Values & Behaviours is well underway. Our agile pathfinders and Service Delivery Leads are championing and playing a key role in embedding the values and behaviours.

| Commitment | Activity | | BRAG' Rating | Trend | Headline |
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| <p>Make sure we deliver an outstanding customer experience and the high quality services our community expects</p> | <p>78. Provide an excellent customer experience for everyone who engages with the council</p> | <p>We will prepare and deliver a new Customer Experience Strategy to transform how we engage with our customers over the next four years, delivering a real step change across all our services, embracing innovation and embedding a first class experience our customers will value.</p> | <p>Green</p> | <p>↔</p> | <p>We are progressing the delivery of the Customer Experience Strategy, working collaboratively with colleagues across the council and capitalising on synergy with other projects to deliver the Strategy vision. Automated survey was launched in October 2023, following a thorough testing phase. Through this function, mobile callers will be sent a link after their calls with us to complete and submit feedback on their experience. We are continuing to develop our online services and this quarter launched the 'Immigration inspection' booking form, 'Find my councillor' and Local Land Charges. We have commenced the switchboard contract re-tender. The tender will enable us to review our current offering and explore new opportunities for delivering our services such as WhatsApp, AI and SMS.</p> <p>Further information on how the council is progressing delivery of its Customer Experience Strategy is included within Appendix C2.</p> |
| | <p>79. Champion a greener and more sustainable council that strives to reduce our carbon footprint</p> | <p>We will embed our ambition to be net carbon neutral by 2030 by continuing to deliver our organisational Sustainability Action Plan (now part of our newly approved Environmental Strategy) so that it intrinsic to everything and ensures we reduce our carbon footprint in line with our green goals.</p> | <p>Green</p> | <p>↔</p> | <p>We have formalised the delivery of the new Environment Strategy and set out how we will achieve our ambition to be net carbon neutral by 2030. Sustainability is at the heart of everything we do, and is woven through other council projects, programmes, schemes and initiatives such as the Rediscovering River Colne, Town Hall Quarter and Transforming Travel in Watford Programmes.</p> <p>Further information on how the council is progressing delivery of its Environment Strategy is included within Appendix C3.</p> |
| | <p>80. Focus the right resources in the right places to secure future success</p> | <p>We will review how we employ our resources (including staff and finances) to make sure they are focussed on the areas which are most important to the council and support the delivery of this Plan.</p> | <p>Green</p> | <p>↔</p> | <p>Following the successful introduction of our Service Delivery Lead Officers to strength the council's ability to deliver against its priorities, the annual Personal Development Review process, giving staff the opportunity to review their performance, celebrate their successes and identify personal and professional development opportunities, is now complete.</p> |
| | <p>81. Explore opportunities to share services with other councils where it delivers best value and better customer outcomes</p> | <p>We will work with other authorities to develop and implement business cases that explore opportunities to share more services where this will deliver improvements for our customers.</p> | <p>Green</p> | <p>↔</p> | <p>Having successfully implemented our Legal Shared Services with St Albans City District Council (SADC) earlier this year, Phase 2 of the Planning Enforcement & Building Control (PE&BC) Shared Services is now progressing with work to review the HR & OD Shared Service also now initiated. The shared services model provides opportunities for us to review and enhance our processes, automate and digitise processes where relevant and reduce costs and increase resilience. The HR & OD Shared Services project with WBC, SADC and Three Rivers District Council is still in the early stage, with engagement undertaken with key stakeholders and budget and resourcing agreed.</p> |

| Commitment | Activity | | BRAG' Rating | Trend | Headline |
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| | 82. Make sure the council continues to hold successful and well run elections | We will support and prepare for the implementation of the Elections Act 2022 so that our elections continue to be effectively managed and voters are well informed on elections and how to exercise their right to vote. | Green | ↔ | We introduced some aspects of the Elections Act 2022 during the May 2023 Local Elections. This included Voter Photo ID and providing greater assistance to voters with disabilities. We will continue to implement the remainder of the Elections Act from 2023 through to 2025. |
| Pioneer new ways of working that challenge us to innovate, transform and consistently improve | 83. Adopt the right digital technology that matches and supports our ambition for excellent service delivery for our residents | We will develop and deliver a new four-year ICT strategy to drive forward how we use ICT and digital technology to deliver our ambitions, seeking opportunities to innovate to meet the needs of the council and our community. | Green | ↔ | Our new four-year ICT Strategy continues to be developed and was presented for internal review this quarter. A number of actions and updates have been agreed which are being taken forward by officers. In the meantime, the ICT team continue to deliver on a number of projects such as the replacement of Councillor IT devices at both Watford and Three Rivers councils which is nearing completion. |
| | 84. Deliver a step change in how we use our data and information so it strengthens our drive for constant improvement | We will improve how we use our data and information to challenge our decisions, enhance performance and support excellent customer experience, using our information to monitor service delivery and to drive action if something needs improving. | Green | ↔ | We have formally stood up a project to deliver the council's Information and Insight Strategy 2023-26, which was approved by Cabinet in June 2023. The Strategy sets out how we will achieve our vision of an organisation driven by intelligence to meet the demands of our customers and continue to provide high quality services. In this quarter we made significant progress in the development of our performance reporting dashboards. The dashboards will enable us to report our internal and external KPIs in a way that clearly demonstrates our performance at a glance, and through our Continuous Improvement Framework, identify how and where improvements can be made. We have refined the Customer Service reporting dashboard to include a 'First Time Resolution' function which shows the reason our customers are calling. We have also developed a new functionality for our Complaints reporting that will allow us to identify all cases currently with the ombudsman. |
| | 85. Strengthen our approach to contract management to ensure we are making the most of our contracts and that they are delivering for us and the town | We will implement a robust contract management framework to ensure we deliver expected outcomes and excellent value for money from our contracts, providing the best service for our customers. | Complete | ↔ | The review of our existing contract management approach has been completed and the final version of the Contract Management Handbook has been published. Relevant officers have been given the necessary training to ensure that the council continues to achieve the very best value from our contracts. Training guides are also available on the intranet to enable officers to refresh their training as and when required. |
| | 86. Embed social value through our procurement process | We will update our Procurement Strategy to strengthen our approach to evidencing economic, social and environmental outcomes when procuring, awarding and delivering contracts. | Complete | ↔ | The council's updated Procurement Strategy was approved by Cabinet in January 2023. The Strategy will make sure we continue to get best value from the market during this period of economic instability and includes a comprehensive proposal on social value and measurement which supports the delivery of our Sustainability Action Plan. |

| Commitment | Activity | | BRAG' Rating | Trend | Headline |
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| <p>Focus and challenge how we manage our budget so it is concentrated on delivering our commitments and securing greater investment for Watford</p> | <p>87. Ensure our investment portfolio is ambitious and effectively managed to deliver maximum value to the council</p> | <p>We will ensure that we are actively managing our investment portfolio, including exploring new opportunities to protect our income, manage risk and maximise value over the longer term, so that we can continue to provide high quality services to our residents and businesses.</p> | <p>Amber</p> | <p>↔</p> | <p>We continue to agree long leasehold extensions on Watford Business Park (WBP) where appropriate which generate capital receipts and secure rental income for the medium to long term. We are continuing to utilise the council's existing land bank to generate further income through direct development or through joint venture arrangements. Examples include the Gateway site at WBP and the Riverwell Multi-Storey Car Park. Out of Borough Assets are performing well. For example, Coleshill Industrial Estate rents agreed have grown from £6.50 psf to in excess of £7.50 psf in the last 2 years. Croxley Park is actively managed to ensure that open market rent is maintained with minimal voids. The GT Model tracks the financial performance of the Park compared to assumptions made at the time of the lease being taken in 2019. It was assumed in 2019 that the whole of Building 1 would have been let and income producing by now, rather than just a single floor, so the revenue being generated at present is not as was originally forecasted, due to the availability of 40,000 sq ft in Building 1, although occupier interest in the building is now increasing, with 20,000 sq ft recently let to DLL. The vacant occupancy costs to the council and annual headlease rental uplifts are at capped level.</p> |
| | <p>88. Assess the feasibility of a Growth Fund and its benefits for Watford</p> | <p>We will explore where our financial strength can support start-up and growth opportunities delivering a positive investment return for the council and renewed prosperity for the town.</p> | <p>Planning in progress</p> | <p>↔</p> | <p>The Council has set aside £500k towards a Growth Fund. As part of our bid to central government's Levelling Up Fund (LUF), a further £500k was requested to complement the Innovation Hub initiative, which would have allowed a £1m fund to be set up to support businesses in the Hub, through a grants and loan scheme. However, since the council was unsuccessful in securing the LUF funding, a decision has been made to not progress the initiative due to the economic climate.</p> |
| | <p>89. Manage and direct the council finances effectively</p> | <p>We will ensure that our budgets align with our priorities and that budget management is robust, forward-looking and supports the best possible service outcomes from available resources, enabling us to keep council tax increases below inflation.</p> | <p>Green</p> | <p>↔</p> | <p>The 2023/24 budget included a Council Tax increase of 2.99%, well below inflation. The Council proactively manages and monitors budgets during the year to ensure value for money and effective prioritisation of resources. The 2024/25 budget setting process has now begun and will ensure that council resources continue to align to council priorities to deliver the best possible service outcomes.</p> |
| | <p>90. Identify new commercial opportunities that align with our ambition</p> | <p>We will look for new and innovative commercial opportunities that will align to our values, whilst ensuring a financial return that can be used to support the council's activities for the benefit of the borough.</p> | <p>Green</p> | <p>↔</p> | <p>Due to current financial climate the council are not seeking to undertake any major investments at the current time and will look to pursue opportunities to collaborate with partners, ensure our existing investments hold up and explore opportunities as they arise.</p> |

| Commitment | Activity | | BRAG' Rating | Trend | Headline |
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| | 91. Manage our ambitious capital programme so that it supports our aspirations | We will develop a commercial risk and mitigation strategy for our capital programme to protect the council against turbulence in global markets, whilst still delivering our ambitious programme of improvements. | Amber | ↔ | The rapid and significant increase in inflation continues to pose significant risks to the affordability of the Capital Investment Programme. The greatest exposure is to projects that are at the pre-tender stage where the council has not yet entered into contract. Where possible, mitigations are in place such as the early purchase of materials to protect against future price rises. The affordability of all schemes within the Capital Programme is kept under review and project appraisals take into account the cost of funding projects and include the associated borrowing costs where relevant. |
| | 92. Invest our Croxley Park funds in ethical investments | We will make sure the funds we receive from Croxley Park are invested in a sustainable way to deliver financial goals and better future for us all. | Green | ↔ | Funds from the Croxley Park investment are placed with the Royal London Sustainable Diversified Trust Fund and Royal London Sustainable Managed Growth Trust Fund with the aim to provide capital growth that will maintain the value of the investment in line with inflation. The performance of these funds is monitored by the Property Investment Board and reported through the Council's budget monitoring report, with income utilised to deliver our corporate priorities as outlined within the Council Plan. |
| Lead by example, securing our reputation as a forward thinking, caring and inspiring organisation where staff can thrive and achieve their best for our residents and businesses | 93. Build on our innovative approach to agile working, realising the benefits for our staff and our community | We will ensure our staff are able to provide timely high quality and efficient services to customers by opening up opportunities for staff to work in an agile way in a modern, collaborative and inspiring workplace, helping the council to become an employer of choice. | Green | ↔ | The council's new collaborative and focused working space opened in July 2022, providing a modern and fit for purpose space for teams to deliver the very best services to residents, businesses and the community. To ensure the working space remains fit for purpose, we are regularly conducting staff surveys to collate feedback on both the space and technology and implementing changes as required. |
| | 94. Secure robust succession planning, making sure we value and manage our talent to recruit and retain the best for Watford | We will open up opportunities for our staff to grow and develop, building their skills and knowledge to achieve. Where we do recruit, we will appoint the best, ensuring we recruit people with the right experience and behaviours to be part of 'Team Watford'. | Green | ↔ | The Values and Behaviours, which set out the expected behaviours for 'Team Watford', ensuring that we provide the best service to our residents, businesses and community, were launched in December 2022. The full roll out and implementation of the values and behaviours is currently in progress. Through this process we will incorporate the Values & Behaviours into each stage of the employee lifecycle, such as the recruitment process and PDR cycle, so that we can support our staff throughout their time at the council. As well as the Values and Behaviours, our new People Strategy will also determine how we support, develop and retain our staff. |

| Commitment | Activity | | BRAG' Rating | Trend | Headline |
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| | 95. Embed our values and behaviours so they inspire our staff to achieve even more and underpin how we work | We will collaboratively develop meaningful corporate values and behaviours with our staff and use these as the foundation to implement a behaviours framework. This will help develop the skills of our people at all levels, and from all backgrounds, to recognise individual contributions, expertise and knowledge and to improve the resident and customer focused services we deliver. | Green | ↔ | <p>The implementation of the council's values and behaviours framework is well underway, with support from our Agile Pathfinders and Service Delivery Leads who have all benefitted from external facilitator-led training sessions. In Q1 significant work was undertaken to shape the values and behaviours and the focus has now moved to delivery. We have initiated an internal, comprehensive communications and engagement campaign, an important aspect of the project to ensure successful implementation.</p> <p>In this quarter service areas across the council have started to review and refresh their 'Agile Charters' into 'Team Charters', ensuring that our 6 values are fully incorporated into the way we work individually and as a team. An all staff 'Living the Values' event is planned for the end of October, giving staff the opportunity to explore our values and see why our behaviours are important to us and how we work.</p> |
| | 96. Refresh our Organisational Development approach so that it effectively underpins and supports our Council Plan | We will ensure we develop, motivate and inspire our staff so they are supported and empowered to do their best for our residents and businesses by refreshing our Organisational Development approach. | Green | ↔ | <p>The council's People Strategy and Delivery Plan have been drafted and will be going through the council's approval process in the next few weeks. Once approved, we will prioritise projects for delivery.</p> <p>The roll out and implementation of our refreshed Values and Behaviours Framework is now well underway. Through this process the Values and Behaviours Framework will be worked into the employment lifecycle from recruitment and onboarding to development and progression and through to the Performance Development Review process.</p> |
| | 97. Seek and implement opportunities for people to have fulfilling local government careers | We will create apprenticeship opportunities for local people at the beginning of their working life, providing them with experience, skills and knowledge from across the council to help kick start their careers. | Amber | ↓ | <p>The council's Corporate Apprenticeship Scheme aims to support local people, particularly our younger residents, at the beginning of their working lives. Currently one apprentice is on the Scheme working with services across the council in order to gain the skills, knowledge and experience they need to help them start and progress in their career, whilst providing valuable public services to our customers.</p> <p>Owing to the current recruitment freeze, further recruitment of apprentices is on hold. However, we will be developing a plan to consider all early careers including apprentices, graduates, pathways to planning, work experience and T-Levels.</p> |
| | 98. Protect the physical and mental health and wellbeing of our staff | We will ensure that we protect the physical and mental health and wellbeing of our staff by developing their resilience and providing opportunities for genuine two-way engagement | Green | ↔ | <p>Our health and wellbeing survey was incorporated within a wider council staff survey which was launched in October and allows our staff to share, confidentially, their views and experiences of working at the council. The survey captured input from our Health and Wellbeing champions, who play a key role in supporting our staff through the council's health and wellbeing initiatives.</p> <p>The results of the survey will enable us to review our health and wellbeing initiatives and guide our next steps.</p> |

| Commitment | Activity | BRAG' Rating | Trend | Headline |
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| | | | | We are planning further 'Lunch and Learn' sessions for delivery by June 2024. To date we have delivered 2 taster sessions to our health and wellbeing group on menopause and neurodiversity. |