



COUNCIL MEETING

Wednesday, 16th March, 2016

7.30 pm

Town Hall, Watford

Publication date: 10 March 2016

CONTACT

If you require further information or you would like a copy of this agenda in another format, e.g. large print, please contact Caroline Harris on 01923 278372 or by email – legalanddemocratic@watford.gov.uk .

Welcome to this meeting. We hope you find these notes useful.

ACCESS

The Council Chamber's Public Gallery is situated at the rear of the Town Hall between the main building and the side entrance to the Colosseum. Access is via the visitors' and Members' car parks.

Visitors may park in the staff car park after 4.00 p.m. and before 7.00 a.m. This is a Pay and Display car park; the current charge is £1.50 per visit.

The Council Chamber is on the mezzanine floor of the Town Hall and a lift is available.

Induction loops are available in the Council Chamber.

TOILETS (including disabled)

Toilets are situated on the first floor, near the Committee Rooms.

FIRE/EMERGENCY INSTRUCTIONS

In the event of a fire alarm sounding, vacate the building immediately following the instructions given by the Democratic Services Officer.

- Do not use the lifts
- Do not stop to collect personal belongings
- Go to the assembly point at the Pond and wait for further instructions
- Do not re-enter the building until authorised to do so.

MOBILE PHONES

Please ensure that mobile phones are switched off or on silent before the start of the meeting.

FILMING / PHOTOGRAPHY / RECORDING / REPORTING

Please note: this meeting might be filmed / photographed / recorded / reported by a party other than Watford Borough Council for subsequent broadcast or publication.

If you do not wish to have your image / voice captured you should let the Chair or Democratic Services Officer know before the start of the meeting.

An audio recording may be taken at this meeting for administrative purposes only.

10 March 2016

Councillor

You are hereby summoned to attend a meeting of the Council of the Borough of Watford to be held on Wednesday, 16th March, 2016 starting at 7.30 pm at the Town Hall, Watford to take into consideration and determine upon the following subjects, namely: -

5. MAYOR'S REPORT (Pages 5 - 10)

11. LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME (Pages 11 - 30)

Report of Cabinet 7 March 2016

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Manny Lewis', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Manny Lewis, Managing Director

Mayor's Report – March 2016

Projects

Big Word Fest

This latest Big Event is a real treat, bringing together organisations and groups from all over the town to deliver a packed programme of events. There is a huge variety of events, covering author talks, theatre, and arts and crafts. It has been very well received and the Watford Observer and BBC Three Counties radio have been great media partners for what will hopefully be the first of many literary festivals.

Cassiobury Park

Borras Construction has been appointed to carry out the £6.6m Heritage Lottery and Big Lottery funded restoration of Cassiobury Park. Based locally in St Albans, Borras is a family-owned contractor which has worked on numerous successful park restoration projects. Work began in February, starting with the construction of an eco-friendly hub building that will become the heart of the park, and act as a central welcoming point for visitors. As well as providing improved changing facilities for the pools, sports changing rooms, a new kiosk and upper floor café, the hub will include a flexible teaching and exhibition space.

The Bandstand

The historic Cassiobury Bandstand has been taken for a revamp before being returned to its home in the park. Due to open in September in its original 1920s location, the bandstand will have a new colour scheme using the colours from the Capel family coat of arms. Work to remove the bandstand from its current location started in early March. It is being taken to the Lost Art workshop, a conservation and restoration metalwork specialist where it will receive a new soundboard, a restored roof and a lick of paint.

Watford Health Campus Projects

The Metropolitan Line Extension and Watford Health Campus projects are full steam ahead, with works gathering pace this Spring. Transport for London (TfL) is building a new viaduct over Baldwins Lane as part of the Metropolitan Line Extension (MLX). Before they can do this, the various utility companies need to divert existing gas, water, electric and communication services. This will involve some traffic management around Baldwins Lane and the A412 Watford Road.

Another important step has been reached in the creation of the Watford Health Campus with the Government approval of the scheme's CPO. In approving the Health Campus CPO, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government recognises that the Health Campus will make a significant contribution to improving

the 'economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the area'. The benefits the Secretary of State notes in his decision, include the new homes that will be delivered, which will include affordable housing and the improvements to the local environment, such as cleaning up contaminated land and reducing flood risks in the area.

Investing in the Future of the Town Centre

As part of the plans for improving the town centre, the Council is proposing to widen the pavement on the western side of the High Street, between the Met Quarter and Water Lane. Officers are currently talking with affected businesses and groups to get their views and then the Council will go out to a public consultation later in the year.

Better Business for All partnership

The Hertfordshire Better Business for All (BBfA) partnership, of which Watford is one of the leaders, was shortlisted for two BBfA awards. Herts was the only partnership up for two awards and we came runners-up for our Regulators Training Programme initiative. From a field of 26, we also took third place in the Partnership of the Year category. A number of the shortlisted partnerships, including some of the winners, referenced Hertfordshire's partnership for helping them on their journey by sharing our products and advice. This goes to show what great partnership working is happening in the Council.

Spring Clean

To welcome in the Spring, the Council launched a two-week town-wide spring clean on 4 March. The start of the spring clean coincided with the national Clean for the Queen campaign (4-6 March) and the Council is aiming to have the highest number of clean-up activities of any town in the UK. Our partners at Veolia, who do a wonderful job of cleaning the town, are providing clean-up kits – including litter-pickers and special purple bin-bags.

The Regeneration of Ascot Road

The Council has signed a new 250 year lease with regeneration specialist Orion Land and Leisure for their site by Ascot Road, West Watford. Works will soon begin on site to de-contaminate it, after which time, Orion is hoping to put on some pop-up events and activities. The planning process is expected to take up to two years. Residents should look out for the planning application in the autumn of this year. Completion of the new development is hoped to be in line with the opening of the new Cassiobridge tube station in 2020.

Partnership Working

I had my regular catch up meeting with Chief Inspector Wheatley and following these discussions there was a presentation to One Watford which showed interesting variations in crime in the town. In particular with regard to the night time economy for which there is good news. The presentation also highlighted the emergence of different kinds of issues clearly showing our population is changing and that crime patterns are also changing.

AstroTurf for Meriden

Watford FC's Community Sports and Education Trust is starting a refurbishment of Meriden Community Centre with the installation of a third generation artificial grass pitch by early May. Replacing the weathered multi-use games area, the pitch will make better use of the space, be easier to look after and can be used in any weather. The project is being partly funded by Watford Borough Council

Crime Stoppers Campaign

I was invited to the "Crime Stoppers Hard to Reach Campaign Hertfordshire" at the Asda Shopping Centre in North Watford along with the Police and Crime Commissioner. This campaign was launched with a 7 day tour of a Crimestoppers ad-van, using multi-lingual Crimestoppers messages.

Supporting Local Organisations

British Polio Fellowship

I was delighted to visit the British Polio Fellowship's new premises in Watford which was officially opened by her Royal Highness the Duchess of Gloucester. The Royal visit was a wonderful way to mark a new Central Office and a new Chapter in the 77 years of the British Polio Foundation.

Herts Fire and Rescue

I recently enjoyed attending a Passing Out Parade of the Watford Local Intervention Fire Education (LIFE) Course. This is a 5 day intensive workshop delivered by specially trained fire-fighters on a monthly basis at a designated local Community Fire Station within Hertfordshire. The LIFE project is a Youth Intervention Programme run by Herts Fire and Rescue to install discipline and respect into Young People's lives.

Watford Half Marathon

It was a pleasure to present the Awards to the winners of the Watford Half Marathon in Cassiobury Park. It was really inspiring to see such a great turnout and the enthusiasm of all the runners.

Business News

Intu Centre extension

The demolition phase of the £150 million Charter Place redevelopment is nearly finished and soon the construction of the new shopping centre will get underway.

The plans will see the redeveloped Charter Place Shopping Centre integrated with the existing Intu shopping centre, to establish new public realms for entertainment and events, large modern retail units, a restaurant hub and cinema.

Intu also intends to refurbish the existing centre, so the end result will be a single, modern, vibrant 1.4million sq ft destination.

Once the work is complete in 2018, property research consultancy CACI estimates that Watford will be part of its top 20 ranking for national retail destinations, alongside Edinburgh and Bristol.

Debenhams to be Anchor Store

I am delighted to say that Debenhams has signed up to take a unit in the extension of the Intu Centre. The addition of Debenhams will significantly increase the appeal of Watford as a shopping destination. Debenhams joins other confirmed occupants: Cineworld with its nine-screen IMAX cinema and restaurants.

Wilkinsons

I was really pleased to be opening the New Wilkos Store in February. The store was clearly missed during its move from Charter Place and subsequent refurbishment, as there was a great queue of people waiting to flood through the doors as soon as they were open again!

Car park refurbishments

The refurbishment of Church, Gade and Sutton car parks by CitiPark is almost complete and many people are looking forward to accessing the best car parks in Watford.

CitiPark are finalising the much needed upgrade, not only aesthetically but with improved CCTV and industry-leading technology such as Automatic Number Plate

Recognition (ANPR) and a brand new parking management system, altogether allowing for a quicker, easier and more secure parking experience.

All three of the CitiPark car parks in Watford are currently open 24/7 with the final touches close to completion.

Food Hygiene in town centre

Nearly 80% of food and drinks outlets in Watford have received top scores for hygiene. Recent statistics showed that 60.3% of Watford's food and drinks venues are rated 'very good' scoring 5 out of 5 with a further 18.6% scoring 4 and being rated 'good'.

Engaging the Community

Doctor's Strikes

I went along to meet the people on the picket line for the recent Doctor's strikes. I felt it was important to hear their concerns and issues at first hand. It is very disappointing that this situation still remains unresolved.

Meeting with Under Secretary of State

I met recently with Ben Gummer MP, Under Secretary of State for Care Quality. I was very concerned about the fact that Watford General Hospital has been in a difficult situation for several years. I discussed with him the progress of the Trust getting out of Special Measures. I felt it was important to have the Government's take on the state of our Trust and its prospects for improvement. I am pleased to say that the meeting was positive. I also outlined with him, the plans to assist the Hospital with its regeneration and improvement of facilities.

Bookshop

I've had many residents contact me regarding their concern that we have lacked a real Bookshop in the Town since 2012. I completely agree with them and I have therefore written to Waterstones and Amazon to ask them to consider bringing a store to Watford. I very much hope for a positive response.

TfL Zoning for stations in Watford

There is huge frustration among commuters regarding the peculiar zoning which makes Watford stations more expensive to travel to central London than from similar stations in other areas. I have therefore written to Transport for London to ask that there is a review of the anomaly that placed Watford Junction outside the normal zones 1-9 and I await a response.

Children's Mental Health Week

It was Children's Mental Health week 1 – 14 February and I was really pleased to be invited to visit Laurence Haines School who have embarked on a two year national Nurturing In Schools programme, the first school in Hertfordshire to do so. This programme embeds emotional well-being at the heart of the school community, which I fully support.

International Women's Day

We celebrated International Women's Day on 8 March and I joined in the activities at Watford Central Library hosted by Watford Women's Centre. We celebrated the "WOW" (Women of Watford) factor, whilst recognising there is a long way to go. The event was supported by many organisations in the town including Watford Women's Refuge, Watford and Three Rivers Refugee Project and the Police

Watford Sheltered Workshop

I was invited to join the Watford Sheltered Workshop as their Patron when they had a visit from the Minister for Disabled People. It's good that this enterprise still continues in Watford when many across the country have closed down.

Council News

Museum Rosette

Watford Museum has been awarded the accreditation of VisitEngland's Quality Assured Visitor Attraction. The assessment recognised the wealth of interesting items featured in the Museum along with the building's façade, painted railings and exceptionally well maintained garden, which all combine to create a great first impression and experience for visitors.

Skateboarding

Watford Borough Council has imported £4,500 worth of specialist skateboarding ramps from the USA for people to use during the free Friday night Skates and Ladders sessions at Watford YMCA. The sessions run from 7.30pm to 9pm and are provided through the Council's Get Active programme to improve health and fitness levels in Central Watford.

We have also begun consultation on a potential new up to date skate park existing alongside a new BMX track and improved cycling facilities. Early days yet but an exciting new community facility for young people and families, subject to consultation of course.

REPORT TO COUNCIL – 16 March 2016

REPORT OF CABINET – 7 March 2016

Cabinet met on 7 March 2016. The minutes are published on the Council's website.

The following Members were present at the meeting:

Present:

Mayor Dorothy Thornhill
Councillor Johnson
Councillor Scudder
Councillor Sharpe
Councillor Taylor
Councillor Watkin

Also present:

Councillor Bell
Councillor Martins
Councillor Mehta

The following was a recommendation to Council:

62. LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME 2016-19

A report was received from the Head of Regeneration and Development. The Local Development Scheme (LDS) set out the subject, scope and timetable for the preparation of the Local Plan Documents.

During 2016-19 it was expected that Local Plan 2 would be completed and adopted and have commenced a review of the Local Plan Strategy to advance the end date to 2036.

Councillor Sharpe introduced the report and commented that the local development scheme was a timetable for producing planning policy documents. It was a requirement in the 2004 Act which envisaged an easy to operate planning system. Watford was ahead of other local authorities as it was coming to the end of Local Plan 2. The report set out the timetable of Local Plan 2 and also for the ongoing process.

The Mayor thanked the Head of Regeneration and Development's team.

RESOLVED

That Cabinet:

1. supports the timetable set out in the Local Development Scheme.
2. agrees that the Local Development Scheme is recommended for approval to Council on 16 March – with a commencement date of 1 April 2016.

PART A

Report to: Cabinet
Date of meeting: 7th March 2016
Report of: Head of Regeneration and Development
Title: Local Development Scheme 2016-19

1.0 **SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The Local Development Scheme (LDS) sets out the subject, scope and timetable for the preparation of Local Plan Documents. Each LDS covers a 3 year period – the last one ran from April 2013 so a new one is needed to cover the period 2016-19.
- 1.2 During this 3 year period we expect to complete and adopt Local Plan Part 2 and commence work on a review of the Local Plan Strategy to take account of the most up to date evidence and to advance the end date to 2036.
- 1.3 It is important to have an up to date Local Development Scheme. As well as providing useful information for the local community and stakeholders who will be involved in the plan preparation process, compliance with the published scheme is one of the soundness tests when Local Plans are examined.
- 1.4 During this period we also expect to undertake a review of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule and to prepare a number of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) and Development Briefs, some of which are already underway. These include:

Skyline – Watford’s Approach to taller buildings (SPD)
Watford Junction Development Brief
S106 Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document

The timetable for these does not need to be included in the Local Development Scheme.

2.0 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That Cabinet supports the timetable set out in the Local Development Scheme.
- 2.2 That the Local Development Scheme is recommended for approval to Council on 16th March– with a commencement date of 1st April 2016.

- 2.3 That, it is also recommended to Council that, updates to the Local Development Scheme can be made by the Head of Regeneration and Development in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Development

Contact Officer:

For further information on this report please contact: Vicky Owen, Spatial Planning Manager
telephone extension: 8281 email: vicky.owen@watford.gov.uk

Report approved by: Jane Custance, Head of Regeneration and Development.

3.0 **DETAILED PROPOSAL**

- 3.1 The Local Development Scheme (LDS) sets out what the Local Plan will cover and the timetable for its preparation. It is a public document and one that is referred to in the examination process. The proposed LDS is at Appendix A to this report.
- 3.2 At examination, the inspector will consider whether the local plan document being examined has been prepared in accordance with the latest LDS. This forms part of the assessment of soundness. It is therefore important that the scope and preparation timetable are both accurate and achievable, given available resources, and potential changes to those resources. A detailed risk assessment has therefore been prepared, which highlights potential risks of slippage and measures that may need to be taken to minimise the likelihood and impact of those risks. This is at Appendix B to the report.
- 3.3 The main risks to achieving the timetable are identified as staff budget pressures; the mechanisms of joint working on strategic issues with other authorities and partners working to different timetables. Further national changes to the planning system are also a likely risk.
- 3.4 The proposed LDS sets out a timetable for completing the Local Plan Part 2. Along with the Local Plan Part 1 Core Strategy adopted in 2013, this would replace any remaining “saved” policies from the Watford District Plan 2000.
- 3.5 Alongside this, work has already begun on the evidence to inform a plan review. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is clear that plans must be kept up to date and be based on joint working and co-operation to address larger than local issues. Thus much of this evidence will be prepared together with surrounding authorities and progress on plan reviews will therefore be linked. The LDS sets out a timetable for a review of the Local Plan Strategy to ensure it remains up to date.

4.0 **IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 **Financial**

- 4.1.1 There is an annual budget of approximately £100,000 to support Local Plan

preparation. It is estimated that around £100,000 per year will be required for the evidence studies and sustainability appraisal and engagement programme . It is also anticipated that a further £60,000 will be required for examination costs (including legal support); any budget shortfall will be met from the Examination in Public – LDF Reserve.

4.2 **Legal Issues** (Monitoring Officer)

4.2.1 The Head of Democracy and Governance comments that the LDS has to be approved by Council

4.3 **Equalities**

4.3.1 No equalities impact has been identified in relation to the scope and preparation timetable of the Local Plan. The Local Plan documents will be subject to equalities impact assessment as they are prepared.

4.4 **Potential Risks**

Potential risks are identified in Appendix B.

4.5 **Sustainability**

4.5.1 Progressing with the Local Plan will help the council to make sustainable decisions on planning applications. The Local Plan documents themselves will be subject to separate sustainability appraisal.

Appendices

- Appendix A: Local Development Scheme 2016-19
- Appendix B: Risk Assessment

Background Papers

- No papers were used in the preparation of this report.

File Reference

- SP 2.3.2

Local Development Scheme

A work programme for Watford's Local Plan
2016-2019

1st April 2016

This document can be made available in alternative formats including large print. The council also has staff who can verbally translate the document into a range of other languages.

Please contact us on telephone: 01923 226400 for more information.

Contents

- 1. What Is the Local Development Scheme?**
- 2. Why is a new LDS needed?**
- 3. What Is a Local Plan?**
- 4. Monitoring and Review.**
- 5. Local Plan Documents Scope and Timetable**
- 6. Resources and Risk Management.**

1. What is the Local Development Scheme?

- 1.1. The Local Development Scheme (LDS) is a public statement of Watford Borough Council's three year programme for the preparation of the Local Plan. The programme is agreed by council resolution and comes into effect on 1st April 2016.
- 1.2. The LDS contains:
 - A brief description of the Local Plan documents the council will prepare in the next 3 years.
 - A preparation timetable.
 - Information on how the council will monitor progress against the timetable.

2. Why is a new LDS needed?

- 2.1. The council's last LDS was published in April 2013 and covers the 3 year period to March 2016. During the last period Local Plan Part 1 Core Strategy and the CIL charging schedule were adopted (2013 and 2015 respectively).
- 2.2. This LDS covers the period from 2016 to 2019. During this period we intend to complete the Watford Local Plan with the adoption of Local Plan part 2 and to commence a plan review to take account of more recent evidence.
- 2.3. Although we expect that the Local Plan documents will be prepared by and for Watford Borough Council, and that their coverage will be borough-wide, their preparation will be based on effective cooperation with neighbouring authorities, public, voluntary and private sector organisations. In particular, in line with good planning practice, and the Duty to Cooperate specifically set out in the National Planning Policy Framework, we will work with other organisations to identify and address issues which cross administrative boundaries and relate to strategic priorities.
- 2.4. For more information about the Watford Local Plan you can look at the council website www.watford.gov.uk or contact us as below.

Planning Policy Team
Watford Borough Council
Town Hall
Watford
Herts
WD17 3EX

Tel: 01923 278263 email: strategy@watford.gov.uk

3. What is the Local Plan?

3.1. The Local Plan sets out planning policy. It sets out the strategic priorities and development considerations for the area and is used in determining planning applications.

3.2. The development plan for Watford consists of:

- The remaining saved policies of the Watford District Plan 2000, until replaced (which will happen on the adoption of Local Plan Part 2)
- Local Plan documents prepared by the council and subject to independent examination (currently the Local Plan Core Strategy, adopted in 2013); and
- The Minerals and Waste Local Plan, prepared by Hertfordshire County Council.

The National Planning Policy Framework, originally published by the Government in 2012, and accompanying National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) are also of material consideration but do not form part of the statutory development plan.

3.3. Local Plan documents forming part of the development plan are subject to Sustainability Appraisal and to a formal examination in public (EIP). For Watford, these will comprise:

- **Local Plan Part 1 - Core Strategy** (adopted Jan 2013)
- **Local Plan Part 2 – Development Management and Site Allocation Policies**

Any policies making a change to a land use allocation will be illustrated on the **Adopted Policies Map**.

We will also be working on reviewing the Local Plan Strategy to cover the period to 2036.

3.4. The Local Plan also contains other supporting documents, available on the council's website:

- **Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs)**
- **Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) (2010)**
- **Authority's Monitoring Report** (produced annually)
- **Local Development Scheme** (this document)
- **The CIL Charging Schedule (2015)**

3.5. New supplementary planning documents proposed include:

- **Skyline – Watford's Approach to taller buildings**
- **S106 Planning Obligations**

3.6. Development briefs are also to be prepared, including for the Watford Junction Special Policy Area.

4. Monitoring and Review

- 4.1. Each year the council publishes a monitoring report (AMR), covering the year from the start of April of the preceding year to the end of March. The AMR compares the progress of Local Plan preparation to the timetable in the LDS. It also assesses the effectiveness of Local Plan policies, and the significant effects, and reports monitoring data for the borough.
- 4.2. The AMR will therefore act to flag up both policy changes which may be required, and whether a review of the preparation timetable is necessary.
- 4.3. Due to the increase in population and demand for new homes and employment space, a review of the Local Plan Strategy is proposed taking account of emerging technical work on housing and employment growth.

5. Local Plan documents scope and timetable.

5.1. The tables below describe the scope and content of the Local Plan and a timetable for the main stages in production. The adopted proposals map will be revised when any document is adopted which makes changes to the map in order to illustrate geographically the application of the policies.

5.2. The main formal stages in plan preparation are as follows:

- **Notification (Reg 18)**

This stage involves notifying those bodies or persons specified in the Regulations (The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 that we intend to prepare a Local Plan document; the subject of that document, and inviting representations on what such a document should contain.

In practice there will be consultation stages between this and publication to allow for the development and sustainability appraisal of reasonable alternatives, and for public participation in plan preparation. Indicative times for these are given in the table below for information – the number of stages of informal consultation required will depend on the outcome of earlier consultation and sustainability appraisal.

- **Publication (Reg 19)**

The Local Plan Document, as intended for submission to the Secretary of State, will be published for formal consultation.

- **Submission (Reg 22)**

The Local Plan Document is submitted for independent examination by a planning inspector, along with all comments received at the publication stage.

- **Examination (Reg 24)**

An independent inspector is appointed by the planning inspectorate to assess the soundness of the submitted plan. The inspector will take all comments received into account.

- **Adoption (Reg 26)**

The stage at which the council formally adopts the Local Plan document as part of the development plan.

The Watford Local Plan 2006-2031 – Part 2

Title	Local Plan Part 2
Subject Matter	Site allocations and development management policies, to deliver the adopted Local Plan Part 1 Core Strategy.
Status	Local Plan Document:
Geographic coverage	Watford Borough
Timetable	
Notification	November 2012
<i>Informal consultation</i>	Autumn 2013 – March 2016
Publication (for consultation)	August 2016
Submission	February 2017
Examination	March – November 2017
Adoption	January 2018

The Watford Local Plan Strategy 2016-2036

Whilst completing work on Local Plan Part 2, we are already looking ahead to reviewing the Local Plan to cover the period to 2036. This plan will take account of the most up to date information on development needs in the area.

Title	Local Plan Strategy 2016-2036
Subject Matter	The Local Plan Strategy document will set out the overall strategy and broad locations for development in Watford to 2036.
Status	Local Plan Document:
Geographic coverage	Watford Borough
Timetable	
Notification	March/April 2016
<i>Informal consultation</i>	December 2017 and July 2018
Publication (for consultation)	December 2018
Submission	July 2019
Examination	Aug 2019-Dec 2019
Adoption	February 2019

6. Resources and Risk Management

Resources

- 6.1. The Local Plan is prepared by the council's Planning Policy Group. Allowing for other work responsibilities, and planned absences such as leave and training, the Group is currently able to dedicate around 14 person days per week to Local Plan preparation.
- 6.2. The need for an external consultant to fulfil our Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment requirements is ongoing. External consultants are also used to prepare background evidence base studies, and they are appointed on an as needed basis.
- 6.3. The policy team has an annual budget for the production of supporting studies for local plan preparation, which is £98K per annum from 2016-2017.

Risks

- 6.4. A separate risk assessment has been undertaken of risks which may affect our ability to prepare documents in line with the planned timetable. A key risk relates to staffing levels, given the likely continuation of cuts in local government funding and pressure on resources. This may affect both staffing levels within the team, and the contribution other relevant staff within the council are able to make to our work. Increased use of outside consultants or temporary staff may be required to keep plan preparation on time. Alternatively, if the budget does not allow this, the timetable may have to slip, and if so, will need to be revised.
- 6.5. Another significant risk to the timetable is the process of working closely with neighbouring authorities and other agencies through the Duty to Co operate, particularly in relation to the need to agree the distribution of housing, employment and other uses across a wider area. This means that both evidence and discussions on how that evidence should be translated into local policies and targets will need to be coordinated at both officer and political level which is likely to have timing implications. Any failure to fulfil this duty properly would mean the plan being found unsound.
- 6.6. Further changes to the national planning system pose a high risk that may introduce additional delay and uncertainty.
- 6.7. Another potential risk is the emergence of neighbourhood planning. Currently there are no neighbourhood plans being produced in Watford. However should a group wish to prepare such a plan, resources will need to be diverted from the Planning Policy team to assist in the production of a neighbourhood plan.

Risk Assessment to accompany the Local Development Scheme 2016-19

There are a number of potential risks that could affect the council's ability to achieve key milestones. Whilst it is difficult to say if and when such risks may occur, the following factors could have a significant impact and may result in a need to review the LDS:

Risk	Impact on timetable	Likelihood (assuming no mitigation)	Impact and likelihood without mitigation	Mitigation	Impact, and likelihood, with mitigation
Staffing					
Budget pressures constraining level of staff resources, vacancies or other absence.	3	3	9	Seek to fill vacancies and cover planned long term absence. Could use agency staff at peak times or use consultants for additional elements of work but this would depend on budget.	6
Limited availability of other relevant council staff.	3	3	9	Seek input from other teams as early as possible and ensure Heads of service briefed through LT.	6
Insufficient wider engagement/ corporate buy-in	3	2	6	Ensure Planning Policy team is represented on relevant forums and engages with LT/ELT at key stages	4
External input/influence					

Risk	Impact on timetable	Likelihood (assuming no mitigation)	Impact and likelihood without mitigation	Mitigation	Impact, and likelihood, with mitigation
Other organisations timetables and resources affecting ability to comply with Duty to Cooperate on strategic issues. Several agencies have already told us they no longer have the resources to comment on individual plans and instead offer guidance notes or checklists on what they expect Local Plans should contain.	3	3	9	Use checklists where provided and liaise directly with relevant organisations where specific input is required.	6
Political Issues					
Political decisions across the wider area resulting in failure to reach agreement on wider than local issues through Duty to Cooperate.	4	3	12	Raising key issues at the earliest opportunity and maintaining an ongoing dialogue.	10
Changing political priorities within the council	3	2	6	No mitigation required.	6
Political timetable and lead in times to decision making process. Risk of decision being called in.	2	2	4	No mitigation required	4
Further changes to the planning	3	4	12	Not within our control, but we	10

Risk	Impact on timetable	Likelihood (assuming no mitigation)	Impact and likelihood without mitigation	Mitigation	Impact, and likelihood, with mitigation
system.				can keep up to date with changes.	
Procedural Risks					
Failure of soundness tests	4	2	8	Self assess compliance and take note of other examinations – particularly within the local area.	6
Procedural omissions	Minor 2	3	6	Always check requirements	4
	Significant 2	2	8		4
Other risks					
IT problems/failure	2	4	8	Being addressed at corporate level	8
Emergencies affecting Town Hall/staff	2	1	2	Council has an emergency plan. Documents are stored electronically and staff are set up for home working.	2

Impact on Timetable Key:

- 4 Potential need to start again
- 3 Delay of over a year
- 2 Delay of up to a year
- 1 Minor delay

