A launchpad for Watford's future

Delivery Plan 2026 – 2028

May 2026

INTRODUCTION

Delivering for Watford with no-nonsense action

Watford is in a period of change, with the new local government structure coming into place from 2028. We are moving forward with confidence because that is what we do best.

The catalyst for this has been our partnerships with our communities, and public and private sector organisations. Together, we have achieved brilliant results for Watford and together, we will continue to carve out a bright future for the town.

The Council Plan (2026-2028) illustrates the need to go one step further over the next two years, so that we can deliver for our residents, businesses and communities on two fronts: in the here and now and in a future that looks very different for both Watford and Hertfordshire.

To do this we must be nimble, ready to meet the challenges of the day while keeping a clear focus on our long-term aspirations. In that spirit, the Council Plan is carefully balanced to capture the bold ambition which is Watford's trademark and the bigger picture thinking required for the landmark changes that are coming.

Yes, we are pushing ourselves to deliver impactful projects with long-term benefits but we are also ensuring they are achievable, backed up by the resource and skill required.

Putting residents at the heart of the plan

Most importantly, the Council Plan is crafted around what matters most to residents, setting out our priorities in five themes, with the golden thread of Standing Up For Watford.

We have a clear vision for Watford to continue flourishing as an urban town with a green ambition, filled with energy, warmth and opportunity. A place where everything is rooted in the art of the possible and big things happen, without losing sight of the everyday details which touch our lives.

Watford has a unique character, with huge determination, creativity and a true sense of community. Our plan harnesses that to create an environment in which our diverse and gifted communities can succeed now and beyond local government reorganisation.

This Delivery Plan (2026–28) turns commitments into no-nonsense action, setting out exactly how we will achieve our mission. It has been designed so that everything we do has our personality shining through. Under each theme and commitment, you can see what we will be doing to deliver the Council Plan. It will keep us focused and determined, navigating us through the next two very significant years.

Keeping the focus

To keep our plans on track, we will report our progress to our Elected Mayor, Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committee on a quarterly basis and publish an annual update for our communities. As a council, we deliver a broad spectrum of services which are not detailed in this overview. These will be delivered to the same high standards we set for ourselves and subject to the same scrutiny as the Delivery Plan.

This plan is supported by a number of other important strategies, which have all been coordinated to achieve the vision set out in the Council Plan (2026-2028).
To see these, visit: www.watford.gov.uk/strategies

A Competent Council

Underpinning this Council Plan is the driver of remaining A Competent Council, supporting success through:

Continued financial stability

The dedication of our councillors

The commitment of our staff

Collaborating with our partners

Using our expertise deliver major projects

Standing up for Watford with big picture thinking

Commitment: Protecting Watford's unique identity and ensuring Local Government Reorganisation delivers real benefits for our community by making Watford's voice heard during the transformation.

Action: We will take a proactive and positive approach to shaping and delivering transformation for Hertfordshire, promoting the interests of Watford as a significant economic and cultural centre.

Commitment: Fighting for Watford General Hospital to be rebuilt as quickly as possible, so that our community gets the modern healthcare facilities we deserve.

Actions: We will continue to work with partners to lobby for the speedy development of the new hospital.

We will ensure the council's Joint Venture with Kier - delivering the Riverwell regeneration scheme - continues to work collaboratively with the West Hertfordshire Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust in support of the hospital redevelopment.

Commitment: Bringing the disused Croxley Line back into use and advocating for the Hertfordshire to Essex Rapid Transit (HERT) project to start in Watford.

Actions: We will develop an advocacy plan for the project, setting out the far-reaching benefits to the region.

We will work with partners across the region to ensure the project sits at the heart of the narrative for mayoral devolution in Hertfordshire.

Commitment: Campaigning for Watford's railway stations to be rezoned into zone 6, so that passengers pay fairer fares.

Action: We will continue to put forward a robust and evidence-based case via the right channels to press for change.

Commitment: Pressing for improvements to local train stations to make them more accessible.

Actions: We will continue engaging with Network Rail and train operators to support improvements at Watford Junction, including installing a new pick-up and drop-off point outside the station.

We will lobby TfL for step free access at Watford Underground Station.

Commitment: Demanding a bus franchise model that improves local bus services, with affordable and reliable buses in Watford.

Action: We will use the Bus Services Act 2025 – also known as the Better Buses Bill – to lobby for a review of bus services and campaign for action to be taken.

Commitment: Battling for well-designed, sustainable, social homes in the right places for local residents, along with the infrastructure to support new developments and the public services people need to flourish.

Actions: We will use our Development Management powers effectively to secure affordable housing and infrastructure.

We will continue to seek funding opportunities to support affordable housing and infrastructure delivery.

We will ensure developments comply with the high standards set out in our Local Plan.

We will start a review of the Local Plan in 2027, ensuring it remains fit for purpose and is delivering for Watford.

A Healthy and Happy Town

Commitment: Champion wellbeing in our town, with a special focus on young people.

Action: We will continue to deliver the Mayor's Small Grants Fund, with a special focus on funding projects for and by young people.

Commitment: Give every child the same chance to enjoy Watford's parks.

Action: We will invest in our playgrounds to make them more accessible for all children of all abilities.

Commitment: Host a range of family-friendly events.

Action: We will deliver the Watford Big Events programme, packed with free and low-cost events, including the ever-popular Big Screen, Big Beach and the annual fireworks display in Cassiobury Park.

Commitment: Provide opportunities for children and young people to get active and have fun.

Action: We will provide free swim and gym sessions for young people in the school holidays and deliver exciting Easter and summer holiday activities for children.

Commitment: Improve sports facilities for young people.

Action: We will provide a new outdoor gym for young people, a new cricket pitch at King George V Playing Fields, improved facilities at Woodside Playing Fields and better basketball facilities in north Watford.

Commitment: Open a new, modern, and inspiring Museum of Watford.

Actions: We will continue to build our Museum Advisory Panel and engage with our community to shape the new Museum, ensuring we celebrate the town's story and showcase our rich and diverse heritage.

We will complete the fit-out of the Museum and open it to the community.

Commitment: Refurbish the Town Hall and bring it back into the heart of the community.

Actions: We will complete the refurbishment of our Town Hall to ensure it is sound and protected for generations to come.

We will open new community spaces, a warm and welcoming customer service centre and public café, alongside the Museum of Watford and Innovation Hub.

A Safe and Clean Town

Commitment: Keep Watford safe and welcoming for everyone.

Actions: We will work closely with the Police, Community Safety Partnership, and local communities. As part of this, we will lead the implementation of the strategic action plan for the community safety partnership, prioritising: violence against women and girls and violent crime, especially knife crime and robbery, along with continuing to provide information and reassurance to residents.

We will expand our network of over 300 CCTV cameras, funded by the council, and ensure these are monitored day and night.

Commitment: Help to tackle anti-social behaviour.

Actions: We will campaign for more properly resourced Community Police Officers to tackle anti-social behaviour.

We will employ a Park Guard to provide extra patrols in our parks and drive out anti-social behaviour.

Commitment: Help residents build a positive relationship with the Police.

Action: We will work with the Police through the Community Safety Partnership and Healthy Hub to help organise, promote and attend events that reduce the fear of crime and support engagement with the Police.

Commitment: Champion the safety of women and girls in Watford.

Action: We will continue to be accredited as a White Ribbon organisation and implement the agreed action plan, encouraging organisations around Watford to also join the initiative.

Commitment: Tackle littering, fly-tipping and dog fouling.

Action: We will recruit a new enviro-crime officer and continue to increase the number of fixed penalty notices issued for offences.

Commitment: Work with Veolia to keep Watford's streets clean.

Action: We will work with Veolia to deliver regular deep street-cleaning initiatives along with an annual spring clean programme.

Commitment: Work with residents to dispose of waste properly.

Action: We will organise and promote Community Waste Days to give residents opportunities to dispose of waste properly.

Commitment: Encourage safer parking near schools.

Action: We will work directly with local schools to encourage safer parking nearby and provide more enforcement to tackle dangerous parking.

Commitment: Improve signage in Watford, with new signs for people entering the town and better wayfinding for people walking around it.

Action: We will roll out a pilot of the Watford Wayfinding Strategy, focusing on the town centre.

Caring for Everyone

Commitment: Collaborate with local charities to end rough sleeping in Watford, ensuring everyone receives the support they need.

Actions: We will contract and fund the Winter Night Shelter for the next three years.

We will work with partners to continue developing and enhancing the single homeless pathway to end rough sleeping.

We will bid for, and support partners to bid for, funding to support rough sleepers and prevent homelessness.

We will continue to fund the Housing Advice worker at Citizens Advice Watford.

We will fund tenancy sustainment services to support rough sleepers back into permanent housing.

Commitment: Support local families and residents with the cost-of-living crisis.

Actions: We will keep increases in council tax to a minimum, and below the rate of inflation.

We will reduce council tax bills for households with low incomes.

We will bid for funding from the Housing Support Fund to directly support residents with increasing costs.

We will deliver at least three in-person Healthy Hub sessions per week.

We will continue to deliver the Watford Community Fund grants programme, ensuring support is provided to those in need at a grassroots level.

Commitment: Work with and advocate for the voluntary sector to ensure they can continue helping local causes beyond Local Government Reorganisation.

Commitment: Show that Watford is a town where everyone is welcome and where everyone can thrive.

Actions: We will support people living with dementia and their families by launching the new Hertfordshire Memory Support accreditation in Watford.

We will ensure Watford is an Age-Friendly place, working in partnership with Age UK and the Active Sports Partnership to undertake detailed consultation on

the eight Age Friendly domains.

We will use the findings and collaborate with partners and the community to develop an Age Friendly Action Plan.

We will champion accessibility and inclusion by ensuring public spaces, services, and community activities are designed to meet the needs of people with disabilities.

We will work with Electric Umbrella to set up an inclusive forum, to discuss how we can learn from the experience of others to make Watford an even better town for everyone.

We will continue to fund a Watford Shopper Bus Service, making shopping trips easier and more accessible for those who need extra support.

We will work with Hertsmere Borough Council to explore the possibility of delivering a new, local cemetery so that families can continue to bury loved ones in the area.

Commitment: Work with the community to identify how we can provide the support people most need in the cost-of-living crisis.

Action: We will host a regular Cost-of-Living Forum, bringing together groups from across the community, to identify how we can better provide the support that is needed by those struggling.

Commitment: Promote community cohesion and collaboration.

Actions: We will provide an opportunity for faith leaders from across Watford to come together in the Mayor's Faith Forum, supporting community cohesion.

We will ensure residents of all ages help shape the council's work and priorities through the People's Panel and Youth Panel.

We will support the delivery of the annual Herts Pride event in Cassiobury Park.

Commitment: Support registered charities to maximise the benefit of their community events in the town.

Action: We will abolish hiring fees for registered charities who use our parks and open spaces for community events.

A Greener Town

Commitment: Continue to invest in and improve Watford's outstanding parks.

Actions: We will increase the number of Green Flag parks in Watford to 18, including Knutsford Playing Fields in our submission.

We will install more water fountains and improve worn pathways in local parks.

Commitment: Plant more trees across the borough and equip residents to make their neighbourhoods greener and more sustainable.

Actions: We will plant another 10,000 trees across the borough by 2028 and provide regular free tree and compost giveaways for residents.

We will provide more allotment spaces by extending the current Cherry Tree Allotment site.

Commitment: Continue making council buildings more energy efficient, reducing fuel bills and supporting the environment.

Action: We will explore opportunities to improve the energy efficiency of Watford Central Leisure Centre.

Commitment: Promote sustainable transport and encourage active, eco-friendly travel, making Watford's air cleaner and reducing our carbon footprint.

Actions: We will increase the number of Beryl Bikes across the town and look for opportunities to install new Beryl Bike Bays in different locations and expand the scheme into areas near Watford.

We will continue to work with Hertfordshire County Council to explore opportunities to secure Active Travel Funding.

We will work with the county council to make best possible use of Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) funding from government and roll out more Electric Vehicle chargers.

Commitment: Support greater biodiversity and actively improve water quality.

Action: We will continue to deliver the Rediscovering the River Colne programme of works, restoring its rich biodiversity and transforming the water quality.

Commitment: Equip residents to identify where heat may be escaping from their homes, highlighting insulation gaps, draughts and other areas where energy efficiency improvements could be made.

Action: We will partner with Hertfordshire County Council to launch a free Thermal Imaging Camera Loan Scheme for residents in 2027.

A Thriving Local Economy

Commitment: Support start-ups, attract new businesses, and create jobs and opportunities in our town.

Action: We will open a state-of-the-art Innovation and Incubation Hub for start-ups and new businesses, fostering collaboration and growth, and bringing in new opportunities for the people of Watford.

Commitment: Support local businesses by continuing to attract residents and visitors to the town and boosting Watford's reputation as a vibrant, cultural hub.

Actions: We will work with partners to host a temporary winter ice rink in the town centre.

We will promote the revitalised Watford Colosseum as an exciting, national entertainment venue.

We will deliver a 'Shop and Eat Local' campaign, highlighting the array of fantastic businesses across the town and encouraging residents and visitors to spend locally.

Commitment: Ensure our town centre continues to thrive, as spending and leisure behaviours evolve.

Action: We will work with partners to produce a Nighttime Economy Action Plan, aligning our ambitions and coordinating activity.

Commitment: Foster growth and collaboration to ensure our high streets remain vibrant.

Actions: We will promote the Watford Business Pledge, encouraging businesses to sign up through promotion and direct engagement, and rallying organisations to work together for the success of the town.

We will demonstrate the successes of the pledge by sharing stories from the businesses, bringing our vision for Watford to life.

Commitment: Promote Watford Market as a dynamic destination for residents and visitors alike.

Action: We will promote what Watford Market has to offer, including its popular Market Late events, supporting local traders and making the market a vibrant destination.

Commitment: Support local businesses outside of the town centre to succeed, benefitting local communities.

Action: We will improve the Queens Road and Vicarage Road Precinct shopping parades, keeping them up-to-date, appealing and easily accessible.

Commitment: Ensure developers support the local economy.

Actions: We will increase the funding from the Community Infrastructure Levy (NCIL) for community projects and upgrades to the area.

We will ensure that local suppliers and local people can access the business and employment opportunities development brings by working with Herts Futures on Employment, Skills and Social Value (ESSV) Plans.

Commitment: Cement our region's reputation as a globally significant centre for the creative industries.

Action: We will support Hertfordshire Growth Board to deliver a Hertfordshire Film Festival to be hosted in Watford in 2027.

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BOROUGH
COUNCIL

BE BOLD

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