

ABOUT



WATFORD



WATFORD
BOROUGH
COUNCIL

Spring 2021



W ABOUT AT FORD



Peter Taylor
Elected Mayor of
Watford

www.watford.gov.uk/electedmayor

Welcome to this spring edition of About Watford. While Covid-19 is still with us and we have a way to go before the infection rate comes right down and eventually disappear, I wanted the magazine to focus on the positive things we have in the pipeline that will get us back on our feet and thriving again in the future.

We have recently agreed proposals to revive the area around the Town Hall and the Colosseum that we are calling our 'Town Hall Quarter'. This project looks to revive the top end of the High Street by refurbishing the iconic heritage buildings, creating new affordable housing and looking to create an incubation hub which should bring economic benefits to the town through providing new and local businesses with space to grow.

We recognise the need to continue to retain and attract new business into Watford which is why we have been working to provide state of the art facilities for employers. The Watford Business Park Development, known as 'Greenhill Works', provides just those opportunities. Alongside this, through the Watford Business Recovery and Growth programme and the WhatsApp High Street pilot, we are providing a range of dedicated support for local people and their businesses.

The last year has proven how vital it is to have good quality parks and open spaces for people in our town to enjoy. That is why we are continuing to invest in a range of green spaces, including Woodside leisure and sports facilities. We want to make sure that Watford has the best possible facilities so that everyone is able to stay physically and mentally healthy. We have also continued to make progress on sustainability through improved recycling rates and reducing the amount of waste we send to land fill, new Electric Vehicle charging points, continued use of our Beryl bike-share scheme, new funding to improve the energy efficiency of homes, and plans for investment and improvements to our biodiversity across the borough.

There have been great successes in relation to helping rough sleepers and homeless families into accommodation. With the fantastic work of One YMCA, New Hope and other charities in the borough we have got our rough sleeper figures down and have been able to provide support to tackle the root causes of rough sleeping and homelessness.

Finally, I would like to say a huge thank you to all of the volunteers who have been helping with our Town Hall vaccination hub. Getting as many of our Watford people vaccinated is a key part of our bounce back - let's keep on going!

If you have an issue that you think I might be able to help with, please get in touch at themayor@watford.gov.uk or call my office number on **01923 278371**.



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WE'RE HERE TO HELP IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS

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Council tax set for 2021/22



A message from Elected Mayor, Peter Taylor



2020-21 has been a really tough and unprecedented year for our town and we expect the challenges to continue - in reflection of this our 2021-22 budget is prioritising initiatives to:

- support the NHS through the Covid-19 pandemic
- improve the wellbeing of residents and Watford's environment
- help local businesses to recover and thrive

The past year has been challenging financially for all councils with more spending required to support residents and businesses and incomes affected by the pandemic. Despite this, in Watford, we have been able to keep council tax increases low and we have continued to deliver excellent services for our town.

Looking ahead we will continue to work closely with the NHS and Hertfordshire County Council to make council space and resources available to support Covid-19 testing and the vital vaccination programme - we are also providing funding support for people on low income who need to self-isolate.

Our business community which provides employment for thousands of residents has been hard hit by the pandemic and we are investing in new facilities and improving key retail hubs in the town to attract new companies in and to retain the many great ones we already have. We are also running a free Business Recovery and Growth programme

for existing businesses and start ups and we will continue with our Shop and Eat Local campaign.

Last year we made significant progress on reducing homelessness and rough sleeping and we will continue to support local people by building more affordable family homes and support facilities. We know that having a home is crucial to people being able to live positive lives and for children to develop and grow.

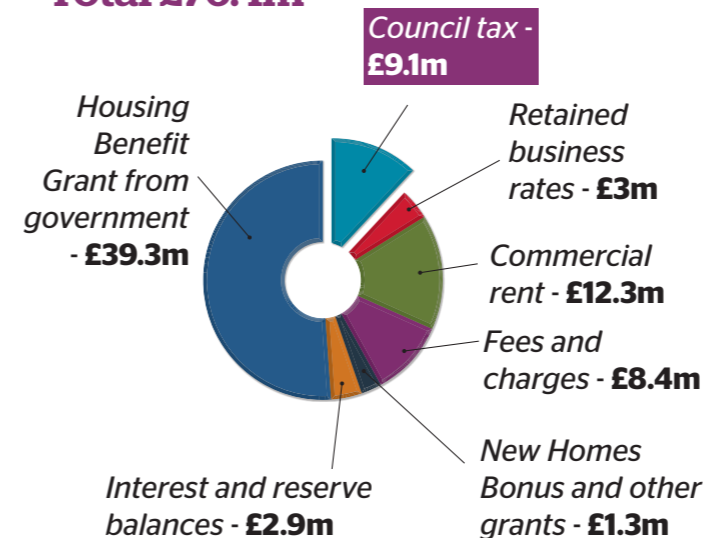
We are investing in our fantastic parks and green spaces which we have come to value even more throughout the pandemic. This year will see the start of improvement works to Woodside sports and leisure facilities including a new café, play areas and facilities. We will also upgrade Lea Farm Recreation Ground, Cheslyn House and Gardens, Harwoods Recreation Ground and Meriden Park.

We are also investing in a Wellbeing Watford project that will play a key part in keeping the community connected through the pandemic.

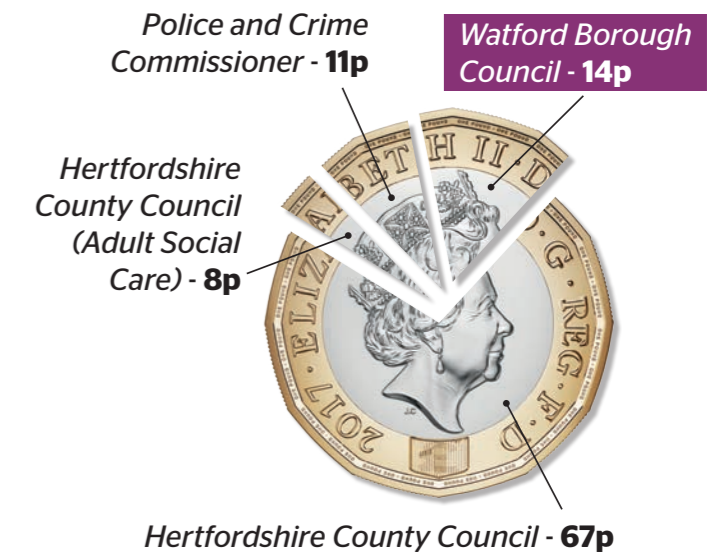
This budget means that we can continue to deliver excellent services for every resident in Watford, support our health services and care for those who are most in need and improve public transport in the town.

As ever, if you have any issue that you think I can help with, please contact me at themayor@watford.gov.uk or on my office at **01923 278371**.

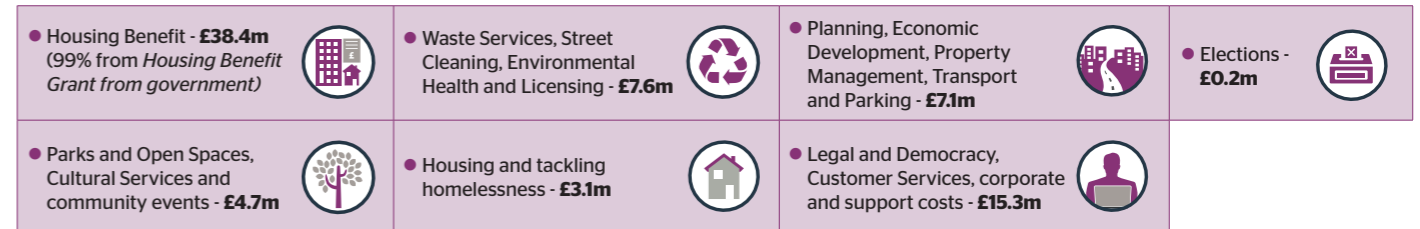
Where our money comes from Total £76.4m



Where your money goes



What we spend our money on: Total £76.4m



How much council tax will I pay?

Band	Hertfordshire County Council	Hertfordshire County Council (Adult Social Care)	Police & Crime Commissioner	Watford Borough Council	Total
A	£879.57	£100.85	£142.00	£185.49	£1,307.91
B	£1,026.17	£117.65	£165.67	£216.41	£1,525.90
C	£1,172.76	£134.46	£189.33	£247.32	£1,743.87
D	£1,319.36	£151.27	£213.00	£278.24	£1,961.87
E	£1,612.55	£184.89	£260.33	£340.07	£2,397.84
F	£1,905.74	£218.50	£307.67	£401.90	£2,833.81
G	£2,198.93	£252.12	£355.00	£463.73	£3,269.78
H	£2,638.72	£302.54	£426.00	£556.48	£3,923.74
% increase	1.99%	2%	7.58 %	1.7%	4.03%

How to pay your council tax

There are a number of different ways to pay your council tax.



Direct Debit - Take the hassle out of paying - visiting www.watford.gov.uk/directdebit



Online - Pay for it online using the online payment facility at www.watford.gov.uk/pay



Telephone - Use our 24 hour payment line on **01923 278989**

For more information about council tax visit www.watford.gov.uk/counciltax

Leading by example towards a sustainable future



Watford Council declared a climate emergency in summer 2019. Despite the events of 2020, we're more committed than ever to our sustainability agenda.

When it comes to a sustainable future, 'business as usual' is a thing of the past. In summer 2019 Watford Council declared a climate emergency to underline our commitment to reducing emissions and adapting to the changing climate.

Our sustainability strategy covers every aspect of life in Watford,

from greener jobs, homes and workplaces, to transport, energy and water. We're also working hard to improve waste and recycling, and enhance biodiversity in our outdoor spaces.

Time to go boldy

The UK government has set a target of reaching Net Zero Carbon

by 2050, but we're aiming to go further: we want to achieve Net Zero in Watford by 2030.

It's an ambitious target. But it's the most important legacy we can leave behind for our future residents, for the UK and for the planet. There has never been a better time to live up to our motto: to go boldly.



Green spaces

A new approach for ancient woods

The five-year restoration project at Whippendell Wood has begun. This ancient woodland is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) by Natural England, and is protected by law. Ancient woodland is land recorded as being continuously wooded since 1600, and a few centuries later, Whippendell Wood is in need of some TLC.

The project aims to support natural diversity and wildlife, improve access and links with the park and wider landscape. A large part of the restoration work involves the gradual removal of non-native conifers, to allow light to penetrate the canopy,

encouraging ancient species to recover and reverse years of damage. The next five years will see low-impact forestry and the following works taking place:

- Opening up rides and glades
- Creating links between larger open spaces
- Identifying veteran and biologically significant trees and removing threats
- Reintroducing coppicing as traditional management
- Retaining dead and decaying wood to support habitats
- Conserving historic features such as wood banks, dells, avenues and roundels
- Improving access and signage, including a public rights of way project with the Ramblers Association and Herts County Council, and a brideway project with the National Horse Association

For information and updates, visit www.watford.gov.uk/cassioburyprojects

Elected Mayor of Watford, Peter Taylor said: "Whippendell Wood is a real gem, enjoyed by thousands of people each year. However, there is work to be done to make it a healthy woodland. Woodlands need to be managed to ensure they can be enjoyed by future generations. The scheme will help us to keep the woods healthy for many more years."



Greener homes

A green home is a warm home

Are you concerned about the costs involved in making your home more energy efficient? Thanks to Green Homes Grants, homeowners in England, including landlords, can now receive up to £5,000 towards energy-saving measures, such as insulation.

Low-income households can claim 100% of the costs of work up to £10,000. It's estimated up to 600,000 households could be eligible to save up to £600 a year on energy bills through the scheme. Find out more at: www.greenhomesgrant.campaign.gov.uk

Council-supported grants and interest-free loan options for insulation measures are also available to all Watford households through Better Housing Better Health, subject to conditions. Call: 0800 107 0044, or visit bhbh.org.uk for further information.

Keeping Watford cosy

The council's insulation scheme has been helping to keep Watford snug over winter. Over 850 residents on the Kingswood Estate in North Watford will enjoy warmer, smarter homes, thanks to a major energy-saving scheme. The energy savings, combined with savings to society and the NHS are expected to average £620 per completed property, per year.



Helping the River Gade make the grade

Watford Borough Council has been working together with not-for-profit organisation, Community Connection, to improve the River Gade and its habitats at Cassiobury Park.

The team has already started work on thinning vegetation, clearing collapsed trees and willow roots to improve water flow and the wooden debris will be turned into habitat piles, dead

hedges and hibernation areas for amphibians and reptiles, creating new habitats and benefitting local wildlife. There will also be regular monitoring of the river's flow level and litter clearing.



Rediscovering the River Colne

Did you know that our borough is home to a tributary of the River Thames? Work will be starting later this year on a 10-year project to clean up the River Colne and bring eight different sections of the river into the public realm.

The key aim of the project is to attract the original biodiversity of the area back to the river and its banks, including plant life, fish, birds, insects and other species.

It's not just the wildlife that stands to benefit from this ambitious project, as residents will be able to access the river and enjoy walks and a range of water-based activities and educational programmes.

For more information, visit www.rivercolnewatford.co.uk



Greener transport

Happy birthday, Beryl Bikes!

One year on, Beryl Bikes are now part of the Watford landscape, keeping our streets greener and cleaner and keeping us active.



Beryl's year in numbers:



82,594
Total trips



836,478km
Total distance



50,316hrs
Total duration



13,635
Unique users



59

live bays with 22 bays under review / pending installation after lockdown

More EV charging points on the way



Watford Borough Council installed five on-street electric vehicle (EV) charging points in 2020, in Bradshaw Road, Victoria Road, Durban Road East, Essex Road and Shaftesbury Road, as well as EV charging in Watford Business Park and at Cassiobury Park.

Now in 2021, seven additional 7kW fast EV chargers are coming to Granville Road, Stamford Road, Sotheron Road, Grosvenor Road, Sutton Road, Westland Road and Mildred Avenue, with each site allowing charging for up to two vehicles.

Residents can charge their vehicles for as little as 32p per kilowatt hour via the Electric Blue app, and top up for a maximum of four hours, or a full charge overnight.

The charge points have been funded by the Office for Low Emission Vehicles (OLEV) and Electric Blue, in partnership with Watford Borough Council.

Work is also being undertaken with Ringway to install 15 lamp column chargers. For more information, visit www.watford.gov.uk/sustainablewatford

Sustainable waste and recycling

War on waste is working

Reducing waste and increasing recycling is a key part of Watford's sustainability strategy, and it's working.

Since the launch of a new waste and recycling collection service last September, recycling rates across the borough have increased and the amount of waste going to landfill has decreased. In fact, we're now recycling over 50% of our waste.

Love your leftovers

Ever wondered what happens to your food waste? The new food caddy collection service has already picked up over 500 tonnes of food waste from Watford households. The waste is sent to a biofuel plant to be converted into energy - so

far it has generated enough to boil 2,640,810 kettles, or power 5,281,620 hours of TV viewing time. Next time you enjoy a cuppa and a box set, you never know, it could be fuelled by your own leftovers!

Data for the four months to December 2020 from our environmental services partner, Veolia, shows:

- Recycling rates are up by 246 tonnes.
- Waste to landfill is down by 559 tonnes.

Elected Mayor of Watford, Peter Taylor said: "I'm really pleased that in such a short amount of time, recycling rates have increased. My thanks go out to Watford residents who have increased their levels of recycling, despite the difficulties that we are all facing during these uncertain times. I am really proud of what our residents have achieved and would ask them to keep up their good work."



The waste and recycling service changes in September included:

- Introduction of weekly food waste collection
- Fortnightly collection of non-recyclable waste
- Yearly sign-up for fortnightly garden waste collections (£45, or £40 by direct debit)
- Weekly recycling collection

Got a question?

Waste and recycling collections over Easter will change. Please check your collection calendar, or visit www.watford.gov.uk/mybinday

For more information on waste and recycling, visit www.watford.gov.uk/waste

Residents can sign up to the chargeable garden waste collection service at: www.watford.gov.uk/gardenwaste

For more information on the waste and recycling service change, visit www.watfordrecycles.com or call 020 3567 6900.

Did you know?

Recycling just six tea bags can produce enough electricity to boil the kettle for your next cuppa? Your recycling can be turned into electricity and compost.

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Sponsoring Beryl Bikes in partnership with



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Watford means business!

After the challenges of 2020, supporting our local businesses to survive and thrive has never been so important. As we eagerly await the arrival of spring, shoots of recovery are starting to appear.

There's no denying the pandemic hit our local and national business and retail communities hard. But Watford remains resilient and resourceful and, despite the ongoing challenges, our employment sector is already fighting back.

New businesses are joining our buoyant local business community and we're investing in new projects to drive employment opportunities for the future.

New biz on the block

Despite the events of 2020, Watford continues to grow and attract new investors

and businesses. With the redevelopment of Clarendon Road, new businesses are being drawn in and shown the opportunities that come with working in Watford. Clarendon Road already has a number of high-profile businesses and head offices, such as the newly developed TJX building, which will act as the company's European headquarters and bring more jobs to the town.

Later this year, 40 Clarendon Road will see PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), the second largest professional services network in the world, move into the area. They will be consolidating their offices from Uxbridge and St Albans into a main office for the area in Watford. It comes as

the company looks to deliver a broader range of services outside London providing services for clients and communities in Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, West London, South Essex, and beyond.



"I'm really excited for us to be joining Watford's business community at 40 Clarendon Road later this year. This premier location will provide an exceptional base for us to connect with our phenomenal clients, communities and people from across our wide-reaching geography."

**Caroline Bevans,
Senior Partner at PwC
Watford Office**



The 30-hectare Watford Business Park, located by Greenhill Crescent and Faraday Close, is one of the key employment hubs in the town, with over 100 businesses employing 1,000 - 1,200 people from Watford and beyond. Whilst a significant proportion of the existing buildings are out of date and not geared to current business needs, the council has recognised the park's potential and the role a more innovative development could play in Watford's business profile and the local economy.

Croxley Park welcomes newcomers

Three new businesses have also moved into Croxley Business Park. Vibrant Foods, connectivity solutions company, CSL Dualcom Limited, and medical devices supplier, Clinisupplies Limited, have all taken up residence in the last year.

Watford Elected Mayor, Peter Taylor said: "It is fantastic to welcome three new businesses to Croxley Park, which will provide more jobs for local people. Their decisions to set up in Watford show confidence in our local economy and that, despite the difficulties nationally, Watford is an attractive place to live and work."

Working with local partners to redevelop the site, the council has secured a £5m Local Growth Fund investment from Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) to improve the park and increase its employment capacity, with the potential to create an additional 180 jobs in the town.

New plans for Watford Business Park approved

Watford Borough Council's plans for a £20m major redevelopment project to create a business park that's fit for the future have got the go ahead.

The project includes the design of 7,100m² of commercial premises, parking and landscaping, as well as a new access route. The buildings will feature a range of modern, flexible business units, targeted at small and medium-sized businesses from the film, TV, life sciences and manufacturing sectors, amongst others.

"Croxley Park has cemented its position as one of the UK's leading business parks in recent years, with high quality workspace and wellness-focused offerings like the Hive. More is expected of today's workplaces, and even more is going to be expected as we emerge from Covid-19. Croxley Park is well placed to deliver for businesses, its employees and clients, now and long into the future."

**Paul Smith, Croxley Park
letting agent Bray Fox Smith**



WhatsApp Watford!

Watford teams up with WhatsApp to pilot a pioneering project to help local businesses bounce back.

Watford Borough Council is partnering with WhatsApp to create the UK's first 'WhatsApp High Street' of businesses running their customer communications via the free WhatsApp Business app.

Experts from WhatsApp provided training for an initial group of 12 businesses on Market Street and training remains open for

any small businesses in Watford interested in the scheme.

WhatsApp Business acts as a shopfront for a company's products and services, and helps businesses communicate with customers, keeping them engaged and informed for when they can once again open their doors.

Elected Mayor, Peter Taylor, said:

"I'm delighted a global brand like WhatsApp has chosen to work with us on this initiative, which is the first of its kind in the UK. We are committed to working with them to ensure Watford's economy succeeds as we open up after a difficult period of lockdown."

To find out more, visit: www.watfordbusiness.com/whatsapp



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Find out more at www.census.gov.uk

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Free business support programme launched for Watford

Watford Borough Council has partnered with not-for-profit and social enterprise Wenta to launch a free business support programme tailored to the needs of local residents and businesses across Watford.



The new programme, Business Recovery and Growth - Watford (BRG Watford), provides free of charge services, including one-to-one business advice, skills training webinars and workshops, access to co-working, incubation space for small businesses and specialist support. The programme is available to all Watford businesses as well as residents who are thinking of becoming self-employed.

The programme is supported by the Elected Mayor of Watford, Peter Taylor: "Our small businesses are the lifeblood of Watford's economy, providing thousands of jobs for local people and making

a vital contribution to the success of our town. We know how difficult this year has been for many of these businesses and employees, with uncertainty high and unemployment growing. I would therefore urge anyone who needs support to contact us as soon as possible and utilise Wenta's support programme. It's free and, most importantly, tailored to your needs!"

For businesses looking to adapt their services and grow, the programme also gives access to specialist advice on areas such as legal, ICT, finance, accounting and marketing. Larger businesses will be able to access mentoring and advice from other organisations in

the Hertfordshire support network such as Watford Chamber, Watford BID, Hertfordshire LEP and Hertfordshire Growth Hub.

Free incubation workspace at Wenta's business centre on Colne Way is also available for new businesses - ideal for anyone wanting to work in a collaborative environment with adviser support, as well as those unable to work from home.

CEO of Wenta, Ed Jordan, said: "We're excited to be partnering with Watford Borough Council on this initiative. The programme will deliver a very simple, direct and inclusive support service to the Watford community. A one-stop-shop for helping businesses and residents to adapt and strengthen in these challenging times."

A list of some of the free webinars and workshops are available on the Wenta and Watford Borough Council websites. They include topics such as social media, finance, website development and marketing.

Register for FREE support at: www.watfordbusiness.com/recovery
Email: info@wenta.co.uk
Call: 01923 691363

From friends to business partners

Meet the team at d20 café



Page Adela Costas, Michelle Chin and Mario Karaikos set up their own business in 2016 and are now the proud owners of the popular d20 café on Queen's Road. They have taken full advantage of the free business start-up support offered through Wenta.

Michelle said: "A few years back, we decided to make a change from our careers. All of us had such a big passion for board games. It just made sense to share our passion and open up a board game café. We just thought 'yes - we'll give it a go'."

As a first point of call, the team sought business advice from Wenta. Michelle explained: "Even though we knew about our idea and we could see our vision, it gave us a lot of validation when a business adviser understood our vision as well."

The team has utilised most of Wenta's free business support services, from skills training workshops to advice sessions.

Watford market goes upmarket

A facelift is on the cards for Watford Market as part of the council's continued commitment to improving the local area.



The improvements will include brand-new signage, renovation of the containers and paths, as well as new branding and a planting scheme to make the market greener, more inviting, and to bring a unique character to the space.

The entrances to the market will see additional improvement work and extra signage to draw in new customers and highlight speciality stalls.

Working with Market Asset Management (MAM), the council has committed £250,000 to the project, which is on track to be completed in spring.

Currently occupied market stalls will be offered assistance with

their signage and advertising, to boost the awareness of their businesses and the market itself. Dedicated social media channels have also been set up under Watford Market on Facebook and Instagram, and Watford Town Market on Twitter.

These channels will promote what's on in the market, and the range of merchandise on offer. It's hoped the project will not only boost business at the market and attract new stallholders, but that it will become yet another reason to visit Watford.

Please follow the market on [facebook.com/watfordtownmarket](https://www.facebook.com/watfordtownmarket) and [instagram.com/watfordtownmarket](https://www.instagram.com/watfordtownmarket)

Investing in Woodside Playing Fields

Plans to give Woodside Playing Fields - the Green Flag accredited park - a makeover have moved a step closer, with the first phase of the development project approved and works about to start.



The first phase focuses on creating the Woodside Community Sports Village, with a range of developments to improve the sports facilities on site, promoting an active lifestyle and encouraging greater use of the park by residents and visitors.

It will include a sports hub, providing up-to-date cricket, football and boxing facilities, changing rooms for the clubs already based at the site, including Watford Town Cricket Club and Watford Amateur Boxing Club, as well spaces for shared community use.

Peter Taylor, Elected Mayor of Watford, said: "We are lucky in Watford to have so many first class leisure facilities. One of my key manifesto commitments was to help bring a brand new family friendly facility to Woodside Playing Fields. These plans are ambitious and will give Watford residents some really great state-of-the-art facilities. I can't wait to see these improvements take shape."

New play areas for young thrill-seekers

An adventurous new toddler and junior play area will be built! Your little ones will be able to discover the play trails, swing on the jungle swing like a modern-day Tarzan, roll down the grassy mounds, zoom down the slides or just enjoy being pushed on the swings.

And to make sure everyone can join in the fun, there will be equipment that is ideal for children with disabilities.

This includes the enhancement of the existing sensory garden with a network of paths created to link the community areas and children's play area with the woodland of Albans Woods.

To complete the scene, seating and picnicking spots are sprinkled throughout the play space.

A community café in a historic setting

Bikers, sports people, walkers and busy parents will be able to relax with a drink and snack in the new park café, set in the historic stable block with outside seating and socialising and event spaces.

The café will serve a selection of hot and cold food and drinks, to eat in or take away. On top of this, it's set to feature a meeting space that can be hired out for community use.

New public toilets and additional parking is also planned to cater for increased use of the site. For more information on the project, please visit yourwoodside.co.uk

As part of the council's plan, we will also upgrade Watford's much-loved parks and open spaces, including Meriden Park and Lea Farm Recreation Ground, which will both undergo landscape improvements such as tree planting, wildflower meadows and shrub beds, as well as access improvements. For more information, visit: www.watford.gov.uk/parks

St Albans Road revitalised

Works to improve the look and feel of a key section of St Albans Road were recently completed by Watford Borough Council.

Working with local businesses and feedback from the public, the section from Brixton Road to Balmoral Road has been transformed into a sustainable and vibrant local high street to support the community and local businesses for years to come.

Improving the functionality of the road

The new sustainable drainage system will help with irrigating the trees and alleviating some of the drainage issues on the street. The location of the new street trees and planters now act as barriers to parking on the pavement.

Improving the look and feel

The removal of redundant street furniture, guard-railing and unnecessary signage has reduced street clutter and poor sighting of traffic signs. The new soft landscaping and replacement of



pavements has had a significant impact on the feel of the area and improve air quality. The project has also created new small 'squares' of high-quality public realm and community space on Hatfield Road, Victoria Road and Bruce Grove.

Increasing cycling provision

New cycle stands have been installed to provide parking facilities for cyclists while allowing a clear flow of movement for users

of the pavement and helping prevent illegal parking.

Elected Mayor of Watford, Peter Taylor said: "St Albans Road is a key route into and out of our town centre. It is used by thousands of people every day and is an important place for businesses, leisure and socialising.

"One of my key manifesto commitments was to improve this area and I am pleased we have delivered on this commitment."

Third phase of Clarendon Road transformation completed

The third phase of the project - focusing on the Beechen Grove Road intersection to the St Johns Road intersection has now been completed. Works are now progressing on the remaining section from St Johns Road to Station Road and are expected

to take around 11 months to complete.

Elected Mayor of Watford Peter Taylor said: "This is another phase of our transformative plans to improve Clarendon Road. Working together with local businesses

and Hertfordshire LEP, we've been able to transform a key entrance to our town which is used by millions of people every year. I would like to thank our partners for their involvement throughout this process and also thank our residents and visitors, who may have been inconvenienced by the works, but I'm sure who will also agree that the end result is worth it."

Watford junction forecourt transformed

Watford Borough Council, in partnership with Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), Network Rail, West Midland Trains, Murrill Construction and DPQ, have transformed the forecourt area of Watford Junction.

What was once a disjointed, cluttered space is now a safe, pedestrian-friendly area, with

more open, multifunctional space that visitors and commuters can enjoy.



One of the most noticeable additions is the large freestanding letters spelling out 'WATFORD'. This colourful and creative focal point not only dresses the area up but is also a great spot for a selfie, helping to raise the profile of our town.

New paving and lighting, lots of green planting, seating and visitor signposting, along with the beginning of a heritage trail for visitors to follow, are some of the new additions that you can see.

Elected Mayor of Watford Peter Taylor said: "8million people a year travel through Watford Junction station. The improvement works have made the station forecourt a more welcoming and interesting place and will give a much better first impression for people coming to our town.

"I would like to thank Hertfordshire LEP for their support and contribution of £300,000 towards the Watford Junction project."

A new Beryl bike-share bay is also being installed at the front of the station, encouraging visitors to cycle into the town centre and commuters to use the bikes to get around.

Town Hall Quarter signals investment in town's heritage, culture and future prosperity

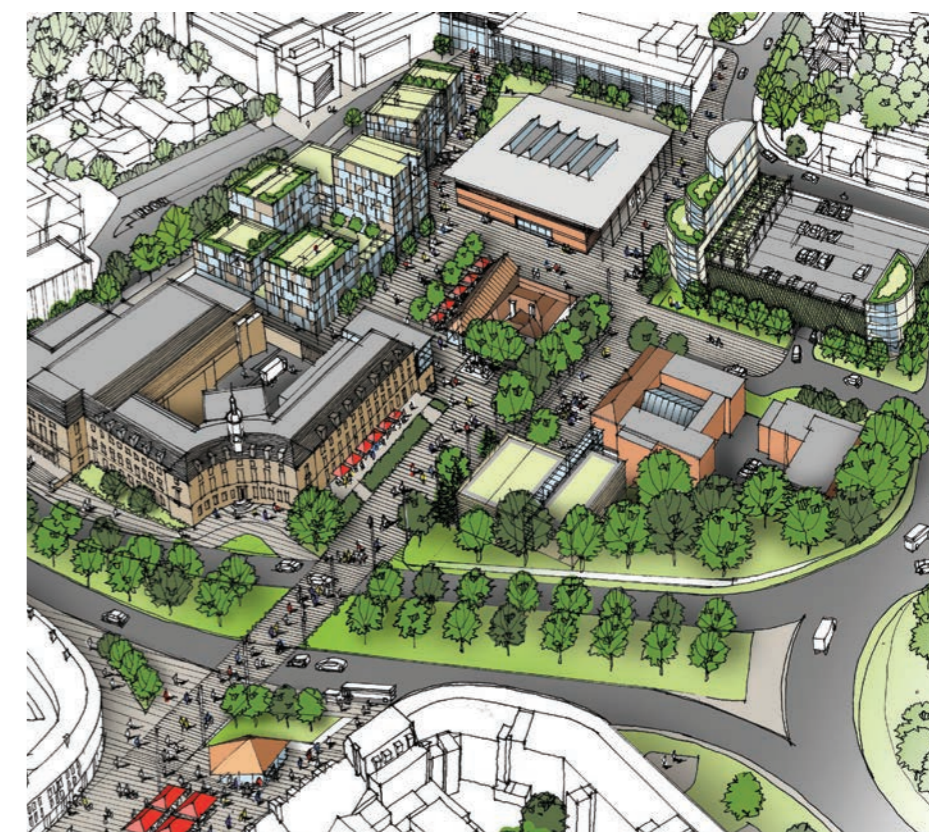
A major transformation and improvement programme, based around Watford Town Hall has been approved by Watford Borough Council's Cabinet.

The Town Hall Quarter programme will transform the area around the Grade II listed building, securing its long-term future and that of the historic Watford Colosseum, opening up the area for an attractive new neighbourhood with homes, business space and places for all the community to enjoy.

The Town Hall Quarter is an ambitious, far-reaching programme for the council, combining a number of interlinked projects, each of which, Cabinet was advised will need to demonstrate compelling benefits for Watford and the community as well as driving value for money and strong returns on any investment the council makes.

The scope of the programme reflects the council's commitment to building on Watford's outstanding reputation for culture, entertainment and live performances, with plans to refurbish and enhance Watford history.

The scheme will also seek to boost the town's economy and prosperity, promoting start-up



and growing businesses through the creation of an incubation and innovation hub within the Quarter, giving the town's entrepreneurs and innovators a shared base to foster ideas and collaborate.

Elected Mayor of Watford, Peter Taylor said: "Having the right plans in place to help Watford prosper and thrive is more important than ever as we face the challenges and opportunities of the post Covid-19 world.

"The Town Hall Quarter will create an attractive and distinctive new neighbourhood in this part of the town, promoting Watford's fantastic cultural and heritage sectors and playing an important role in our commitment to fostering new businesses and a strong local economy.

"Now we have given the green light, I am looking forward to the proposals taking shape so we can work with our residents and businesses on these exciting plans"

Covid-19 vaccination centre opened at Watford Town Hall

Watford Town Hall has opened its doors to support the Covid-19 vaccination programme. Hundreds of Watford residents have already received their jabs and many more have been booked in to receive theirs over the coming weeks.

A new Covid-19 vaccine centre was officially launched at Watford Town Hall last month, supporting the town's efforts to reduce infection rates, protect the NHS and save lives.

With the Town Hall perfectly located for a vaccination centre, Watford Borough Council has worked closely with the NHS to adapt part of the building for this new role, ensuring it is easy to access.

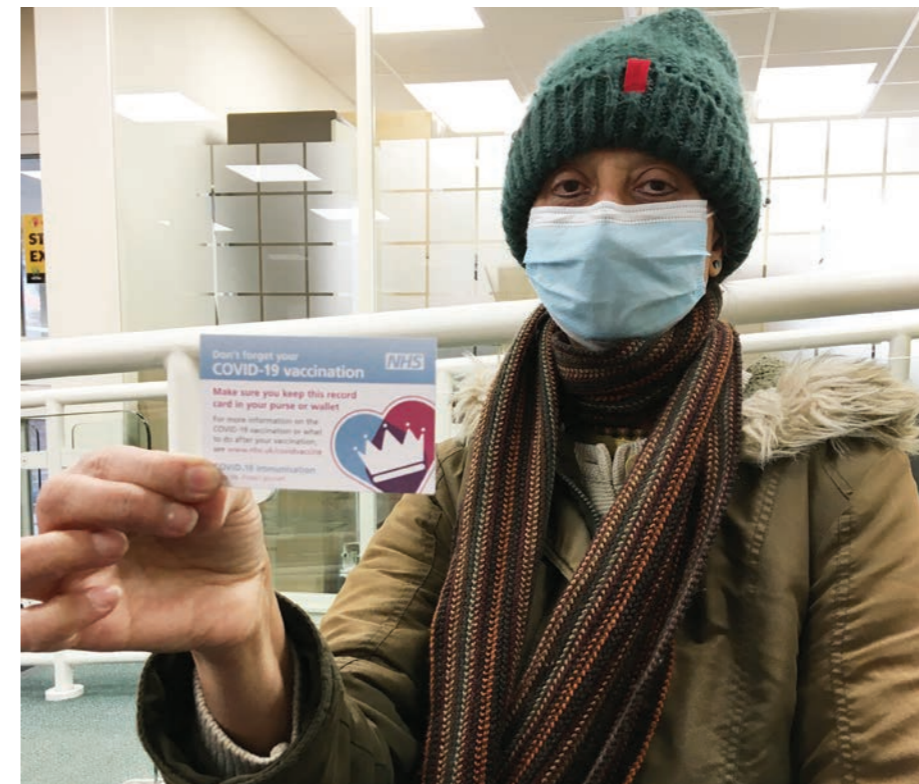
People can wait safely and the team administering the vaccine programme has everything it needs to make it quick, easy and stress-free.

Elected Mayor of Watford, Peter Taylor said: "I am delighted that the Town Hall can play such a vital role in protecting our community. It is such a landmark in Watford and so it seems fitting that it can add this role to its long history of serving our residents, perhaps the most important one it has ever played.

"We will join local GP surgeries, pharmacies and Watford General Hospital in getting this life-saving vaccine to those who need it most and I would urge everyone who is eligible to book an appointment. It is the best way we can protect ourselves, our friends and family and, hopefully, come out of this terrible pandemic together.

"I would also like to say a massive thank you to everyone who is working so hard to make this vaccine programme a success, from the clinical staff to the volunteers, everyone involved should be proud of the difference they are making."

The centre is in the extension to the Town Hall, chosen because



"I feel really happy to have it and I'm looking forward to being back at work in March. I'd tell anyone who was nervous about getting it, don't be. The centre feels very safe and welcoming."

Amita Patel, who is a teacher at Garston Manor, (pictured below) said she felt "really great" about getting the vaccine.

Describing her experience, she said: "It's been such an easy process, the system just seems to flow along. I can't wait to see family again, especially my dad, it's been so long."

it is on one level and has flexible space to accommodate the needs of the centre, which will have the capacity to deliver thousands of vaccines each week.

Vaccinations at the Town Hall are by appointment only and people should wait to be called before attending any vaccination centre.

Suzie Shakespeare, pod manager for the Watford Town Hall vaccination centre, (pictured left) said: "We have a fantastic team of staff and volunteers here at the new Watford Town Hall vaccination centre who are all working so hard. There's no need for anyone to worry about coming down, we will look after you and we can't wait to see you!"

Nina Desai, who works as a donor carer and team assistant for NHS Blood & Transplant Service, (pictured above) received her jab

recently. Describing her experience, she said: "This vaccination centre at Watford is fabulous. It was all done in no time at all and there's a lot of team spirit!"

The easiest way to arrange a vaccination is through the national booking service which can be accessed at www.nhs.uk/covid-vaccination.



New contactless donation point

to support Watford Covid Appeal charities

Quick and simple, just tap to donate £3

TAP FOR WATFORD
COVID-19 charities appeal

Tap to donate £3

Local charities are supporting many people to get through these challenging times. You can help too by giving £3.

www.watfordcovidappeal.org

Charity registration number: 1055018

TAP TO DONATE

VISA | M | G | P

These cards are processed by Watford & Three Rivers Trust. Charity registration number: 1055018.

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113 High Street,
Watford, WD17 2DQ
by shopping centre entrance

Donations spent on emergency food, supporting victims of domestic abuse, providing shelter for the homeless, care to those bereaved and more.



www.watfordcovidappeal.org



WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

One Town, One Book

The Watford Borough Council initiative encouraging everyone to read the same book in the month of March

The Book of Us
Sometimes the end is only just the beginning...
ANDREA MICHAEL

Book club discussions and workshops with the author begin 22 March.

For more information, events and activities, visit:
www.watfordtogether.co.uk



WE ARE WATFORD



watfordcouncil



WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

Something to write home about

Four years ago after a sharp rise in the number of homeless people nationally, Watford Borough Council embarked on a new four-pronged approach to tackling homelessness and rough sleeping in the borough. The benefits are now being realised with fewer people than ever living rough on the streets and fewer homeless families in temporary accommodation while they wait for a settled home.

Prevention better than cure

Preventing people from becoming homeless in the first place has been a key part of the council's strategy. The Housing team has built relationships with landlords in the borough so if tenants are struggling to pay rent, it facilitates discussions and payment plan options, including sometimes helping to pay off rent arrears, so families can stay where they are.

People about to become homeless from, for instance, their family home can also access a grant for a deposit on a new property.

Temporary and permanent homes

When people become homeless they may have to live in temporary homes for two to three years before a settled home is found either with a private landlord or with a housing association.

Becoming homeless is acutely distressing but in the past, the council would often have to place families with children in temporary homes outside Watford, such as in Luton or Amersham. Parents in this situation would have to uproot their children from Watford schools and consider giving up their jobs too.

The council has changed this so that all temporary homes are now located within Watford. Children can then continue their education

"In November 2016 there were 233 households with 391 children in temporary homes. In November 2020 there were 90 households with 101 children. Our success at preventing homelessness so fewer households need to live in temporary homes, making it good quality and now locating it all in Watford are fantastic achievements. I am very proud of what we have accomplished in reducing the trauma of homelessness for Watford households."

**Cllr Stephen Johnson,
Portfolio Holder for Housing
and Property**

without disruption and parents can hold on to their jobs and any support they may have from relatives and friends in the town. The council also tries to make sure that families in temporary homes have enough bedrooms and are also self-contained as far as possible.

The council works closely with Watford Community Housing (WCH) and other housing associations on long term affordable accommodation for people. The Housing Team is working with WCH on helping under-occupying tenants move to smaller accommodation, freeing up larger sized homes for homeless families with children.

WCH also partners with the council on delivering the Mayor's manifesto promise to build new homes in the borough with lower rents, which will become available later this year. Hart Homes, a joint council and WCH venture, is building new affordable homes in Holywell and near Watford General Hospital.

Holistic support for rough sleeping

Many people living on the streets have complex needs, including poor mental health, substance abuse and an array of other issues. Both a roof and providing wraparound support are essential in helping rough sleepers find a positive pathway out of their situation.

Since 2017, the council has successfully obtained government funding to put the right support in place for rough sleepers. Initially, funding was used to create a street outreach and intervention team (working within homelessness charity New Hope) who have daily one-to-one contact with rough sleepers, helping them get the support they need.

In early 2020 we embarked on a new project with One YMCA (OY), who provide over 40 rooms and support in their Charter Place building for rough sleepers aimed at helping them back on the pathway to recovery and independent living. This spring, the council (again with One YMCA) will open a further supported housing scheme for single people and couples without children who are homeless or rough sleeping.

With further government funding, OY and WCH are also working with us to provide temporary self-contained studios and more permanent homes with support for single people who have slept rough for a long time.

"In January 2021 there were no verified rough sleepers on Watford's streets. This doesn't mean we will never see rough sleepers again in the town but together with local partners, the council is succeeding in putting in place the right support at the right time so no-one needs to sleep rough in Watford and can be helped back to independent living."

**Peter Taylor,
Elected Mayor of Watford**

The COVID pandemic has brought uncertain times and you may be worried about losing your home. We're here to help: the earlier you can contact the council the more likely we can help you stay where you are or help you find a new place to live. See the council's website: www.watford.gov.uk/homeless-advice email us at: housing@watford.gov.uk or phone us on **01923 226400**.



Cemetery chapel to host local creative talent

The foyer of the 162-year-old stone chapel at Vicarage Road cemetery has been adapted by the council and local artist Amma Gyan, to provide a contemporary creative space called 'Amanartis at the Chapel' for artists and art societies in the local area to originate and exhibit their work.

The chapel gallery will work with artists, local schools and community groups to host a variety of exhibitions and sessions in mediums such as painting, photography, textiles and mixed media.

Elected Mayor of Watford, Peter Taylor said "Amanartis will give the community a social space and help remove the feeling of isolation which is essential for everyone's general wellbeing.

When safe to do so, they will also host artist talks and demonstrations, taster sessions and community engagement events and I am really pleased to support this great initiative for the area."

To find out more, including how the space is Covid-19 secure, please email hello@amanartis.co.uk, call 07968 783760 or visit amanartis.co.uk



Awards and accolades for parks and green spaces



Cassiobury Park has been voted by the public as one of the top 10 parks in the whole of Britain, joining winners from across the UK who can all claim that they hold a very special place in the hearts of their local communities.

The poll, run by Keep Britain Tidy, was completed by over 59,000 people who cast their vote to decide on Britain's best loved green and open spaces.

Cassiobury and Oxhey parks were awarded Green Flags of excellence along with 10 of the town's other parks and green spaces - a record number in Hertfordshire. Cassiobury Park and Whippendell Wood also recently received a Green Heritage Site Award.

Herts Service to Sport Award for Oxhey Activity Park

The fantastic sport, play and leisure facilities at the recently launched Oxhey Activity Park, have been recognised with a Hertfordshire Service to Sport Award with judges describing it as 'one of the beacons of light that emerged during lockdown within Hertfordshire'.

Elected Mayor of Watford, Peter Taylor said: "The fact it's already won an award and is being recognised by people across Hertfordshire and even the country, is testament to the great facilities on offer. One of the key parts of my manifesto was to improve Watford's parks and green spaces and get more people out and about enjoying these facilities".

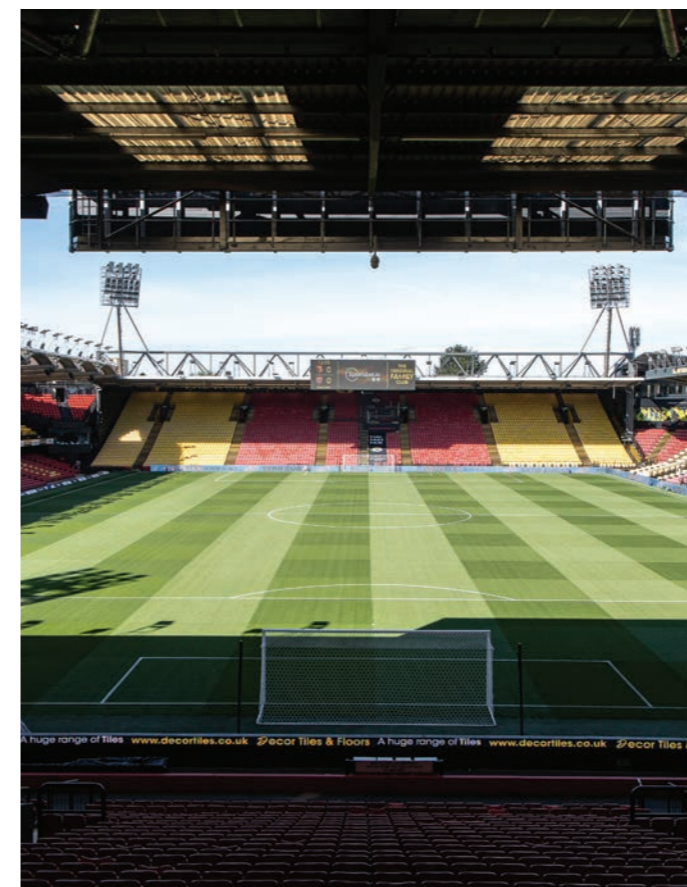
Get Involved: 100 Years At Vicarage Road!

30 August 1922 was the first time the Watford FC stadium rang to the cheers of supporters as the then known 'Brewers' took to the field for a Third Division South match against Millwall.

The club and a group of supporters are now planning a whole range of activities to commemorate 100 Years at Vicarage Road in 2022.

They are now looking for memories and items to help celebrate this important milestone and are aiming to develop a collection of resources about the stadium through the years in various forms, from books, films, exhibitions at Watford Museum, stadium signage and an interactive online gallery.

Please get in touch at vic100@watfordfc.com, and tell them what Vicarage Road means to you and the objects you've collected over the years! The club will contact you and they may then arrange an audio or video interview, or may ask to scan photos.



Museum's digital archive to commemorate 2020



2020 was a tough year for everyone but it was also a year when the residents of Watford showed incredible community spirit and many positive things were achieved in the face of adversity.

Watford Museum has created a digital archive to commemorate these things, including examples of residents going above and beyond to support people in their community, acts of kindness by neighbours and a fun mix of photos that put smiles on the faces of Watfordians in 2020.

The archive is available to view online at www.watfordmuseum.org.uk

If you have any pictures from last year that you will look back on fondly, please send them to Museum curator Sarah Priestley via email to sarah.priestley@watford.gov.uk so they can be added to the Watford Museum 2020 Digital Archive.

Polling stations will be safe places to vote in May, but there are other ways to vote.



Want to vote by post?
Apply early

Find out more at electoralcommission.org.uk/voter



How your council lines up

In Watford we have an Elected Mayor, Peter Taylor, who was elected for a four-year term on 3 May 2018. You can contact the Mayor if you wish to raise an issue with him directly.

Watford Borough is divided into 12 wards. Each ward has three councillors whom you elect to represent you for a four-year term. Councillors can be contacted on the phone numbers shown or by email and are there for you to discuss any issues or concerns you have about your neighbourhood or the town.



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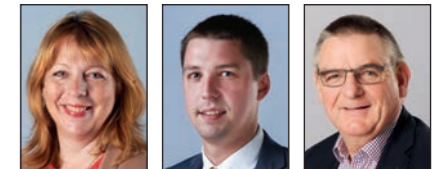


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