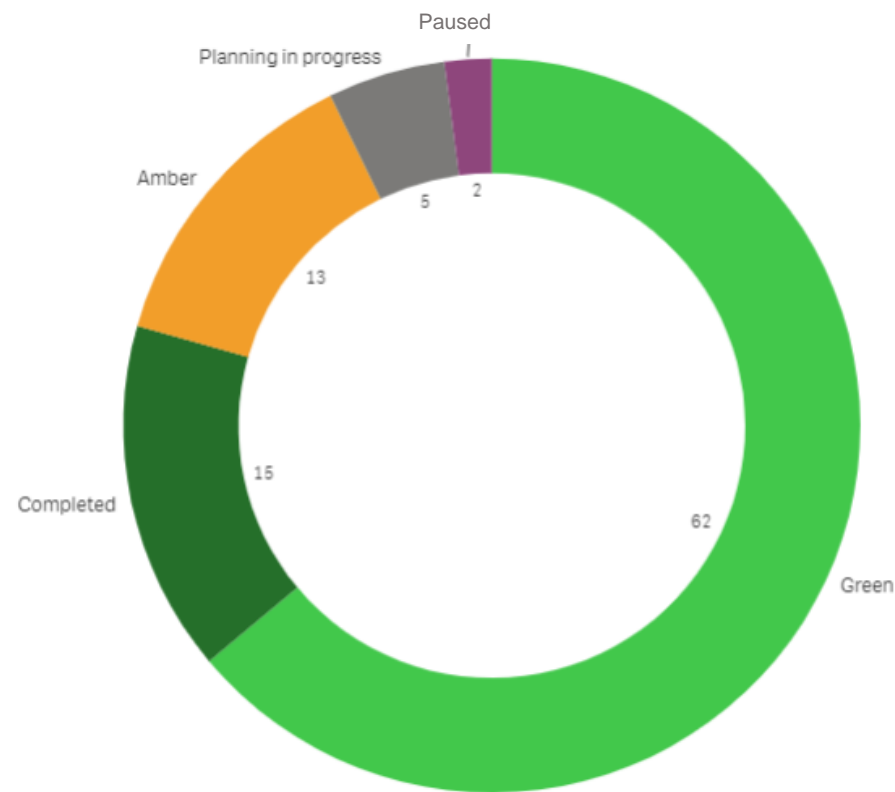




# **Delivery Plan Progress Update**

Delivery Plan Overview



**Key**

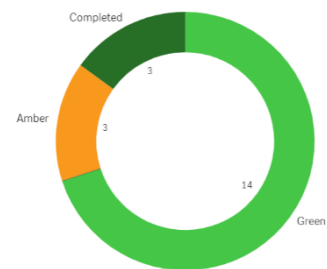
**Green** – Completed

**Green** – On track

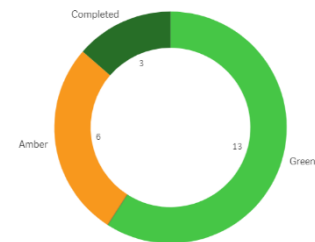
**Amber** – Potential Risks / Some uncertainty

**Red** – Challenges

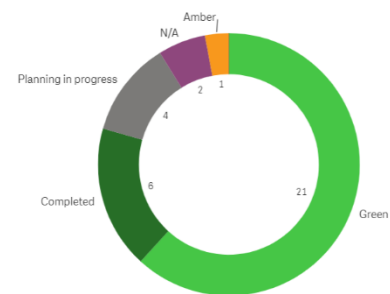
Council Plan Theme - A greener, brighter future



Council Plan Theme - An inspiring, thriving and creative town



Council Plan Theme - A diverse, happy and healthy town



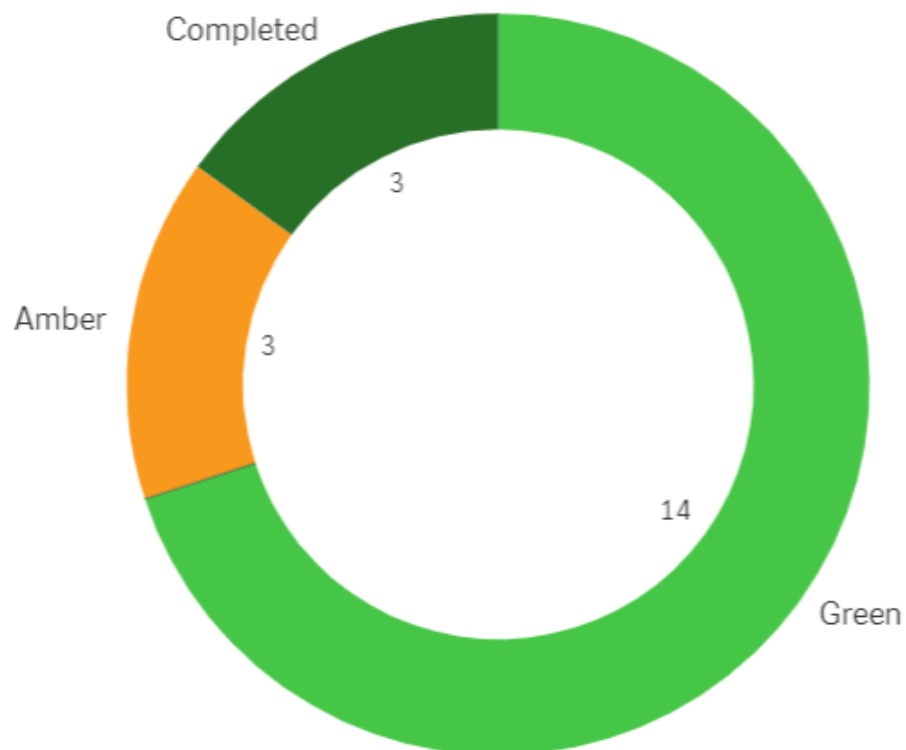
Council Plan Theme - A Council working for our community and serving our residents



**Note: Activities highlighted in blue are awaiting additional commentary from services**

## THEME: A greener brighter future

### Overview



### Key achievements over this period

- The Watford Car Club, which is being delivered in partnership with Enterprise Car Club, has gone live at two sites, with further sites planned to go live in the next few months.
- An additional £386k On-Street Residential Chargepoint scheme (ORCS) funding has been secured for the installation of electric charging points in Watford. The grant will be match funded by our delivery partner. Currently 43 dual on-street charge stations, providing 86 charge points, have been installed and are live and available for public use.
- The Beryl Bike contract duration was successfully extended, and the scheme was also extended to Hertsmere (Bushey) and Three Rivers (Croxley), enabling residents to travel sustainably and seamlessly across local authorities.
- Following a successful application to the LGA Annual Conference Innovation Zone, we have been selected to showcase the 'Tales of the River' project in July 2024.
- We have secured a total of £50.8k external funding to support delivery of the Cassiobury Wetlands project.
- £900k of PSDS funding have been secured to improve the energy performance of three community buildings – Palace Theatre, Orbital Community Centre and Harebreaks Community Centre. The necessary work will be undertaken over the next two years and will significantly improve the energy performance of the buildings.

Commitment	Activity		BRAG' Rating	Trend	Headline
Encourage people to make greener travel choices, reducing congestion and improving the health and wellbeing of the town	1. Investigate greener travel and transport solutions that work for Watford	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.	Green	↔	<p>Through our ambitious Transforming Travel in Watford (TTIW) Strategy we are continuing 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.</p> <p>Following a review of the council's Capital Programme, in this quarter we commenced soft market testing, engagement with stakeholders, site acquisition discussions and preparation for the transport pre-app.</p> <p>In the next quarter we will be prepare for consultation on the Masterplan.</p>
	2. Promote ways of to travel that support people make greener choices	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.	Green	↔	<p>We are continuing to explore, progress and deliver initiatives that will provide residents with options other than using their own cars for short and long journeys through the TTIW Programme.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Watford Car Club initiative, which is being delivered in partnership with Enterprise Car Club, has gone live at two sites within Watford with further sites planned to go live in the next few months. The Traffic Regulation Orders were successfully finalised in the last quarter. The Car Club will help us reduce our carbon emissions and will provide Watford residents with a low-cost option for short car journeys. In the next quarter we will focus on developing a strategy for the full launch of the scheme.</li> <li>- We are continuing with the installations of electric vehicle charging points, with 50% of installations funded by round 2 of the On-Street Residential Chargepoint scheme (ORCS) grant now complete.</li> </ul> <p>Further information on how the council is progressing delivery of its Transforming Travel in Watford Strategy is included within Appendix C4.</p>
	3. Champion sustainable travel initiatives and greener vehicles options	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.	Green	↔	<p>Our electric charging point installations programme is progressing with 50% of the work funded by ORCS round 2 now complete. We were successful in securing a further £386k ORCS in the round 3 funding, which will be match funded by our installation partner, and will enable us to provide more electric charge points across the borough. Currently 43 dual on-street charge stations, providing 86 charge points, have been installed and are live and available for public use.</p> <p>The new Car Club is live and operational at two sites. A full roll out will be planned in the next quarter.</p>

Commitment	Activity		BRAG <sup>1</sup> 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	↔	<p>We are engaging with key partners, including Watford Cycle Hub and Beryl Bikes, through the Cycle Forum to progress plans for a Green Loop scheme in Watford. The scheme will improve the cycling and walking network across the town to enable more people to choose to cycle and walk by improving sign posting, wayfinding and road lining measures.</p> <p>The Green Loop East scheme which includes improvements to several highway junctions along the East leg, is being progressed by Herts County Council (HCC). The scheme is progressing steadily with detailed designs and Road Safety Audit planned for future phases of this scheme.</p> <p>The Beryl Bike scheme, which has proven to be very popular in Watford, has been extended to our neighbouring councils. Bike users will now be able to enjoy a seamless bike journey between Watford, Croxley and Bushey through interconnected networks.</p>
	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.	Stage 2 Complete	↔	<p>Stage 2 of the options and feasibility study for the Watford to Croxley Link is now complete and the report has been finalised.</p> <p>The next stage is to undertake stakeholder engagement, publish the findings in the new year and agree the next steps with partners.</p>
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	↔	<p>The development of the Biodiversity Strategy has been aligned to our emerging Green Spaces Strategy and HCC's Local Nature Recovery Strategy. The first principles report on the Biodiversity Duty, which maps out the path for the Biodiversity Strategy development, was approved by Cabinet in November 2023.</p> <p>We have successfully appointed a contractor through a procurement process to develop our Green Spaces Strategy. The initial work to develop the Strategy has commenced with data gathering, interviews and mapping of green spaces with biodiversity and health.</p> <p>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.</p>
	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	↔	<p>We have completed the tree planting programme for this season, and in doing so achieved our target to plant 20,000 trees well in advance of 2026. We are now planning for the 2024/25 tree planting season, where we will continue to plant more trees, monitor benefits and tree survival rates, and embed and streamline our processes.</p>

Commitment	Activity		BRAG <sup>1</sup> Rating	Trend	Headline
	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	↔	<p>The Rediscover River Colne programme continues to report amber as we continue to engage with the Environment Agency (EA) to progress the flood risk activity permit to deliver the in river works at the northern sites. Whilst we secured a permit earlier in the year to progress a reduced scope of work at Timberlake Allotment, this was unfortunately delayed due to persisting high water levels, which prevented our volunteers from being able to complete the works. We are working with the EA to replan this work. We held a successful junior champion session with Watford Second North Scout Group, engaging with 23 people in total. In addition we delivered River Ambles sessions at Oxhey Park and held Wildplay sessions.</p> <p>We were successful in our application to the LGA Annual Conference Innovation Zone to showcase our 'Tales of the River' project in July 2024.</p>
	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 elated historical features.	Green	↔	<p>Having completed the planned works at Cassiobury Wetlands towards the end of 2023, we are now progressing the Management and Maintenance plan for the site which has been drafted and is being reviewed by our partners and other stakeholders. In parallel we are progressing the signage for the site by working collaboratively with community groups.</p> <p>We have successfully secured external funding, a total of £50.8k, from Grundon and the EA to support delivery of this project and will be claiming these funds in the next quarter.</p>
	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.	Amber	↓	<p>In line with our commitment to sustainability, works remain ongoing in Whippendell Woods. To preserve the SSSI status of the site we have worked 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. The Heads of Terms for the new site has been drafted with the Golf Club. The activity is delayed and reporting amber as we continue to negotiate the Heads of Terms required in order to deliver the new bike trail.</p> <p>We successfully completed the Ash Die Backs works (timber felling).</p>
	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	↔	<p>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 most recent giveaway took place at Woodside on 11 May.</p>

Commitment	Activity		BRAG <sup>1</sup> Rating	Trend	Headline
	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 town's goals for better habitats and environmental diversity	Complete	↔	The requirement for a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for how developers can contribute to our vision and ambition to enhance biodiversity across the town has been superseded by recent legislation. The council's Development Management team will continue to assess planning applications in line with our ambitions for better habitats and environmental diversity.
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 is in progress via a designated Sustainability Programme, however the commitment to achieve net carbon zero by 2030 and the promotion and enhancement of sustainability is a key objective in other projects and programmes such as the River Colne and Town Hall Quarter Programmes. We have developed and launched a mandatory 'Climate Change' e-learning module for our staff which describes the importance of the climate change issue and the actions we can take to make a difference.  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. 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.
	16. 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.	Complete	↔	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 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

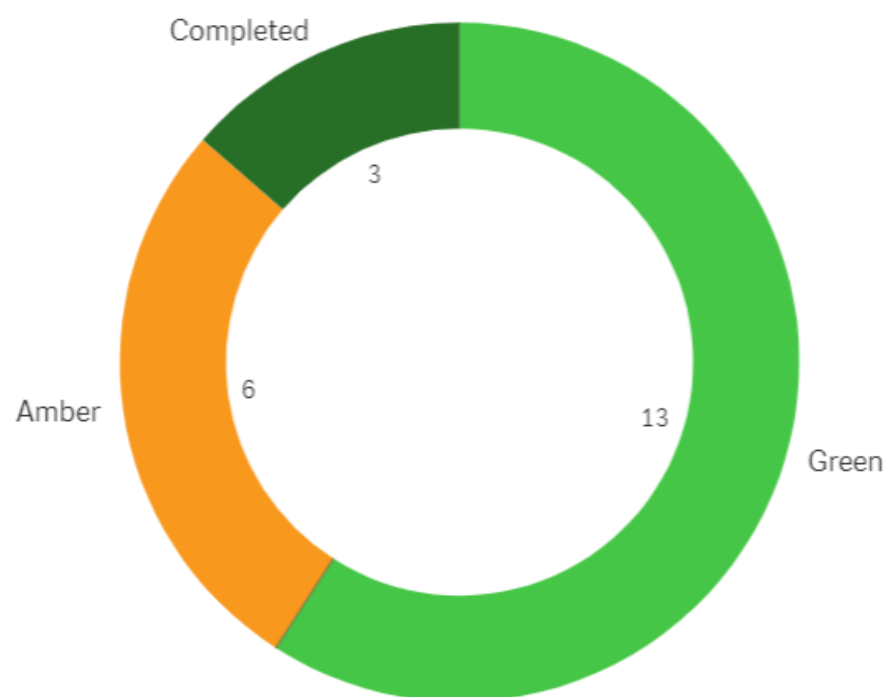
Commitment	Activity		BRAG <sup>1</sup> Rating	Trend	Headline
					annual saving in carbon through the replacement of lights with LED equivalents and installation of new roof insulation.
	17. Ensure the council's own buildings are energy efficient	We will explore ways to improve the energy performance 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. The consultant is producing an annual report comparing energy usage across the business park between 2022 and 2023.</p> <p>We have also appointed a sustainability consultant to prepare a Sustainable Asset Strategy for our community portfolio. The Strategy will contain a detailed, costed strategy for 30+ community buildings, setting out a pathway for improving energy performance of each building. This will subsequently be worked into a comprehensive asset management strategy for our portfolio.</p> <p>We have secured £900k PSDS funding to improve the energy performance of three community buildings – Palace Theatre, Orbital Community Centre and Harebreaks Community Centre. The necessary work will be undertaken over the next two years and will significantly improve the energy performance of the buildings.</p>
	18. 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,	19. 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	Green	↔	<p>The waste and recycling service changes introduced in 2020 have 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.</p> <p>The food waste collection in flats programme went live in October 2023 in some blocks of flats in the borough where the service is being used by the</p>

Commitment	Activity		BRAG <sup>1</sup> Rating	Trend	Headline
reusing materials and reducing waste and what they throw away		targets that reflect our sustainability ambitions.			residents. Sign-ups for food waste collection at flats has reached between 12-20%. The government has issued new guidance on simpler recycling which will bring consistency in the materials that are collected for recycling across England.
	20. Support our partners to reduce waste and increase recycling	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.	Green	↔	We received and reviewed the updated government regulation on ‘Simpler Recycling’ which makes it easier for people to recycle the same items at home, work and school – the impact on Watford, its residents, businesses and delivery partners have been assessed.  We are working with Veolia on sign-ups for food waste collection from flats, which has reached between 12-20%. This will be revisited once new ‘burdens’ funding (£186k) is formally announced. Veolia is continuing to progress their public engagement and education programme

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## THEME: An inspiring, thriving and creative town

### Overview



### Key achievements over this period

- The first Watford Skills and Employment Group meeting was hosted by West Herts College (WHC) in January 2024 and brought together a range of organisations and agencies delivering skills and employment support to Watford businesses and residents.
- All UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) Year 2 funding (2023/24) was allocated and the projects are starting to deliver the required outcomes
- The Watford Business Park Gateway, known as 'Inspire', is now complete. 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.
- Business engagement events during this quarter included the Environmental Managers Forum, a Meet the Mayor event with Watford Chamber of Commerce, a business wellbeing event, a Meet-The-Buyer event at Watford Football Club.
- The first Market Lates of 2024 was held on 3 May, coinciding with the spring bank holiday. An acoustic hour with Soroya Ray was held, followed by the main act, Studio 6. The event also featured a book signing by Tom Skinner (The Apprentice), a magician, face painter and street food, craft beer and prosecco bar. The event was considered a success, and the busiest so far with 827 visitors recorded entering by the attendant at the entrance.

Commitment	Activity		BRAG <sup>1</sup> Rating	Trend	Headline
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	21. 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	↔	Our bid for the third round of Levelling Up Funding was provisionally confirmed by Central Government in November 2023. This would provide £8m towards the delivery of the Innovation and Incubation Hub. The council have continued to engage with the Department for Levelling Up through the validation process but do not, as yet, have any timeline for when the funding will be confirmed, hence the amber rating. In the meantime, should the funding be confirmed, the Innovation and Incubation Hub will provide an exciting, once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to support the higher-than-average start ups across the town to thrive, grow and support local employment.
	22. 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 first Watford Skills and Employment Group meeting was hosted by West Herts College (WHC) in January 2024 and brought together a range of organisations and agencies delivering skills and employment support to Watford businesses and residents. This enabled new collaborations to evolve, which will help target and deliver activities more effectively in our area. All activity from this group is now being captured on a dashboard which WHC is coordinating, and the progress of this is being reported to the quarterly One Watford for Business economy steering group. The key areas of focus include skills needed to support the success of Watford's key sectors, as well as employability skills, which span a range of disciplines needed in the workplace.
	23. 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	↔	As part of the Economic Development (ED) service redesign process, support for Watford's key sectors has moved to Business As Usual. This reflects the fact that our key growth sectors are supported through the wide range of activity delivered under the ED work plan. Key activities undertaken during this quarter include: - Film & TV sector support where Watford businesses connected with the Herts Film Office service and new supply chain portal through the Create Growth event at Ashridge House in February 2024 - Visitor economy planning has taken place with Visit Herts - Watford businesses connected with the University of Herts Healthcare Technologies event in February 2024 - Retail hospitality leisure (RHL) sector businesses supported through work with Watford BID  Further information on how the council is progressing delivery of its Economic Growth Strategy is included within Appendix C1.
	24. 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	↔	All UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) Year 2 funding (2023/24) was allocated and the projects are starting to deliver the required outcomes. Planning for Year 3 (2024/25) projects is in progress; this is the final year of the current UKSPF programme. Highlights include:

Commitment	Activity		BRAG <sup>1</sup> Rating	Trend	Headline
					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Watford Net Zero project - 327 businesses have been helped with 20 submitting carbon data and progressing reduction action plans</li> <li>- Watford Fit-to-Bid project - 273 businesses have been helped and a second Meet-the-Buyer event in March 2024 had almost 100 attendees with buyers including Warner Bros, TJX Europe and Heathrow Airport</li> <li>- The Growth Springboard is nurturing early stage start-ups through early growth with demonstrable successes;</li> <li>- The Herts-wide business support services are helping many Watford businesses and residents.</li> </ul> <p>Testimonials and client stories are being collected demonstrating the positive impact of the programmes.</p>
Tell Watford's story as a great location for businesses where they can invest, grow and succeed as part of our flourishing business community and networks that connect people	25. Promote what makes Watford a great location for business, connecting to building pride in the town and our profile as a great place to visit	We will work with partners to shape our place narrative and brand, sharing what is great about Watford, attracting more visitors and supporting our local economy, putting the town on the map as a great place for business.	Green	↔	Our Place Brand Strategy was completed and presented to a range of partners in Q3. An associated implementation and resourcing plan is being developed alongside creative content to ensure successful rollout. Our Place Brand Strategy is now being filtered out and is starting to be used by the council and its partners including at business events and by Watford BID. The Strategy is also being worked into the new Colosseum venue operator contract.
	26. 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	↔	A range of business engagement activities happen on a regular basis. This quarter included Environmental Managers Forum, a Meet the Mayor event with Watford Chamber of Commerce, a business wellbeing event, a Meet-The-Buyer event at Watford Football Club, as well as a range of one-to-one business meetings with, including new contacts at Leonardo Hotels and Appdrawn, and several one-to-one meetings with the buyers and SME attendees of the events. Through these meetings and events the ED team helps ensure Watford businesses can access all resources available to them and helps ensure their views and feedback inform future Council initiatives.
	27. 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 are waiting for the final South West Herts Economic Study report now that all comments have been received from stakeholders. The Economic Study will inform the Joint Strategic Plan (JSP) and local plans. The JSP vision document was previously agreed and is available on the JSP website. We are being supported by the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and Herts Growth Board (HGB) for Article 4 Directions to protect office use on Clarendon Road.
Create a distinctive and successful neighbourhood at the heart of our	28. 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	Amber	↔	Work with our preferred joint venture partner, Mace Development, on the New Neighbourhood scheme continues to progress with de-risking activities for utilities, highways and financial viability. The highways work will continue to address early design issues. Engagement with Homes England

Commitment	Activity		BRAG <sup>1</sup> Rating	Trend	Headline
town, providing space and time for residents, businesses and the community to enjoy and experience		residents to enjoy, as well as establishing a new area in the town for culture to flourish.			to discuss further funding opportunities continues and we have provided further information to enable them to progress their stage 2 assessment. We are progressing a business plan with the NHS to relocate various NHS services into a modern facility as part of the New Neighbourhoods development.  The activity status remains amber due to the ongoing current economic climate which has delayed the anticipated investment, without external grant funding it is unlikely we will be able to progress a scheme.
	29. 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	↔	We have provisionally been awarded Levelling Up Funding, subject to further verification, towards the refurbishment costs of the Colosseum. The main refurbishment work to the Colosseum commenced on site towards the end of 2023 and since then work continues on site with new stage and associated steels in place, bar design complete and extensive mechanical and engineering improvements underway.  Council officers continue to meet regularly with AEG to plan for the reopening of the venue.
	30. 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.
	31. 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. Mindful of the current economic climate, improvement works to St Mary's Churchyard and the delivery of improvements to district shopping parades within the borough have been re-baselined. We are working with HCC to progress the first phase of the district shopping parade improvements.
	32. 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 have successfully delivered the 'Shop and Eat Local' campaign. Through this campaign we engaged with new local businesses, including those from 'Watford Market', and encouraged local people to nominate other businesses to promote.
	33. 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	Green	↔	The first Market Lates of 2024 was held on 3 May, coinciding with the spring bank holiday. An acoustic hour with Soroya Ray was held, followed by the

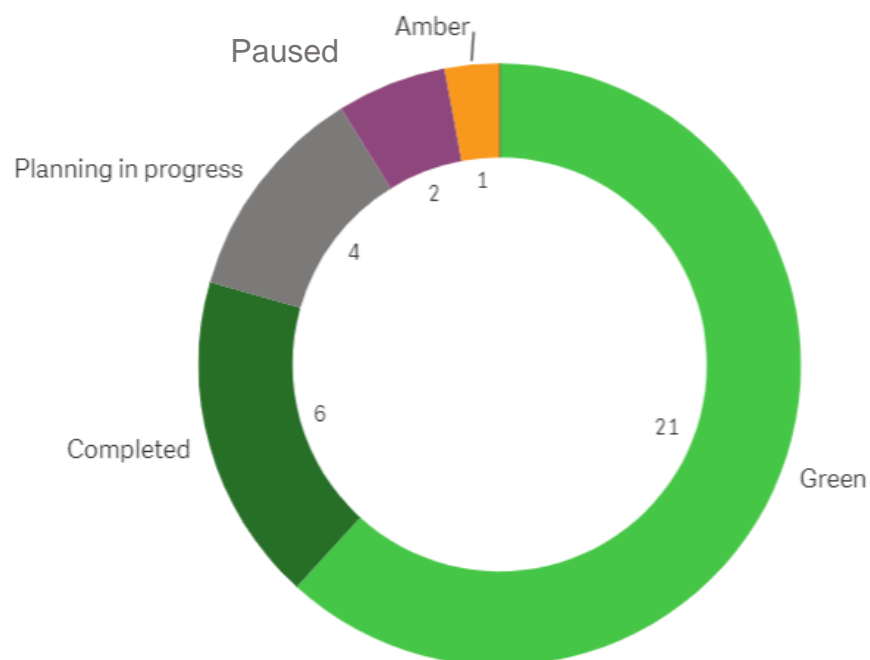
Commitment	Activity		BRAG <sup>1</sup> Rating	Trend	Headline
		and drink stalls in the market and trialling specialist markets.			main act, Studio 6. The event also featured a book signing by Tom Skinner (The Apprentice), a magician, face painter and street food, craft beer and prosecco bar. The event was considered a success, and the busiest so far with 827 visitors recorded entering by the attendant at the entrance.  Further events are planned in August and November 2024.
Ensure the right mix of facilities, services and transport links as part of new developments to create successful, well-designed new communities	34. 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) and the Department of Levelling Up regarding future improvements of the station and on a development strategy.
	35. 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.	Complete	↑	Construction of the Gateway at Watford Business Park is now complete, achieving practical completion in February 2024. The Section 278 works are complete, and HCC have issued the formal completion certificate. 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. The marketing and letting strategy is progressing well and we are seeing a good level interest. We have completed the lease for one unit and progressing a further 4 units with offers and Heads of Terms now agreed and progressing through Legal.
	36. 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.	Green	↑	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. The construction of the remainder of Avenues Phase 1 is well advanced and the planning application for phase 2 is being prepared. We have also selected a contractor for the Industrial Zone N construction. Opportunities for the Island Site is under review by LABV.  Discussions with HCC in relation to a school site is to be continued.
	37. 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.

Commitment	Activity		BRAG <sup>1</sup> Rating	Trend	Headline
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	38. 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.	Amber	↓	<p>Significant work has been undertaken 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, was presented to Strategic Group in January 2024 where it was agreed that further development of the approach will be undertaken with SDLs and to identify further strategic goals.</p> <p>The activity is reporting amber due to the delay in agreeing the project plan and commencing the new strategy.</p>
	39. 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	↔	The draft Nominations Policy is now almost complete and to support this policy we are also undertaking an Equalities Impact Assessment which will identify any potential equalities impact. We are aiming to take the Policy for approval by Cabinet in June 2024. A consultation plan will be developed to ensure we consult and engage with relevant stakeholders before formally adopting and implementing the Policy.
	40. 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.	Amber	↓	<p>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. We have delivered 43 new social homes as at March 2024, which is a third of the target of 120 new social homes over 4 years (to 2026). 37 of the new builds are new builds and 6 are from Local Authority Housing Fund purchases. The Thrive Homes purchase of 127 private units at the Arriva Bus Garage is a significant gain, however all units are shared ownership and will not impact on our social rent target or reduce numbers in temporary accommodation and the housing register.</p> <p>The activity is reporting amber since there are ongoing delays with the Ascot Road and other developments. In addition, the delivery of affordable housing remains challenging in the financial climate.</p>
	41. 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	↔	<p>We have received the final draft of the South West Herts Local Housing Needs Assessment and shared this with the Housing Team. The Team had reviewed the previous version and commented on the affordable housing section.</p> <p>The activity is continuing to report amber as a revised government planning guidance has been issued and the implications for housing delivery are being considered, however with an up-to-date Local Plan, this is less of an issue for the council than other LPAs.</p>

Commitment	Activity		BRAG <sup>1</sup> Rating	Trend	Headline
	42. 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.	Green	↑	The stock condition assessment undertaken towards the end of 2023 will be used to inform the refresh of our Private Sector Renewal policy. We have started to present the findings to various groups, such as Housing Policy Housing Group (HPAG) and teams across the council. The next step is to set up workshops to inform the new policy.

## THEME: A diverse, happy and healthy town

### Overview



### Key achievements over this period

- The improvement works at Meriden Park are now complete. The park now benefits from an improved and extended footpath around the park, a new height barrier at the entrance of the site, new benches and picnic tables, new trees, wildflowers and bulbs.
- The Hemel Hempstead Crematorium received 'highly commended' by the Civic Trust Award 2024 in March, a great recognition of the design, which has so far allowed over 596 families to say goodbye to their loved ones
- We delivered two 'Museum on Tour' events in April 2024 at the Atria, attracting 400 visitors at the museum stall.
- The new CCTV control room at Charter Place was officially opened in February 2024.
- The Easter 2024 holiday programme was successfully delivered, attracting many of our residents.

Commitment	Activity		BRAG' Rating	Trend	Headline
<b>Continue our investment in our outstanding parks and open spaces so they remain the best in the area</b>	43. 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.	Complete	↔	<p>The improvement works to our popular Meriden Park were successfully completed in this quarter. We undertook extensive consultation with local residents and ward councillors to develop and implement a programme of work to improve and enhance the site. This includes an improved and extended footpath around the park, installation of a height barrier at the entrance of the site, new benches and picnic tables and planting of trees, wildflowers and bulbs.</p> <p>The site will be handed over to Veolia in the next quarter for ongoing maintenance.</p>
	44. 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	↔	<p>We are continuing to deliver improvements to our popular Cassiobury Park. In this quarter we agreed the priority repairs for cycle paths and these are expected to be completed in the next quarter. A Flood Risk Assessment Permit (FRAP) was submitted to the EA to enable the progress of works to Footpath 3.</p> <p>The temporary Beryl Bike bay trial which was extended by six months to March 2024, is now complete and we will review the outcome in the next quarter.</p> <p>The Green Spaces Strategy, which will also incorporate the Play Strategy, is in progress, with consultants now appointed through a procurement process.</p>
	45. 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.	Paused	↔	<p>In light of the current financial challenges, the proposal to pause the Woodside Playing Fields scheme has been agreed.</p> <p>However, the public toilet block and Changing Places element of the scheme was successfully completed in April 2024.</p>
	46. 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	↔	<p>The Hemel Hempstead Crematorium 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 say goodbye to their loved ones.</p> <p>Demand at the new crematorium continues to exceed all expectations. Since opening 596 funerals have been carried out.</p> <p>The new facility was recognised and 'highly commended' by the Civic Trust Award 2024 in March which is a great recognition of the design.</p>

Commitment	Activity		BRAG' Rating	Trend	Headline
<b>Celebrate and promote our town's rich and diverse culture and creativity</b>	47. 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 service and sacrifice of fallen service men and women is recognised.	Green	↔	The plans to create the new museum service, based at the Town Hall, have continued over the last period. In this quarter we focused on the museum designs, engaged with potential museum partners and produced a draft procurement strategy. Since the closure of Benskin House, the Museum service has continued to provide services to local residents through the 'Museum on Tour' initiative. Two 'Museum on Tour' events were delivered at the Atria in April 2024, both of which received positive feedback. The events attracted 400 visitors to the stall and 300 activity packs were given out. We will be submitting a bid for round 2 National Lottery Heritage Fund to support the delivery of the Museum service.
	48. 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.	Complete	↔	Whilst our centenary year was celebrated during 2022, the council continued to celebrate our 'centenary heroes' through 2023.  This activity is now complete.
	49. 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.	Paused	↔	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 has been paused following the Capital Programme review undertaken in light of the current financial challenges.
	50. 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. Two pilots are now in progress with two community projects.
	51. 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. This activity will also link into the new Museum and Heritage Service as it relocates to the Town Hall
	52. 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.	Complete	↔	Our 'Ring of Trees' in Cassiobury Park was delivered in 2022 and provides a reflective memorial space close to the Band Stand for residents to remember loved one

Commitment	Activity		BRAG' Rating	Trend	Headline
	53. 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 and Action Plan were approved by Cabinet in June 2023. The delivery programme was delayed due to staff turnover, hence the amber rating, however the Conservation Officer post has now been filled and delivery will recommence from April 2024.
Promote our welcoming and respectful town	54. Ensure everyone feels welcome, included and safe in Watford	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.	Green	↔	Safer Watford, the town's Community Safety Partnership (CSP), is continuing to deliver regular engagement days to reassure and inform the Watford community and to deliver against the CSP action plan and evaluate outcomes. This quarter we focussed on embedding the change in the CSP reporting structure and assessing our priorities for the coming year. The CSP priorities are based on extensive consultations within the partnership and the analysis of crime data within the strategic assessment risk matrix. This has led to a shift in CSP priorities to Acquisitive Crime, Community Wellbeing, and Reassure and Inform. Upcoming engagement is scheduled with a number of schools and West Herts College engaging with students and parents/care givers on 'youth violent crime', ASB Awareness Week, Older Persons Active Learning Sessions, Cuckooing Awareness event and 'right care right person' training for CSP partners. We are currently awaiting a response from PCC office in relation to 'Hotspot Response Funding' to see if Watford CSP are eligible to apply.
	55. Establish our commitment to the wellbeing of women and girls	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.	Green	↔	Our three-year White Ribbon Action Plan was reviewed and revised for years 2 and 3. In addition we have agreed a revised Steering Group membership and leadership.
	56. Make sure our town remains clean and free from litter	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.	Green	↔	The remedial actions identified in the CCTV Review undertaken in 2022 are now complete. A further review of mobile cameras is scheduled for October 2024. The new CCTV control room at Charter Place was officially opened in February 2024.
	57. Develop a range of information and signposting to create a 'welcome to Watford' resource	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.	Planning in progress	↔	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.

Commitment	Activity		BRAG' Rating	Trend	Headline
Listen to and hear the diverse voices of Watford	58. Engage with our community to support better outcomes for our town and residents	We will develop our strategic approach, setting out how we will proactively work and engage with our community and our voluntary and community sector.	Green	↔	The Community Engagement and Participation Strategy provides strategic direction and action planning on a council-wide approach to how we engage with our community. The Strategy was approved by Cabinet in October 2023. Our next Community Network Event will be held in June 2024.  Further information on how the council is progressing delivery of its Community Engagement and Participation Strategy is included within Appendix C5.
	59. 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.
	60. 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 in partnership with the newly formed Watford Royal British Legion to create a programme of events to support the 80 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary of D-Day on 6 <sup>th</sup> June 2024.
	61. 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.	Complete	↔	The new Voluntary Sector Commissioning Framework (VSCF), which was developed through extensive engagement with commissioned organisations, was approved by Cabinet in October 2023 alongside the proposed changes to funding from 2024/25 and will ensure that the council can continue to sustainably support key voluntary organisations across the town. Service Level Agreements have been issued and signed for commissioned organisations and a new online reporting tool has been developed for community centres and commissioned organisations. Training sessions will be delivered in June and July 2024 to provide the necessary support to enable partners to complete quarterly reporting on key performance indicators. A Community of Practice Board will shortly be stood up for overseeing ongoing delivery of the Voluntary Sector Commissioning Framework.
	62. 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	↔	We have completed 100% of the EPC surveys for our community buildings and appointed a consultant to develop the Sustainable Asset Strategy for each property, which will be developed through engagement with our tenants and by July 2024.  We will be identifying and planning the repairs and maintenance works that need to be conducted across our community asset portfolio over the next

Commitment	Activity		BRAG' Rating	Trend	Headline
					five years. Our application for round 3 PSDS funding was successful, securing just under £900k to fund decarbonisation and energy efficiency measures for 3 of our community buildings.
	63. 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	↔	Following approval of the council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) policy, the first Corporate Equalities Working Group (CEWG) met in March 2024. Discussions and agreement of the Terms of Reference and attendees are currently being finalised, and the first formal CEWG is due to take place in Q1 of this year.
	64. 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. Meetings were held with a Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities homelessness advisor in January 2024, where we received critical friend advice on a range of issues which we are following through. Of particular concern, due to current financial climate, had been the number of families with children in B&B over 6 weeks which has now been resolved, with none over 6 weeks since the end of February 2024.
Support improved health and wellbeing across the town	65. 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.	Planning in Progress	↔	The government has issued revised planning guidance reaffirming its expectation that Local Planning Authorities are to have design codes (guidance) in place for older people housing. Further government guidance is expected to be released in spring 2024 but it is uncertain what this will entail. The Planning team are considering the implications of this and resources available to undertake the work. The draft SW Herts Housing Needs Assessment has been reviewed. HCC as a provider of assisted living accommodation has compiled information about needs and requirements to make it easier to interpret to support planning. This is being considered as part of the project.
	66. 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	↔	Watford and Three Rivers Trust (W3RT), the lead in tackling digital isolation, are continuing to arrange and deliver training sessions to support residents. Funding has been secured via the NHS for all CVSs to deliver activities to tackle digital isolation. Further funding is being sought from the National Lottery to bolster the reach of the programme across Herts. We are continuing to review and improve our systems and processes by adapting new technology to make it easier for our customers to access our services. We are currently testing co browsing, a tool that will enable us to support our customers by viewing their screens remotely and guiding them through our online processes.

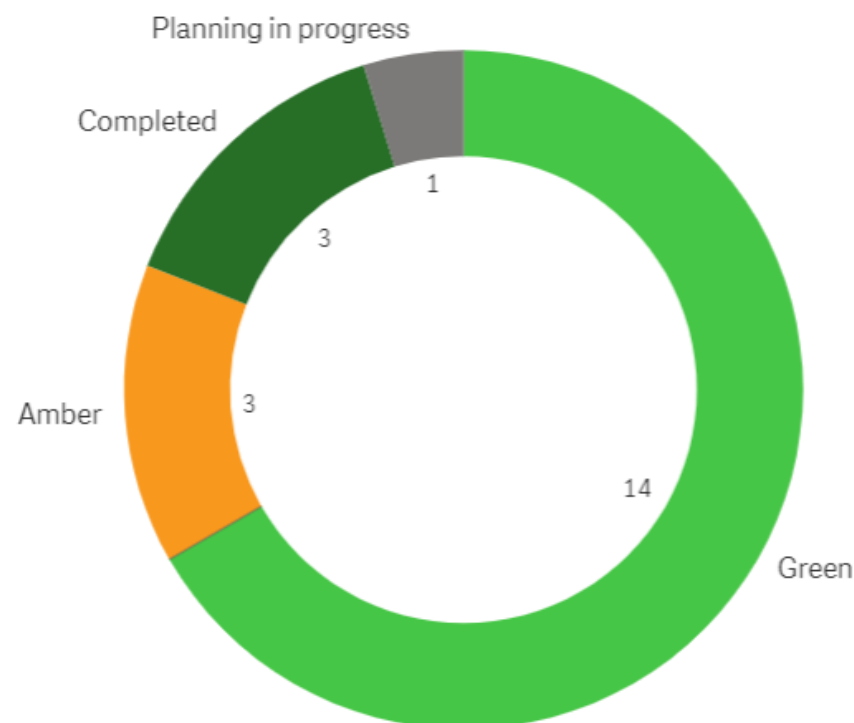
Commitment	Activity		BRAG' Rating	Trend	Headline
	67. Develop services to support our residents’ health and wellbeing	We will work closely with our partners to develop a mental health strategy for Watford, ensuring the right support is available for residents who need it. Watford’s Healthy Hub will provide a pivotal link to assistance and guidance, including opening up conversations about the menopause and for those needing help with mental health issues.	Complete	↔	Mental Health is embedded within the Healthy Hub service offer and ensures that interactions support our residents' mental health and wellbeing at every opportunity. Officers attended the member Health and Wellbeing Forum to discuss the role that the hub has and to provide examples of some of the initiatives. As previously agreed with Members a mental health strategy will not be developed at this time, but partnership working continues to take place to ensure that the council can support mental health and wellbeing initiatives that are being undertaken across the community. During Q4 officers worked with councillors and organisations that provide mental health services across Watford to develop a mental health group where organisations can share ideas and work collaboratively.
	68. Engage with health partners to improve public health and health inequalities for our residents	We will engage across our health partners to make sure the health and wellbeing needs of Watford are represented in new health structures and commissioning of services.	Green	↔	During Q4 the council continued to engage with health partners to support improved health and wellbeing of residents. Specific activities for this quarter include: - The Integrated Care Board funded a cervical cancer coordinator, initially for 3 months but now extended to 6 months, who is working at 5 of Watford's GP surgeries. - The team supported the delivery of a Prostrate Cancer Event in conjunction with the Watford African Caribbean Association. - The team are working with HCC to hopefully deliver the new 'health bus' to visit areas of Watford, providing free health checks. - Ongoing physical health hub continues every Wednesday and a new face to face hub has been launched in Holywell. Regular monthly sessions are organised so that each month the hub can focus on a different theme and encourage other organisations such as NHS Health Checks, IMatter counselling who run adult therapeutic are sessions, CAB and WCHT.
	69. 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. A delivery plan, addressing all the requirements of the SHP project closure report, with key milestones is being delivered.

Commitment	Activity		BRAG' Rating	Trend	Headline
ring together ways to help our residents who might be struggling financially	70. 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	↔	A new Council Tax Support Scheme has been introduced from 2024/25, which is an income banded scheme. The new scheme is easier for customers to understand and work out if they qualify for a reduction of their council tax charge. A Council Tax Support take-up campaign is being planned for 2024/25. Working alongside Citizens Advice, we are also planning to run a take-up campaign for Pension Credit which is a state benefit for elderly residents. Once in receipt of Pension Credit, elderly residents may then be entitled to other help i.e. cold weather payments, dental treatment, glasses, and prescriptions
	71. 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. The 'Cost of Living Forum' which was convened with local voluntary and community organisations to work together on a response for Watford and to ensure that support is coordinated is now known as the 'Community Support Forum' to recognise the wider discussions and remit of the Forum. We are 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.
	72. 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 May 2023, and since its launch, 55 organisations have signed up as good causes including Watford Palace Theatre, One YMCA, Citizens Advice Bureau, and Watford Women's Centre, and a further 6 organisations are awaiting approval. The scheme will ensure that at least 60% of all tickets sold goes towards supporting our local community and good causes. We have raised £27k for good causes to date and our own Community Fund good cause has raised £11.4k. We saw our first big winner in April, winning £2k. We are currently planning the first anniversary of the lottery since its launch.
	73. 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	↔	Preparation is underway for the launch of Watford Fringe Festival, which will be held in Cassiobury Park, to support local talents and bring high quality performing arts to local audiences to enjoy. We will review the Big Events programme (Big Beach, Big Screen, Big Sports and Big Fireworks) for 2024/25 and link these into the work of our Cultural Leaders. The Big Events are successful in attracting and bringing together many of our residents together.

Commitment	Activity		BRAG' Rating	Trend	Headline
	74. 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	↔	<p>We delivered the free Easter 2024 holiday programme for which there was a good uptake of sessions. A review of the data indicates the majority of people who benefitted from the scheme are Watford residents from across the community.</p> <p>The Community Support Group, formally the Cost of Living 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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>The government's round 2 Household Support Fund 4 for 2023/24 was allocated at district level to support food charities and energy support.</p>
	75. 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	↔	<p>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.</p>
	76. 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	↔	<p>The Watford Business Pledge is the Council's key deliverable under the Community Wealth Building Agenda. Great progress has been made over the last quarter. The delivery plan for the Watford Business Pledge has now been drafted and shared with stakeholders, and a soft launch of the Pledge is expected in early June. The required system support is being configured, the process and workflow to on-board businesses as Supporters, Members or Ambassadors of the Pledge is being defined, and the resource to administer the Pledge has been approved. Recruitment will commence shortly.</p>

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

### **Overview**



### **Key achievements over this period**

- The new switchboard contract was successfully implemented before April 2024, with a new provider achieving a seamless transition from the previous provider. We will be enhancing the switchboard provision to incorporate Artificial Intelligence which will enable customers to contact us using other methods, such as Live Chat.
- The Beryl Bike contract extension was agreed and in addition the contract was extended to neighbouring LAs. The new contract will enable residents to continue travelling sustainably across Watford and undertake seamless journeys between neighbouring LAs.
- The new Council Delivery Plan 2024-26 is in progress. We have consulted extensively with officers from across the council, to ensure priorities and resources for the next two areas are defined and agreed.
- Preparations for the May 2024 elections went well, with further changes from the Elections Act 2022 introduced.
- In line with the commitment for the health and wellbeing of our staff, we delivered four lunch and learn sessions focussing on physical and mental health, such as stress awareness and brain health. The following sessions were delivered by a certified psychologist and wellbeing coach:
  - Winter Wellness – January 2024
  - Neurodiversity – February 2024
  - Brain Health – March 2024
  - Stress Awareness and Management – 17 April



Commitment	Activity		BRAG' Rating	Trend	Headline
Make sure we deliver an outstanding customer experience and the high quality services our community expects	77. Provide an excellent customer experience for everyone who engages with the council	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.	Green	↔	<p>We are progressing delivery of the Customer Experience Strategy, working collaboratively with colleagues across the council and capitalising on synergies with other projects to deliver the Strategy vision.</p> <p>In this quarter we successfully procured a new provider to deliver the council's switchboard function with integrated Artificial Intelligence technology. Officers worked closely with the new provider to implement the new switchboard and achieved go-live beginning of April 2024. We are now in the process of developing the AI functionality to provide an enhanced service to our residents, allowing them flexibility to access services at a time that is convenient to them, including outside of office hours. The first iteration of the AI element will be launched in the next quarter.</p> <p>Further information on how the council is progressing delivery of its Customer Experience Strategy is included within Appendix C2.</p>
	78. Champion a greener and more sustainable council that strives to reduce our carbon footprint	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.	Green	↔	<p>We have formalised delivery of the 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. We are in the process of incorporating the 'Watford Sustainability Wheel', a tool that will visually display the environmental and social impacts of our projects, within the council's project management framework.</p> <p>In this quarter the Beryl Bike contract extension was agreed and in addition the contract was extended to neighbouring LAs. The new contract will enable residents to continue travelling sustainably across Watford and undertake seamless journeys between neighbouring LAs.</p> <p>We have developed a new mandatory 'Climate Change' elearning module which will support staff to become more aware of sustainability issues.</p> <p>Further information on how the council is progressing delivery of its Environment Strategy is included within Appendix C3.</p>
	79. Focus the right resources in the right places to secure future success	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.	Green	↔	<p>We are continuing to engage with staff and working collaboratively across service areas to ensure we prioritise delivery of the Council Plan whilst being mindful of the council's financial position. The Corporate Management Board restructure has been finalised as has phase 1 of service reviews and re-design. We are now progressing phase 2 of the service re-designs.</p> <p>We are developing the new Council Delivery Plan which will reflect corporate priorities from 2024 to 2026 and the available resource and budget to successfully deliver the Plan. The Plan will be presented to Cabinet in June 2024.</p>

Commitment	Activity		BRAG' Rating	Trend	Headline
	80. Explore opportunities to share services with other councils where it delivers best value and better customer outcomes	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.	Green	↔	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. We have made significant progress with phase 2 of the Planning Enforcement & Building Control (PE&BC) Shared Services and by the next quarter we will have streamlined our processes and moved to delivering services from one core system. We are continuing to look at the opportunity of implementing the shared service model for HR & OD with neighbouring authorities.
	81. 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	↔	The Council's Elections team successfully delivered the May elections for Ward Councillors and the Police and Crime Commissioner. Changes to the way postal votes are handled by the council were introduced in line with the Elections 2022 Act and staff were trained to ensure they followed the correct process and supported those residents who chose to drop off their postal votes.  We introduced some aspects of the Elections Act 2022 during the May 2023 Local Elections. This included Voter Photo ID and provision of greater assistance to voters with disabilities. We will continue to implement the remainder of the Elections Act from 2023 through to 2025.
<b>Pioneer new ways of working that challenge us to innovate, transform and consistently improve</b>	82. 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	↔	The new four-year ICT Strategy was approved and supports the ICT team to deliver a secure environment to enable the work of the council for our residents and communities. Progress against the key areas of delivery will be monitored over the life of the Strategy to ensure that ICT continues to deliver and keep pace with a rapidly changing landscape both within technology developments and across the cyber security threats which impact upon the council. This will be monitored through quarterly reports to IT Steering Group.
	83. 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 are progressing delivery of the council's Information and Insight Strategy 2023-26, which 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. We continue to review and enhance processes and currently the focus is on data automation by integrating our business intelligence (BI) platform directly with key systems used across the council. Data automation will make our processes more efficient, avoid manual errors and will enable continuous data refresh, providing timely and accurate information.

Commitment	Activity		BRAG' Rating	Trend	Headline
					Data collated through our BI platform continues to drive improvements in service delivery. To support this, we have extended access to our Customer Experience app to Service Delivery Leads and provided training to enable them to self-serve and drive further improvements. In addition we are working with our partners who are delivering commissioned services to develop and agree a reporting mechanism for capturing and submitting KPIs, that will feed directly into our BI platform.
	84. 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.
	85. 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. Preparations are underway to implement any changes from the Procurement Act 2024.
Focus and challenge how we manage our budget so it is concentrated on delivering our commitments and securing greater investment for Watford	86. Ensure our investment portfolio is ambitious and effectively managed to deliver maximum value to the council	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.	Amber	↔	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 'Inspire' 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 now let and Building 7 now under offer.

Commitment	Activity		BRAG' Rating	Trend	Headline
	87. Assess the feasibility of a Growth Fund and its benefits for Watford	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.	Planning in progress	↔	The Council has set aside £500k towards a Growth Fund. Whilst our bid to central government's Levelling Up Funding (LUF) for a further £500k to complement the Innovation Initiative and which would have allowed a £1m fund to be set up to support businesses in the Hub, was unsuccessful, in November 2023 we received provisional confirmation that we were successful in the latest bid. Officers are now engaging with central government on the validation process so that the funds can be confirmed.
	88. Manage and direct the council finances effectively	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.	Green	↔	The 2024/25 budget was approved by Full Council in January 2024. Council resources continue to be aligned to council priorities to deliver the best possible service outcomes. The Medium Term Financial Strategy includes an increased in council tax of 2.99%, reducing to 1.99% in 2025/26 which is well below current levels of inflation. The proposed increases balance the need to fund budget pressures to continue to deliver services against the commitment to keep council tax increases low.
	89. Identify new commercial opportunities that align with our ambition	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.	Green	↔	The Commercial and Collaboration Strategy will be progressed under our Council Delivery Plan 2024-26.
	90. 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	↔	Our Commercial Risk and Mitigation Strategy has been completed, although the rapid and significant increase in inflation continues to pose significant risks to the affordability of the Capital Investment Programme, hence the amber rating. 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. Furthermore, the council has undertaken a robust review of the capital programme and realigned the capital budgets which have been approved by Full Council.
	91. 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	↔	Due to the changing interest rate environment, the Council has divested from the pooled investment funds in order to utilise the cash for internal borrowing. This reduces the Council's overall risk within Treasury Management activities by reducing exposure to both investment and borrowing risks.

Commitment	Activity		BRAG' Rating	Trend	Headline
					This will support the Council in delivering financial goals and ensuring that the Council can set a balanced budget that delivers the Council plan.
<b>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</b>	92. 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.	<b>Complete</b>	↔	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, ensuring that this aligns with our broader values and behaviours.
	93. 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'.	<b>Green</b>	↔	The performance of staff at Watford will be supported by our values and behaviours, which will be incorporated into each stage of the employee life cycle, such as recruitment and appraisal. The Behavioural Framework is being embedded within the Personal Development Review (PDR) process, which will enable us to focus on behaviours, set new objectives and collect learning and development needs. The new PDR will be launched in the next quarter. As well as the Values and Behaviours, our new People Strategy will also determine how we support, develop and retain our staff.
	94. 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.	<b>Green</b>	↔	Our six values demonstrate who we are - we act with integrity, demonstrate trust, show respect, stand for bold, work together and we champion agile. Over the past year we have worked with staff at all levels to launch and commence embedding these values across the council. The values are also incorporated within our Team Charters, which reflects the way we work as a team and as individuals. We are currently working on embedding the behavioural framework within the Personal Development Review (PDR) process. The new PDR will focus on behaviours, set new objectives and collect learning and development needs. The new PDR will be launched in the next quarter.
	95. 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.	<b>Green</b>	↔	The council's People Strategy was revisited and delivery to 2028 in line with our new Council Delivery Plan. The Strategy will flex with the organisation as we move through the challenging financial years ahead. The final Strategy will be taken to Cabinet in June 2024 for endorsement.

Commitment	Activity		BRAG' Rating	Trend	Headline
	96. 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>Due to the current recruitment freeze, further recruitment of apprentices is on hold. The consideration for the recruitment and retention of apprentices is included in our new People Strategy.</p> <p>The development of a delivery plan to consider all early careers including apprentices, graduates, pathways to planning, work experience and T-Levels, has been further delayed as we are considering feedback from the Peer Challenge alongside the financial position of the council.</p> <p>We have arranged work experience placements for local schools with a view to reviewing this process for 2025 and ensuring that as many requests can be accommodated as possible.</p>
	97. 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>We remain committed to the health and wellbeing of our staff. In the last quarter lunch and learn sessions were delivered by a certified psychologist and wellbeing coach in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Winter Wellness</li><li>- Neurodiversity</li><li>- Brain Health</li><li>- Stress Awareness and Management</li></ul> <p>The neurodiversity session has generated interest and discussion and is a key topic to develop more awareness of across the council.</p> <p>In the next quarter we will deliver sessions on women's and men's health, which will explore common health challenges and topics such as hormonal and emotional health.</p>