



# CABINET

**Monday, 7th October, 2013**

**7.00 pm**

**Town Hall Watford**

**Publication date: 27 September 2013**

**CONTACT**

If you require further information or you would like a copy of this agenda in another format, e.g. large print, please contact Pat Thornton Democratic Services Manager on 01923 278372 or by email – [legalanddemocratic@watford.gov.uk](mailto:legalanddemocratic@watford.gov.uk) .

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

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## **CABINET MEMBERSHIP**

Mayor	D Thornhill	(Chair)
Councillor	D Scudder	(Deputy Mayor)
Councillors	K Crout, I Sharpe and M Watkin	

## **AGENDA**

### **PART A - OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

**2. DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST (IF ANY)**

**3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

To sign the minutes of the meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> July 2013

**4. CONDUCT OF MEETING**

The Cabinet may wish to consider whether there are any items on which there is general agreement which could be considered now, to enable discussion to focus on those items where the Cabinet sees a need for further debate.

**5. INVESTORS IN PEOPLE (Pages 1 - 24)**

Report of the Head of Human Resources

**6. APPROVAL TO COMMISSION AECOM TO UNDERTAKE THE LEVEL 2 SFRA (Pages 25 - 34)**

Report of the Head of Regeneration and Development

**7. SCRAP METAL DEALERS**

**ITEM WITHDRAWN**

**8. MANAGEMENT OF THE DISABLED PARKING TASK GROUP - FINAL REPORT (Pages 35 - 114)**

Report of the Scrutiny Officer and Task Group

**9. TO WRITE OFF IRRECOVERABLE DEBTS (Pages 115 - 118)**

Report of the Head of Revenues and Benefits

**10. APPROVAL OF THE REVISED HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY (Pages 119 - 236)**

Report of the Housing Section Head

11. **TO AGREE THAT A CHARGE CAN BE MADE TO PREMISES FOR THE COLLECTION, STORAGE AND RETURN OF ABANDONED SHOPPING TROLLEYS.** (Pages 237 - 242)

Report of the Head of Corporate Strategy and Client Services

# Agenda Item 5

**Report to:** Cabinet  
**Date of meeting:** 7<sup>th</sup> October 2013  
**Report of:** Head of Human Resources  
**Title:** Investors in People Re-accreditation, Watford Borough Council

## 1.0 SUMMARY

1.1 The purpose of the report is to update Cabinet about the outcome of Watford's Investors in People reaccreditation in 2013. No decision is required.

## 2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 The report contains no recommendations.

### **Contact Officer:**

For further information on this report please contact: Marj Setters,  
Organisational Development Manager

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**Report approved by:** Cathy Watson, Head of Human Resources

## 3.0 DETAILED PROPOSAL

3.1 The purpose of this report is to update Cabinet with the outcome of Watford's recent Investors in People reaccreditation, highlighting identified areas of strength and setting out areas of focus for the future.

### 3.2 **1. Introduction**

The purpose of this report is to update cabinet with the outcome of Watford's recent Investors in People reaccreditation, highlighting identified areas of strength and setting out areas of focus for the future.

The Investors in People (IIP) assessment was conducted during week commencing 8<sup>th</sup> July. The assessor was Robert Thomson who also conducted Watford's previous assessments in 2006 and 2010. Robert's experience at Watford has enabled him to see progress over a seven year period; this will however be his last assessment at Watford in view of his forthcoming retirement.

### 3.3 **The Level of Assessment**

Since 2009, Investors in People has offered accreditation at a number of levels: the Standard, which Watford achieved in 2006 and 2010, and three higher levels – Bronze, Silver and Gold. These levels are designed to provide a framework for further organisational improvement.

For 2013, Watford decided to be assessed against the Bronze level of accreditation. This entailed providing evidence against 65 criteria rather than 29, and it also required Watford to choose a specific theme to be assessed against. In view of the business context, Watford's chosen theme was Managing Change.

### 3.4 Initial Concerns

In some respects Bronze could arguably be seen as a cautious choice bearing in mind the positive IIP report in 2010 and the quality of organisational development initiatives launched in Watford since then. However, The Investors in People assessment at Watford traditionally coincides with a turbulent time in the organisation: in 2010 this was pay and grading and the implementation of Shared Service; in 2013 the assessment followed closely on the heels of the outsourcing of the front line services and ICT. Despite the efforts put into communication, concerns remained about staff morale and its impact on the Investors in People interview sessions.

### 3.5 The Process

During the week of the assessment, Robert Thomson interviewed 36 staff who represented a range of roles across the services, and he also reviewed a substantial amount of written evidence – including business strategy, policies, processes, and staff communications.

### 3.6 The Outcome

Despite initial concerns about morale, Watford achieved the Bronze standard of accreditation, and received an extremely positive report from the assessor, who commented:

*"It became evident, however, during the assessment interviews that there would have been the opportunity to accredit WBC at a higher level of The Standard."*

Many of the council's practices and initiatives were praised and no areas were identified as needing improvement. It is especially pleasing that despite the level of change, no negative evidence was recorded about levels of morale and engagement

#### 3.6.1 5.1 Highlights

The full report is attached as an appendix. However the assessor especially highlighted the following areas of strength:

- Clearly communicated Core Values
- The Staff Excellence Awards (SEA)
- The 'STEP' leadership and management programmes
- The Performance and Development Review (PDR) process and its clear linkage to the new competency framework, 'How We Work'
- The Skills Audit at section head level
- The use of KPIs across the organisation
- Culture of continuous learning
- Strategies, policies and procedures to promote equality and manage diversity
- Work Life Balance strategy
- Management Effectiveness
- Culture of openness and trust: the communication skills of the MD and the Heads of Service

- Communication such as Extended Leadership Team, 'Wat's Up' staff newsletter; Core Briefs; Managers' Forum
- The Elected Mayor, the MD and his ELT are recognised as inspirational leaders
- The Managing Change group and the Step Change framework
- The use of staff surveys
- Learning and Development strategy and provision including qualification support

### 3.6.2 **Opportunities for further improvement:**

- Continue to embed the value of the STEP programmes and extend its reach to officers and non-managers
- Continue to develop the Performance and Development Review process to fully embed the How We Work framework
- Consider the engagement of apprentices to support skill building and resilience for succession planning
- Use of the structure offered by the higher levels of Investors in People accreditation to add momentum to Watford's planned improvements.

Plans are already in place for several of these areas:

- Stepping Forward – a suite of development programmes for non managers – will launch in Q4
- Planning is already in place to gather feedback about the new Performance and Development Review process and build improvements into the 2014 cycle
- Apprenticeships are under consideration currently
- The success of the 2013 reaccreditation does suggest that Watford could seek assessment against the Silver or Gold levels at the next review. This will be considered, taking into account the costs and benefits of the higher level assessment

## 4.0 **IMPLICATIONS**

### 4.1 **Financial**

The cost of the reaccreditation process was £3600 . This takes account of consultancy fees. The only other costs were staff time in attending the interviews and in planning and managing the process.

The costs of reaccreditation at silver and gold levels would be higher, reflecting a longer assessment process:

Silver: £4500

Gold: £5200

- 4.1.1 The Head of Strategic Finance (Shared Director of Finance w.e.f 1<sup>st</sup> August 2013) comments that the costs for the reaccreditation can be accommodated within the existing approved budgets.

### 4.2 **Legal Issues** (Monitoring Officer)

There are no legal issues associated with the Investors in People process.

#### 4.3 **Equalities**

There are no equalities issues associated with this report.

#### 4.4 **Potential Risks**

There are no risks associated with this report.

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#### Appendix

Appendix 1: Report from the Investors in People Assessor

#### Background Papers

No papers were used in the preparation of this report

#### File Reference

None



# INVESTORS IN PEOPLE BRONZE ASSESSMENT REPORT

## WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

**“A successful town in which people are proud to live, work, study and visit.”**

## Key Information

Assessment Type	Three-Year Assessment
Investors in People Specialist Name	Robert Thomson
Visit Dates	9 – 11 July 2013
Assessment Enquiry Number	ENQ – 82984 – WC4BCT

## Conclusion

Very good evidence was obtained of WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL's conformance to The Standard. The key findings of the Assessment indicated that the organisation meets the evidence requirements of the current version of The Investors in People Standard with 36 additional evidence requirements to achieve the Bronze Investors in People Standard.

The Appendices 2 & 3 – The Assessment Results Summary on Page 17 and the Investors in People Single Framework Topics, Pages 18-19, indicate the creditable achievement of the relevant evidence requirements across all Indicators linked to WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL's priority business objectives and the selected Management Theme – “Managing Change”.

May I also extend my thanks to all those who took part in the assessment process for their open and honest feedback in respect of their experience within WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL (WBC). Special thanks are due to the HR Learning and Development Officer who coordinated and planned the Assessment, providing the documentation requested both at the preparation stages and during the Assessment. It was a very pleasant and enjoyable process.

## Milestone Dates

Review of Continuous Improvement Plan	18 December 2014 (18 Months from the Assessment Date).
Date of Next Full Assessment	18 June 2016 (36 Months from Anniversary Date)

***It should be noted that “As of 1 April 2012, any organisation that has met the requirements of the Standard is required to undertake an interaction with its Specialist within 18 months of the organisation formally achieving or maintaining its Investors in People accreditation. Please note this is not an optional activity: all organisations must undertake this interaction to maintain their Investors in People accreditation, although the flexible activity can be designed around the organisation's needs to add the greatest value and impact.”***

Specialist Name: Robert Thomson  
Investors in People Specialist  
12 July 2013

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## Executive Summary

During this Assessment, sufficient evidence was obtained to identify the Strengths and the Areas for Development to be included in the Continuous Improvement Plan. Having conducted the Assessment in accordance with Investors in People UK and Investors in People Central England's guidelines, I am pleased to confirm that Watford Borough Council (WBC) meets The Investors in People Standard with 36 additional evidence requirements linked to the company's business priorities and the selected management theme – "Managing Change".

In view of the significant changes during the last five years, including the outsourcing of Waste Management, Street Cleaning, Parks & Recreation and ICT, completed 1 July 2013, it was decided to be assessed for the Standard at Bronze level rather than Silver or Gold. It became evident, however, during the assessment interviews that there would have been the opportunity to accredit WBC at a higher level of The Standard. Consideration should be given to this when planning for the next Assessment or, for the statutory interaction with the Specialist, taking the decision to upgrade to a higher level: Evidence Requirements accredited can be 'banked' for up to 12 months. Some evidence was gained during the Assessment, but not accredited, from the following topic areas, with further reference to Appendix 3 for the relevant Additional Evidence Requirements:

- ❖ Clear Core Values relate to vision and strategy: Inclusive; Fair; Bold; and we will act with Integrity;
- ❖ The introduction of the Staff Excellence Awards (SEA) to recognise the contribution people are making to delivering high quality services, both internally and externally;
- ❖ The introduction and the further development of the 'STEP' leadership and management programme for senior managers, line managers and non managers;
- ❖ Revision of the Performance and Development Review (PDR) process and its clear linkage to the competency framework, 'How We Work';
- ❖ Skills Audit at section head level, contributing to the ability to define the current and future range of skills, experience and knowledge which managers need in line with the council's corporate priorities: this will ensure that any gaps and areas of excellence can be identified;
- ❖ KPIs to improve performance: KPIs are in place; KPI performance is rated as part of the PDR process;
- ❖ Corporate Social Responsibility is part of the council's culture;
- ❖ Culture of continuous learning is evident;
- ❖ Recruitment and Selection process meets the needs of the organisation and is efficient and effective;
- ❖ Strategies, Policies and procedures are in place to promote equality and manage diversity;
- ❖ Work Life Balance strategy meets peoples' needs with linkage to performance improvement: flexible working; home-working facilities; compassionate leave policy; return from maternity leave examples; and the new telephone and data communications systems that enable efficient working from the Town Hall Office, Service Offices and working from home;
- ❖ Management Effectiveness: giving and receiving constructive feedback is valued – regular one-to-one sessions and team meetings; Managers seen as role models for leadership, teamwork and sharing knowledge; Coaching is used to help staff achieve potential and is part of the council's culture: Customer Service Centre (CSC) Team Leader role; support from Senior Managers; work shadowing practice; inspirational leadership qualities; acting on feedback from all levels in the council to improve the way they lead, manage and develop people;

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**improving performance**

- ❖ Culture of openness and trust: communication skills of the MD and his Heads of Service – Extended Leadership Team (ELT); quarterly business updates; PowerPoint presentations; ‘Wat’s Up’ staff newsletter; Core Briefs; Managers’ Forum;
- ❖ As a direct consequence of the learning partnerships formed during the STEP programmes, there is a higher level of interaction between departments: managers encourage, and people share knowledge within and across teams;
- ❖ People have a sense of ownership and pride and are committed to the success of the council;
- ❖ Effective coaching and mentoring;
- ❖ Succession planning is in place with clear opportunities for people to achieve their full potential and career progression is given sufficient priority – individual Personal Development Plans (PDPs), The effectiveness of WBC’s policies in this area is confirmed by the extent of promotion to management and leadership posts from within the council;
- ❖ Self review and information from external reviews are used to identify areas for improvement;
- ❖ Effective feedback methods are used to understand peoples’ views on how they are managed – biennial staff opinion surveys;
- ❖ Internal and external benchmarking are used: Investors in People; accreditation to the Customer Service Excellence Standard by the CSC and Building Control; Purple Flag for the Town Hall Offices and Green Flag Awards for the Parks; customer/client evaluation reports;
- ❖ The Elected Mayor, the MD and his ELT are recognised as inspirational leaders: visibility; approachable; good communicators; directly involved in projects; strong empathy with frontline managers, team members, local businesses, Council Members and Residents.

## Feedback against the requirements of The Standard

### Introduction:

Watford Borough Council (WBC) made its commitment to the Investors in People Standard during 2001/2002. Following the ‘building block’ approach where a number of individual services were successful in achieving the Standard, WBC as a whole organisation was recognised as an Investor in People in December 2006.

Since May 2002, WBC has been led by a directly-elected Mayor. The elected Mayor is the principal spokesperson for WBC, and provides political direction to the council, as well as being responsible for the implementation of council policy and delivery of services.

The delivery of Services is managed by the Managing Director (MD) and his Extended Leadership Team (ELT). Five Heads of Service, including the HR Head of Service/Head of Shared Services, are in post – the new shared services Director of Finance for WBC and Three Rivers takes up her post at the end of July.

The major changes since the 2010 Assessment are: the completion of the service prioritisation programme; the deletion of the directors posts (2); the outsourcing of ICT to Capita, May 2013; the outsourcing of waste and recycling, street cleaning and parks and open spaces services to Veolia Environmental Services, 1 July 2013; and the organisational structure to focus on managing outsourced contracts – the client management and bringing together the right skills and experience to deliver WBC’s major project commitments.

The remaining Shared Services are managed in partnership with Three Rivers District Council – HR, Finance and Revenue & Benefits, the Auditing function is managed by Hertfordshire County Council, with the payroll function outsourced to Northgate.

Staff from the HR and Revenue & Benefits Shared Services teams, were included within the interview sample. Three Rivers District Council also holds the Investors in People Standard.

WBC continues to be recognised as one of the fastest improving authorities in the country:

- ❖ Investment in major projects such as the town centre improvements, the Watford Health Campus, the redevelopment of the Charter Place shopping centre, supporting the delivery of the Croxley Rail Link and significant investments to improve the parks and playgrounds;;
- ❖ Purple Flag standard accreditation for management of the town centre;
- ❖ Three nationally-recognised Green Flag Awards; 4-star Clean Britain Awards; over 80% of residents are happy with the doorstep recycling service - in the top 11 % of councils nationally;
- ❖ The Customer Service Centre (CSC) has been reassessed and continues to hold the Customer Service Excellence Award. The Building Control team has also achieved the Customer Service Excellence Award.

WBC's Vision, Priorities and Core Values continue to be reviewed:

***Our Vision: “A successful town in which people are proud to live, work, study and visit”***

***Our Priorities: “Making Watford a better place to live in”; “To provide the strategic lead for Watford’s sustainable economic growth”; “Promoting an active, cohesive and well informed town”; “Operating the council efficiently and effectively”.***

***Our Values are: Inclusive; Fair; Bold and we will act with Integrity. “Our Values underpin the way we behave to each other and our customers and how we deliver our services.***

*“We believe it is important for our residents and customers to be clear about what they should expect when they engage with us – no matter what the issue or service area they engage with.”*

The Strengths identified during the earlier Assessments are still in place and a number of additional strengths and best practice were noted during this Assessment. The Suggested Development Areas, identified during the June 2010 Assessment and the agreed “Continuous Improvement Plan” have been addressed, specifically in the development and implementation of the Leadership Programme, Project Management skills and the identification and review of the leadership and management skills and future capabilities needed by managers in line with WBC’s Vision and Priorities.

### **Assessment against client objectives:**

The purpose of this assessment is to:

- ❖ Establish whether WBC meets all of the evidence requirements of The Standard and the selected 36 Additional Evidence Requirements;
- ❖ Provide an Assessment for the council’s business priorities and the selected management theme – “Managing Change”. This includes: the effectiveness of the L&D strategy for building the capability of management and members of the staff teams; people’s involvement in decisions about their own L&D; evidence of a culture of continuous learning; opportunities for coaching and mentoring; effective use of internal and external L&D resources: WBC staff

- expertise; coaching and mentoring; clear objectives, with support from managers and peers, for putting new skills and knowledge into practice; clear opportunities for people to achieve their full potential; and sufficient priority being given to career progression;
- ❖ Ensure that there is the recognition of the different needs of people; providing fair access to the support needed; equality of opportunity for people to learn and develop to improve performance; ensuring that people are supported in balancing their work and personal lives; encouraging people to contribute ideas for performance improvement through giving and receiving constructive feedback; ensuring that recruitment and selection is fair, efficient and effective; giving the opportunity for people to make the most of their talents within the organisation; supporting staff to acquire capabilities; development of leadership and management skills at Heads of Service and head of department/team leader levels; planning and developing people's careers – succession planning; the effectiveness of the on-line PDR system; the business update communication process; measurement of progress towards meeting WBC's KPIs; quantifying the investment in L&D; measuring and evaluating the contribution to performance improvement of people strategies and the impact on KPIs; leading and managing in line with WBC's Vision and Values; and the Health and Wellbeing of the ELT, management and staff.

### **Assessment Plan:**

The interview sample was structured to include: the Managing Director and 3 Heads of Service; 15 Managers/Team Leaders; and 18 Officers/Coordinators/Surveyors across all departments, with a range of seniority and service with WBC.

The sample was targeted to include members of staff who had attended the STEP Leadership Development Programme, TU Representatives, client management function, recent transfers/change of job role and representatives on the Future Council Project Board and other focus groups/project working parties. All the interviews were on a one-to-one basis.

The Assessment was completed according to the Assessment Plan agreed with the HR Organisation Development Manager and the HR Learning and Development Officer. During the Assessment, sufficient evidence was obtained which confirmed that WBC meets The Bronze Standard with the 36 additional evidence requirements from the Investors in People Framework as detailed in Appendix 2. The Feedback was attended by the MD, two Heads of Service, the HR Organisation Development Manager and the HR Learning and Development Officer.

The evidence collected by observation and obtained from the interviews, including documentary evidence and access to the website and the intranet, was judged on its currency, validity, consistency and sufficiency. The results were then used to determine WBC's performance against the Investors in People Standard and the selected additional evidence requirements.

## Management Theme – “Managing Change”

Since the Building Block process towards the Initial Assessment, 2001-December 2006, when the council was in Special Measures with a staff complement of 1100+, WBC has undergone considerable change and is now recognised as a high-performing Council. The Change Process has been accelerated as a result of the Government’s Comprehensive Spending Review, 2009/10 and further reductions in Funding in subsequent years.

The council’s Service Prioritisation programme was set up in 2009/10 to determine how WBC could achieve the £5million worth of savings by 2015, following a reduction in funding from government. Following the successful completion of the Service Prioritisation programme which delivered significant cost savings, the Future Council Road Map programme was set up, 2011/12. Service Prioritisation was the first major change programme at the council following the development and adoption of the Managing Change Framework and Change Pledge. *“The process is guided by the principles within the Framework, in particular ensuring that there were timely and honest communication and opportunities for people to engage with the process and shape its outcomes.”*

During the Assessment, strong evidence was obtained from the one-to-one interviews, observations, documentation, and access to the website and the council’s intranet which confirmed that:

- ❖ There is an overall and consistent understanding of the management of change process and how change is being managed effectively at corporate and service levels;
- ❖ WBC’s “Managing Change Group” have worked together to develop the Watford Managing Change Framework. The STEP CHANGE Framework – “listening/changing/improving” has been reviewed and updated to take account of constructive feedback and lessons learned from earlier “change” projects. Part of the commitment made by those on the Group is to provide support and advice to change managers on how to apply the Framework. The Framework can be adapted to reflect the needs and expected outcomes of a given project;
- ❖ During the development of the Framework, the Group took into account: best practice; WBC’s own learning from recent change management experience and its existing policies and procedures; the range of material provided by change consultants, Emerge; CLG’s and LGAs Change Management Toolkit; and other change management best practice including “John Kotter’s 8 steps to organisational change”, “Don Tosti’s Alignment Model” and the “Kubler-Ross Change Curve” as guidance to indicate what will be the most effective management behaviours at given points of the curve;
- ❖ WBC’s Managing Change Toolkit has been developed, and is being implemented, to support managers leading or managing change;
- ❖ People believed and gave examples of how the emphasis during managing change, has been focussed on people issues to support the process changes: *“helping people to work in new ways; setting out a vision for the change; showing empathy; providing support to overcome resistance to change; meaning full consultation at the right time; roles of managers; and taking account of the influence of the culture of an organisation on the transition”*;
- ❖ Employee Opinion Surveys are conducted every two years to measure the impact of changes. In addition, Customer Surveys, Feedback and Evaluations are used to maintain and improve Customer Service Excellence;
- ❖ The PDR system is on-line for all members of staff. The system includes regular, documented one-to one sessions and is subject to “Continuous Improvement”;
- ❖ Learning priorities are clear and linked to WBC’s strategic objectives and Managing Change;
- ❖ Since the June 2010 Assessment, every manager with staff responsibility has attended a “STEP “ programme, delivered by Reed Learning with an accomplished and experienced



facilitator, trainer and coach who is also an ILM Centre Manager: Managing Performance; Managing through Times of Change; Step up to Leadership – Support/Transform/Engage/Perform; and Step Change – Listening/Changing/Improving. The Step Programme Modules are accredited by the ILM and, by completion of further dissertation module, course participants have been able to achieve the Level 5 Qualification in Management and Leadership;

- ❖ It was very evident that managers were applying the leadership and management skills gained with measurable improved performance. Course evaluation, measurement of impact and embedding skills are supported by: the agreement of learning contracts with the line manager; completion of pre and post programme activities; weekly Reflection Notes recording learning into practice and management performance; Personal Development Plan to be reviewed at one-to-one sessions with the line manager; Mentor Support; collaborative working within the Learning Set between Workshops and after completion of the programme; and a Workshop to deliver presentations to the MD and his SLT;
- ❖ A suite of programmes for non managerial staff, “Stepping Forward”, has been developed and will be delivered from Autumn 2013. It will be delivered in a context of: continuing public sector cuts; uncertainty about the future and a lack of job security; exposure to the recent outsourcing of large areas of the council; changes to organisation structure; and the completion of Phases 1 and 2 of Future Council with Phase 3 being imminent. *“Working life in WBC will change for virtually every employee. All will have lost colleagues; some will have competed for jobs and, for many, reporting arrangements will have changed. Change will impact people both practically and emotionally.”*

It was evident that WBC is giving consideration to all of the above issues associated with enabling the council to Manage Change, with efficient performance in the new working environment.

### Priority Business Objectives:

- ❖ To ensure that the council’s people policies and practices are effectively aligned to business priorities;
- ❖ To ensure that learning and development strategies support the council’s goals and that we develop leaders, managers and staff with appropriate skills, knowledge and behaviour to support successful service delivery;
- ❖ To review the impact of recent changes on staff, to ensure that we continue to build morale and engagement through difficult times;
- ❖ To develop an improvement plan that will help to steer the council through future changes.

### Evidence Summary

(Refer also to Appendix 3, Pages 19 & 20)

#### People’s policies and practices are effectively aligned to business priorities:

- ❖ WBC’s Vision and Core Values are well-established and have been reviewed as part of the Managing Change programme to ensure that they are relevant, up-to-date and aligned to the council’s Priorities;
- ❖ The four-year Corporate Plan is reviewed and updated each year to ensure that the council has the right priorities that reflect what is important to its residents and the challenges and opportunities faced by WBC and its Key Public/Private Partnerships, including the companies contracted to manage the outsourced service areas;
- ❖ KPIs and project milestones for the major projects are in place and are being achieved.

**Learning and development strategies support the council's goals and that we develop leaders, managers and staff with appropriate skills, knowledge and behaviour to support successful service delivery:**

In addition to the L&D programmes associated with Managing Change and the STEP programmes for Leadership and Development:

- ❖ Resources for L&D, including the regular, statutory and updating training programmes are made available;
- ❖ The impact is being and will be evaluated through the agreed action plans, the monthly one-to-one sessions and the annual Performance and Development Reviews (PDRs);
- ❖ The L&D Strategy builds the capability of the council, the teams and the individual members of the departmental teams;
- ❖ The L&D Plans take account of individual learning styles;
- ❖ People are involved in helping to make decisions about their own L&D;
- ❖ The L&D programmes are innovative and flexible and are being applied;
- ❖ There is a culture of continuous learning within WBC;
- ❖ Constructive feedback, peer support, work shadowing, coaching and mentoring are in place to support existing staff and new members of staff. The CSC teams demonstrate, to a very high level, the benefits of coaching;
- ❖ Induction processes, covering WBC's policies and procedures, are in place for both new staff and those members of staff changing roles and/or gaining promotion. The Corporate Induction Programme is enhanced and supported by a personalised programme within each service area;
- ❖ Systems are in place to ensure that the planned L&D activities have taken place and that the capabilities are being applied;
- ❖ Effective use of internal and external L&D resources is being made, including e-learning and distance learning programmes. "Learning Steps" – a brand new E Learning Platform, created especially for WBC and Three Rivers, has been launched recently. The Learning Management System, which holds a series of interactive computer-based course modules, is accessible within and outside the council offices. Benefits include the online evaluation for each module, encouragement of self-directed learning and knowledge sharing and the ability to enable the monitoring of L&D take-up and effectiveness;
- ❖ People are given the opportunity to achieve their full potential;
- ❖ All L&D activities are valued and celebrated and viewed as everyday activities;
- ❖ Career progression is given sufficient priority and supported by clear succession plans;
- ❖ Personal development is supported and encouraged both within WBC and, where appropriate, for those members of staff who were transferring to Capita and Veolia.

**To review the impact of recent changes on staff, to ensure that we continue to build morale and engagement through difficult times:**

The assessment interviews confirmed that communications concerning the need for the changes, the high levels of involvement in the Options for change and the opportunities to challenge management decisions have resulted in management and staff gaining a sense of ownership, maintaining morale and trust in the senior management:

- ❖ Biennial staff opinion surveys, benchmarked to earlier surveys;
- ❖ People's involvement in focus groups and working groups to improve performance and reduce costs;

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**improving performance**

- ❖ Monthly Newsletter for staff, Wat's Up, is an invaluable source of information and a means of engaging staff;
- ❖ "Ask the MD/Ask Manny" and the MD's responses has encouraged people to challenge the management decisions;
- ❖ Consultation arrangements are in place to encourage people to take part in decision-making at both an individual and a representative level: core briefings; one-to-one sessions with line managers; team meetings; extended leadership team (ELT) meetings; six-monthly Managers' Forum; information updates on the Intranet;
- ❖ The improved version of the PDR, introduced for 2013/2014 is considered to be a major improvement over the previous systems. It is on-line and performance is measured against the four Behaviour Levels defined within the "How We Work" document, developed during 2012/2013, which links WBC's Priorities to management performance and the council's core values.

**To develop an improvement plan that will help to steer the council through future changes.**

- ❖ People management processes are continually reviewed and feedback is sought from individual members of staff;
- ❖ The PDR process is continually being reviewed and improvements have been made;
- ❖ Return to Work and Exit Interviews are in place for all leavers and the information is used to improve processes at organisational and departmental levels;
- ❖ Actions taken to improve Reward & Recognition following recommendations from the Managers' Forum and earlier Staff Opinion Surveys;
- ❖ Client Surveys and Feedback indicated significant improvements in the levels of client care;
- ❖ As a means of continuously improving the business, managers are involved in developing and implementing the priorities at an operational level, integrating them into everyday activities. Heads of Service review their department performance in relation to the council's KPIs and objectives and provide an update on progress for the ELT meetings;
- ❖ Key targets and priorities are reviewed and discussed at the ELT Meetings and action points are communicated to all managers for discussion at the Team Meetings and one-to-one monthly sessions with individual team members;
- ❖ Strategic L&D requirements are identified as part of the business planning process and the Training Plan is developed in conjunction with the ELT, Managers' Forum and the HR Team: full account is taken of the individual personal PDPs developed from the on-line PDR appraisal process;
- ❖ The HR Team – L&D Manager, HR Business Partners and HR Officers provide support and identify risks to managers but managers are fully responsible for decisions made with reference to WBC's Policies and Procedures and current legislation and local government requirements;
- ❖ L&D is planned to meet WBC's priorities, ILM, AAT, RICS, CI Building, CI Economic Development, CI Housing, CI Environmental Health, CI Town Planning, CIPD and the other professional associations: staff L&D is fully funded by the council;
- ❖ Career progression is evidenced by progression through internal promotion and transition between departments;
- ❖ On-the-job training – coaching/work shadowing/planned involvements in projects, supports the practical knowledge and skills required of promoted/probation/temporary staff completing their Job Roles and Responsibilities, accredited qualifications and Institute Membership programmes;
- ❖ Distance Learning programmes are available with facilities for private study: Resource Link, Learning Steps and the E Learning Platform.

<b>Key Strengths and areas of good practice</b>	
Leadership and Management Developments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ The extent of consultation with management and staff prior to the design and implementation of the STEP Programmes;</li> <li>❖ Compatibility with the Level 5 ILM Leadership and Management qualification;</li> <li>❖ The strong emphasis placed on interpersonal styles; communication; change management; coaching to improve team and individual performance; agreement of learning and action plans with line managers and support to apply those plans during the programmes;</li> <li>❖ The high levels of programme evaluation during the sessions, between modules, specific module on evaluation and longer term post-course evaluation to measure the impact on performance;</li> <li>❖ Consistency of delivery – the same consultant for each programme;</li> <li>❖ Development of learning partners/learning groups – regular meetings during working hours and social events to exchange best practice and support problem-solving;</li> <li>❖ 'How We Work' document: "We deliver results; We set an example; We develop and grow; We work together."</li> </ul>
Learning & Development Strategy	L&D requirements are identified as part of the business planning process in conjunction with the ELT and management, with measurable success criteria and a clear linkage to the council's KPIs and Priorities.
People Management	<p>First class Work Life Balance and Communications from the ELT and line managers. Coaching, especially within the CSC is part of WBC's culture. New members of staff and those recently promoted or transferred between service areas confirmed the equality of opportunity of the Recruitment and Selection process.</p> <p>Flexibility in working hours and availability of part-time contracts: the interview sample included a number of staff who had recently returned from maternity and those who had progressed from temporary to permanent contracts.</p> <p>Emphasis is given by the ELT and management to ensure people's work life balance is managed.</p> <p>WBC encourages its people to contribute their ideas to improve performance, client satisfaction and retention:</p>



	<p>this includes the Managers' Forum and a range of Focus Groups.</p> <p>Introduction of the Staff Excellence Awards (SEA), funded by WBC's commercial partners, to recognise the contribution people are making to delivering high quality services. Awards are made at an official ceremony.</p>
Leadership & Management	<p>Managers and their staff understand the leadership and management skills, knowledge and behaviours which are needed to lead, manage and develop people effectively.</p> <p>The Managing Change Toolkit has been developed and is being used to guide the council through periods of change and transformation, setting organisational standards of how change is expected to be managed. The Management Standards are documented within 'How We Work' and assessed as part of the PDR process. The recognition that further development and continuous improvement of the system are required is a major strength.</p> <p>It was evident that the management theory and skills developed as a result of the Step Up to Leadership Programme were being embedded within the council.</p>
Performance Measurement	<p>There are high levels of understanding by the ELT, managers and people within WBC of the impact that L&amp;D and people management activities has on performance.</p> <p>Monthly reports on performance are discussed at the ELT Meetings with the progress which is being made, or not being made against the KPIs and Priorities.</p> <p>The Team Briefings and the Quarterly Feedback from the ELT staff with effective information on Business Reviews and further developments.</p> <p>The growth of individual members of staff, both in terms of new job roles or developing their own job role, provided good evidence of the benefits gained from the training needs assessment and the resulting L&amp;D programme in terms of performance to the agreed targets.</p> <p>Measurable objectives have been set at all levels and there is a regular programme of one-to-one sessions as part of the PDR process.</p> <p>The new on-line/automated PDR system is highly regarded by both Team Members and their line management.</p>
Continuous Improvement	<p>There were many examples noted throughout the Assessment of how well the ELT and line management were making continuous improvements to WBC's</p>

	<p>approach to the development of its people and its processes in order to manage change and to provide effective services and support for residents and visitors to Watford.</p>
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<b>Suggested Development Areas</b>	
<p>Consolidation of the Leadership and Management skills throughout WBC</p>	
<p>Continuation of the development of the PDR process.</p>	<p>Include performance measurement against the Behaviour Levels defined within 'How We Work'. This Suggestion will provide a strong linkage between the levels of competence being assessed and the measurable outcomes from the L&amp;D activities.</p>

**Appendix 1 – Continuous Improvement Plan**

Business Issue - What	Suggested Actions - How	Potential Benefit - Why	Priority - When	Solutions/Support Available - Who
<p>Continue to gain benefits from the STEP programmes</p>	<p>Regular review and evaluation of the outcomes from the Leadership Programmes. Completion of the STEP programme for non managers from Autumn 2013. Encourage more managers to gain the Level 5 ILM Qualification in Leadership and Management. Continue the series of individual and learning team presentations to the ELT</p>	<p>Embedding the Leadership and Management skills developed and practised during the STEP Programmes Opportunity to develop the managers' Presentation Skills and ability to respond to challenges on their recommendations.</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Participation by managers in the ILM Meetings, discussion groups. Commission regular Outturn Reports from the Reed Learning Consultant who delivered the programmes</p>
<p>Continuation in the development of the PDR system</p>	<p>Full implementation and performance assessment of the 'How We Work' frameworks.</p>	<p>Increase in staff motivation and the overall credibility of the performance management process.</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Gain the agreement of the ELT, Managers' Forum, TU Reps and team members.</p>

<p><b>Gaining accreditation to the Investors in People Gold Standard.</b></p>	<p><b>Self Assessment against the additional Evidence Requirements. 36 ERs have been gained for the Bronze Standard. A further 90 ERs or more will be required to be recognised as Investors in People Gold if the Assessment is completed within 12 months.</b></p>	<p><b>National recognition of the significant improvements which have been made by the council in the quality and effectiveness of its people management</b></p>	<p><b>Medium</b></p>	<p><b>Consider attending the “Going for Gold Workshop” delivered regularly by EMB. Take up the opportunities to meet with other organisations that have gained Investors in People Bronze/Silver/Gold to benchmark and exchange good practice.</b></p>
<p><b>Recruitment of Apprentices</b></p>	<p><b>Respond to the opportunities and support currently being offered by the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) and EMB Excellence to encourage employers to take on apprentices to develop their organisations.</b></p>	<p><b>Additional support for the council’s succession planning and policies for in-house skills development and internal promotion.</b></p>	<p><b>Medium</b></p>	<p><b>Contact NAS to determine the local availability of agencies that can deliver relevant learning and development to support WBC’s comprehensive suite of internal programmes, including E Learning.</b></p>



Appendix 2 – Assessment results summary

**The Investors in People Framework**  
The Evidence Requirements

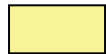
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	Total
<b>1</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓						✓																9
<b>2</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓																		12
<b>3</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓																									5
<b>4</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓																			11
<b>5</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓																										4
<b>6</b>	✓	✓	✓																											3
<b>7</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓			✓		✓		✓												11
<b>8</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓			✓		✓																8
<b>9</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓																								6
<b>10</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓																								6
																The number of Evidence Requirements met is											<b>75</b>			

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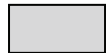
Key:



The Core Investors in People Standard



Your Choice from the Investors in People Framework



Not part of the Investors in People Framework

39 Evidence Requirements

36 Additional Evidence Requirements

26 Required to Achieve the Bronze Standard

**Appendix 3 - Investors in People Single Framework Topics within a Business Context** Exceptional; Strength; Good practice; Meets Standard with potential for improvement; Standard is not met

Evidence Requirements: 37 + 9 The Investors in People Standard. (Numbers after topic headings are the number of Evidence Requirements per topic) **Not included in the Review Assessment.**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
The Standard Good Practice	Vision, Purpose, Strategy & Plan. Planning involves staff groups, provides vision to improve performance with measurable objectives set at all levels of the organisation	L&D plans are in place. Learning priorities are clear and linked to the Business Plan. Resources for L&D made available. Staff involved in identifying development needs and the impact will be evaluated	Staff are encouraged to improve their own and others' performance with equality of opportunity for development and support	Leadership and Management capabilities are understood by all staff and are clearly defined	Leaders and managers are assessed and developed against the defined capabilities. Performance Management is in place for all staff	Systems are in place for senior managers and colleagues to give recognition to staff achievement & contribution. People believe their contribution is valued	Ownership & responsibility are encouraged. Staff are involved in decision-making	Systems are in place to ensure that planned L&D activities have taken place and learning is being applied. Induction processes are in place for new staff, trainees and those staff changing roles	Staff at all levels can describe how CPD & L&D activities have benefited the organisation, the team and the individual. Investment in L&D can be quantified and impact can be demonstrated	Systems are in place for evaluating how new practices have impacted on leading, managing and developing people. Evaluation results in improvements to people strategies and management

<p>Clear Core Values relate to vision and strategy 4 (7, 13, 19, 24)</p> <p>Organisation has targets &amp; success criteria. KPIs are used to improve performance 3 (9, 15, 21)</p> <p>Social &amp; Community responsibilities are taken into account 3 (10, 16, 22)</p> <p>Social Responsibility Is part of the culture 3 (12, 18, 25)</p> <p>Core Values at the heart of company culture and ethos 5 (11, 13, 17, 23)</p> <p>People and stakeholders are involved in strategy development 3 (8, 14, 20)</p>	<p>Staff L&amp;D strategy builds capability 2 (5, 8, 12, 14)</p> <p>People help make decisions about their own learning 3 (9, 13, 16)</p> <p>L&amp;D is innovative and flexible: internal &amp; external sources; peer coaching; &amp; mentoring 1 (6)</p> <p>A culture of continuous learning 2 (7, 17)</p> <p>Plans take account of the learning styles of staff e.g. Visual, Auditory Digital, Kinaesthetic methods of delivery 2 (10, 15)</p> <p>Leaders are seen as role models for L&amp;D 1 (11)</p>	<p>Recruitment and selection process meets the needs of the organisation and is efficient and effective 5 (6, 14, 19, 22, 27)</p> <p>Diverse and talented workforce is created with full DDA compliance 7 (7, 11, 12, 15, 20, 23, 28)</p> <p>Work life balance strategy meets peoples needs with link to performance improvement 6 (8, 13, 16, 21, 24, 29)</p> <p>Giving &amp; receiving constructive feedback is valued 3 (9, 17, 25)</p> <p>Structure makes the most of peoples talents Development projects/Work Groups are given to staff 4 (10, 18, 20, 26)</p>	<p>L&amp;M capabilities for now &amp; future are defined 2 (4, 9)</p> <p>Managers are reviewed and supported to acquire capabilities 4 (5, 6, 10, 11)</p> <p>Leadership and management strategy is linked to business strategy and takes account of external good practice L&amp;M programmes are effective 1 (7)</p> <p>Everyone is encouraged to develop leadership capabilities 3 (8, 12, 13)</p>	<p>Managers seen as role models for leadership, teamwork and sharing knowledge 2 (5, 6)</p> <p>Coaching is used to help staff achieve potential 1 (8, 12, 19, 25)</p> <p>Planning and development opportunities help to develop staff careers 6 (9, 11, 12, 16, 18, 23)</p> <p>Culture of openness and trust 3 (7, 21, 24)</p> <p>Top Managers are inspirational leaders 5 (7, 14, 15, 22, 23)</p> <p>Managers lead, manage and develop people in line with the organisation's values 1 (9)</p> <p>Managers encourage and people share knowledge within and across teams 1 (10, 17)</p> <p>Managers act on feedback to improve their L&amp;M 2 (13, 20)</p>	<p>Reward and recognition strategies are linked to business strategy 2 (6, 15)</p> <p>Representative groups are consulted 5 (5, 8, 12, 14, 18)</p> <p>Senior managers demonstrate understanding of what motivates people 3 (4, 10, 16)</p> <p>Success is celebrated 2 (11, 17)</p> <p>Regular praise and feedback are encouraged – culture of praise and appreciation 1 (9)</p> <p>Colleagues achievements are recognised 2 (13, 19)</p>	<p>Effective consultation and involvement are evident and part of the culture 4 (4, 6, 7, 17)</p> <p>People are supported and trusted to make decisions 5 (9, 12, 13, 14, 15)</p> <p>Knowledge and information are shared 2 (5, 10)</p> <p>Staff feel empowered as decisions are devolved 1 (12)</p> <p>A culture of continuous improvement 2 (8, 11)</p> <p>People can challenge the way things work 1 (18)</p> <p>People have a sense of ownership and pride 1 (19)</p> <p>People are committed to the success of the organisation 1 (16)</p>	<p>Effective use of internal and external L&amp;D resources – own staff expertise, coaching and mentoring 3 (4, 8, 13)</p> <p>Learning is an everyday activity and valued. Support given after L&amp;D. Clear objectives for putting new skills and knowledge into practice. 6 (.6, 10, 11, 15, 16, 18)</p> <p>Innovative and flexible of approach to L&amp;D 2 (5, 14)</p> <p>Clear opportunities for people to achieve full potential Career progression is given sufficient priority 1 (9)</p> <p>All learning including informal, formal, on and off the job, coaching &amp; mentoring, is used and valued 1 (7, 17, 20)</p> <p>Support for personal development results in career progression 2 (12, 19)</p>	<p>Strategies for leading, managing and developing staff are evaluated for their impact on performance improvement 2 (6, 10)</p> <p>Flexible and effective approaches to measuring return on investment or value for money are evident KPIs can be described 2 (7, 8)</p> <p>Return on investment in people is reported clearly to senior managers and the Board of Directors 1 (9)</p> <p>Performance improves as a result 3 (11, 13, 14)</p> <p>Career prospects improve 1 (12)</p>	<p>Self review and information from external reviews are used to identify areas for improvement 2 (4, 10)</p> <p>Effective feedback methods are used to understand peoples views of how they are managed – staff surveys 1 (6, 7, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14)</p> <p>Internal and external benchmarking is used 1 (8)</p> <p>Investors in People Specialist involvement provides impetus for further improvement 1 (5)</p> <p>People believe this is a great place to work 1 (15)</p>
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**Report to:** Cabinet  
**Date of meeting:** 7<sup>th</sup> October  
**Report of:** Head of Regeneration and Development  
**Title:** Level 2 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment

## 1.0 SUMMARY

- 1.1 A Level 2 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment has been contracted out to Aecom, without the need to go out for a more formal procurement stage. This is accommodated under the Council's contract procedure rules as an exception.

## 2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Members to note that delegated authority has granted the contract for the Level 2 SFRA to be undertaken by Aecom.

**Contact Officer:**

For further information on this report please contact Catriona Ramsey:  
telephone extension: 8261  
email: [Catriona.ramsay@watford.gov.uk](mailto:Catriona.ramsay@watford.gov.uk)

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

## 3.0 DETAILED PROPOSAL

- 3.1 The Level 2 SFRA for Watford Borough Council will provide a complete assessment of present and future flood risk, bringing together flood risk identification and its assessment from all available sources. This will provide planners with a reference guide in partnership with the NPPF for allocating areas of development which are both appropriate for the identified flood risk area and sustainable for future generations. The proposed development locations will be assessed, and wider study area outputs will be used to assess windfall sites in that area as they come forward.

Aecom have been working closely with the Council on the Watford Health Campus site. The Level 2 SFRA proposed project programme and study cost benefits from the synergies provided by Aecom's involvement in the ongoing Watford Health Campus project.

As this work is required for the Local Plan Part 2 and has synergies with the Health Campus work, it is deemed appropriate that, rather than undertaking a full procurement process we appoint Aecom. This is accommodated under the Council's

contract procedure rules as an exception. This has been approved by the Managing Director and now to be noted by Cabinet.

### 3.2 Pricing

The fees and expenses of the main elements of work by Aecom total; £17,700 (excluding VAT)  
Should data costs be incurred, Aecom will recharge these at cost +10% to Watford Borough Council. However, from past experience there should be no costs from the Environment Agency.

The team daily rates are the same as the 5% discounted BAFO rates agreed with the LABV for the WHC project.

## 4.0 IMPLICATIONS

### 4.1 Financial

4.1.1 The Head of Finance (Shared Services) comments that..... *Finance comments awaited.*

### 4.2 Legal Issues (Monitoring Officer)

4.2.1 The Head of Democracy and Governance comments that..... *Legal comments awaited..*  
*(NB This will take account of Human Rights issues as appropriate.)*

### 4.3 Equalities

### 4.4 Potential Risks

Potential Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Overall score
N/A			

### 4.5 Staffing

4.5.1 Staffing required to liaise with consultants and Environment Agency will be minimal.

### 4.6 Accommodation

4.6.1 N/A

### 4.7 Community Safety

4.7.1 N/A

### 4.8 Sustainability

4.8.1 The sustainability benefits from the Level 2 SFRA are high. The impact from

undertaking the study will be to ensure inappropriate development does not occur within the flood plain.

Appendices

None

Background Papers

Report to Managing Director – Level 2 SFRA  
Record of Officer Delegated Decision

File Reference

None

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**Report to:** Managing Director

**Date of Meeting:** 5th September 2013

**Report of:** Planning Policy Section Head

**Title:** Level 2 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment

## BACKGROUND

Watford Borough Council commissioned a Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) which was completed by Halcrow in 2007, with a revised edition published in 2012, to take into account of upgrades to the flood defences on the River Colne and revised regional modelling by the Environment Agency.

Following the completion of a Sequential Test, in addition to the Watford Health Campus site, there are a further 5 sites that are shown to be at a risk of flooding and therefore require further assessment.

**Table 1: Sites Requiring Further Modelling**

Site code	Address	Use	Description	Size	Phasing
CEN 57	Lower High Street	Co-op Funeral Parlour and scrap yard	In use. Surrounded by retail and main road.	0.46	Long term potential
CEN 59	Lower High Street	Land around gas holder	Large allocated site. Part of the land is used for coach parking. Surrounded by residential, retail and main road system	1.17	Long term intention to move Gas Holder
CEN 60	Lower High Street	Furniture store and Saab Showroom	In use. On main road. Adjacent to gas works site and residential	0.24	Long term potential
CEN 70	Local Board Road	Pump House Theatre & Arts Centre, Nissan Showroom and adjacent units	Former water board building converted into theatre. With associated large temporary car park. Adjacent to works units and retail, residential	0.82	WBC some ownership.
CEN 119	Lower High Street	Gas holder		0.30	Long term intention to move. Gas interested in redevelopment but need to move operational parts.

In order to undertake a National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) compliant Level 2 SFRA, it is necessary to appoint an experienced consultant team working in partnership with key stakeholders and the council to undertake this further assessment.

The SFRA will form an important part of the evidence base, and will provide a framework for managing and addressing future flood risk. It will draw together the baseline evidence including historic flooding, existing defences and future changes along with an initial assessment of flood risk in the Borough from other flood risk strategies. This will provide a consistent baseline for managing future flood risk including identifying objectives and measures for addressing this risk.

Importantly, flood management authorities have a duty to act consistently with the local and national strategies in respect of exercising their flood risk management functions. There will be a greater need for the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA), Watford Borough Council, Environment Agency and other flood management authorities to work together so that strategic policies in the Local Plan align with the SFRA and are taken into account when deciding on planning applications and sustainable development.

The Level 2 SFRA for Watford Borough Council will provide a complete assessment of present and future flood risk, bringing together flood risk identification and its assessment from all available sources. This will provide spatial and emergency planners with a reference guide in partnership with the NPPF for allocating areas of development which are both appropriate for the identified flood risk area and sustainable for future generations. The proposed development locations will be assessed, and wider study area outputs will be used to assess windfall sites in that area as they come forward.

## **OPTIONS ON CONSULTANTS**

Previously Halcrow had undertaken the initial SFRA, completed in 2007. However, since then Aecom have been working closely with the Council on the Watford Health Campus site. The Level 2 SFRA proposed project programme and study cost benefits from the synergies provided by Aecom's involvement in the ongoing Watford Health Campus project. The intention will be to draw upon the knowledge obtained from their work undertaken, which provides an opportunity for cost savings in the model development, whilst keeping the two projects independent of each other.

As this work is required for the Local Plan Part 2 and has synergies with the Health Campus work, it is deemed appropriate that, rather than undertaking a full procurement process we appoint Aecom. This can be accommodated under the Council's contract procedure rules as an exception. This needs to be approved by the Managing Director and then reported on to Cabinet.

## **PRICING**

The fees and expenses of the main elements of work by Aecom total;

**(£17,700 ( Excluding VAT)**

Should data costs be incurred, Aecom will recharge these at cost + 10% to Watford Borough Council. However from their past experience it is assumed that data would be obtained through the Environment Agency in a partnership at nil cost.

The team daily rates are the same as the 5% discounted BAFO rates agreed with the LABV for the WHC project.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

To agree the Level 2 SFRA project brief and contract submitted by Aecom (attached) without the need to go out for a more formal procurement stage.

Contact Officer:

For further information on this report please contact: Catriona Ramsay

telephone extension: 8261

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## Record of Officer Delegated Decision

1.	<b>DATE OF DECISION</b>	05/08/13
2.	<b>OFFICER MAKING DECISION</b>	Manny Lewis
3.	<b>OTHER OFFICERS PRESENT</b>	Jane Custance on behalf of Catriona Ramsay
4.	<b>DECISION TITLE</b>	Strategic Flood Risk Assessment –Level 2. Decision to procure Aecom without going out to tender. This will be an exceptional circumstance to exempt from the usual procurement rules.
5.	<b>DECISION TAKEN</b>	To authorise Aecom to undertake the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, Level 2 work.
6.	<b>HOW DECISION WAS REACHED</b> <i>(i.e. factors taken into account in reaching this decision including details of any alternative options considered and rejected )</i>	See attached report. (This SFRA level 2 work is imperative for the Site Allocation Document in November.) The work undertaken has synergies with the Health Campus work that Aecom are already commissioned for. This will be a new contract but will refer to the LABV terms and conditions.
7.	<b>REPORTS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS USED IN MAKING THE DECISION</b>  <i>We are required to publish these documents so they must be attached.</i>	Attached
8.	<b>DEADLINE FOR CALL-IN</b> <i>(if appropriate)</i>	N/A
9.	<b>RECORD OF ANY CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND ANY DISPENSATION GIVEN</b> <i>If consulting a portfolio holder about the decision and they have declared any conflict of interest this must be recorded here together with any dispensation granted to them by the Managing Director.</i>	None

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## PART A

**Report to:** Cabinet  
**Date of meeting:** 7 October 2013  
**Report of:** Head of Democracy and Governance  
**Title:** Management of Disabled Parking Bays

### 1.0 **SUMMARY**

1.1 This report provides Cabinet with the final report of the Management of Disabled Parking Bays Task Group.

### 2.0 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

that Cabinet considers and comments on each of the following recommendations of the Management of Disabled Parking Bays Task Group and responds to Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

#### 2.1 Recommendation 1

That information be sent to those residents who have a Disabled Parking Bay explaining the rules which allowed for these bays to be established outside residents' homes.

#### 2.2 Recommendation 2

That information be sent to residents with a Disabled Parking Bay explaining who could and who could not use the bays.

#### 2.3 Recommendation 3

That information be sent to all ward councillors detailing where Disabled Parking Bays have been established within their wards.

#### 2.4 Recommendation 4

That an article be written in 'About Watford' informing residents that the survey has been conducted and advising on actions residents could take in the event of encountering problems.

#### 2.5 Recommendation 5

That all Councillors keep a data log of information on all parking problems received from residents regarding their 'Disabled' marked parking bays.

Councillors will then pass this information on a quarterly basis to the Senior Admin Officer in the Planning section.

## 2.6 Recommendation 6

That information arising from the survey be forwarded to Disability Watford.

### **Contact Officer:**

For further information on this report please contact: Sandra Hancock,  
Committee and Scrutiny Officer  
telephone extension: 8377 email: [legalanddemocratic@watford.gov.uk](mailto:legalanddemocratic@watford.gov.uk)

**Report approved by:** Carol Chen, Head of Democracy and Governance

## 3.0 **DETAILED PROPOSAL**

3.1 At its meeting on 21 November 2012, Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to establish a Task Group to investigate Councillor Martins' scrutiny proposal regarding 'Disabled' marked parking bays.

3.2 The final report incorporating the Task Group's recommendations were presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 27 June 2013. The Scrutiny Committee reviewed the original recommendations and proposed a small change to recommendation five in order to make it clear that the parking problems referred to the specific 'disabled' marked parking bays. The amended version of this recommendation has been incorporated into the final report before Cabinet, attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

3.3 Cabinet is asked to review and comment on each of the recommendations for referral back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

## 4.0 **IMPLICATIONS**

### 4.1 **Financial**

4.1.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

### 4.2 **Legal Issues** (Monitoring Officer)

4.2.1 The Head of Democracy and Governance advises that if Cabinet endorses recommendation 5 members should ensure that any information they hold that contains personal information relating to individuals should be held securely and only used for the purpose for which it was given to them in order to comply with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998.



Appendices

Appendix 1 – Management of Disabled Parking Bays report (**printed separately**)

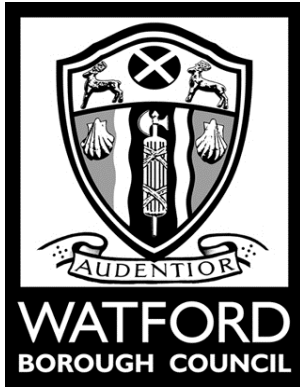
Background Papers

Overview and Scrutiny Committee minutes 21 November 2012 and 27 June 2013

File Reference

None

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# **MANAGEMENT OF DISABLED PARKING BAYS TASK GROUP**

## **REVIEW OF THE MANAGEMENT OF MARKED DISABLED PARKING BAYS IN WATFORD**

**JULY 2012**



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## COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

### Watford Borough Council

#### Members - Task Group

Councillor Rabi Martins

Chair of the Task Group and

Councillor for Central Ward

Councillor Nigel Bell

Councillor for Holywell Ward

Councillor Ian Brandon

Councillor for Callowland Ward

Councillor Karen Collett

Councillor for Woodside Ward

Councillor Sue Greenslade

Councillor for Meriden Ward

#### Other Members attending

Councillor Helen Lynch

Councillor for Central Ward

Councillor Mo Mills

Councillor for Vicarage Ward

### **Officer Support**

#### Watford Borough Council

Jane Custance

Head of Planning

Andy Smith

Transport & Infrastructure Section Head

Barbara Staples

Senior Admin Officer

Sandra Hancock

Committee and Scrutiny Officer

Rosy Wassell

Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer

## **PROPOSED RECOMMENDATIONS TO PRESENT TO OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

### Proposed Recommendations:

1. That information be sent to those residents who have a Disabled Parking bay explaining the rules which allowed for these bays to be established outside residents' homes.
2. That information be sent to residents with a Disabled Parking bay explaining who could and who could not use the bays.
3. That information be sent to all ward councillors detailing where Disabled Parking Bays have been established within their wards.
4. That an article be written in 'About Watford' informing residents that the survey has been conducted and advising on actions residents could take in the event of encountering problems.
5. That all Councillors keep a data log of information on all parking problems received from residents regarding their 'Disabled' marked parking bays. Councillors will then pass this information on a quarterly basis to the Senior Admin Officer in the Planning section.
6. That information arising from the survey be forwarded to Disability Watford.



## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

At the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 21 November 2012 Members discussed the formation of a Task Group to review the management of Disabled Parking Bays and parking by Blue Badge holders.

This task group had been proposed by Councillor Rabi Martins who commented that he was aware of problems related to local residents' 'disabled' marked parking bays. A response to Councillor Martins' proposal had been received from the Head of Planning.

Councillor Rackett supported the proposal and advised that he had received complaints from residents in his ward. Councillors Hastrick and Khan agreed that Councillor Martins' concerns were valid.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer advised that she would circulate the proposal form to those interested in taking part.

It was anticipated that the review would produce the following outcomes:

- The review and amendment of the system for Disabled Parking Bays
- The introduction of a system for enforcing Disabled Parking Bays
- The review of the use / abuse of the Blue Badge system and the introduction of appropriate measures to combat identified problems

In order to obtain relevant evidence it was proposed that:

- Questionnaires be sent to residents who currently had Disabled Parking Bays
- Interviews be conducted with residents who were known to have complained to councillors or officers in the past.

It was agreed by Overview and Scrutiny Committee that the Task Group would comprise:

Councillor Rabi Martins (Proposer) – Councillor for Central Ward

Councillor Nigel Bell – Councillor for Holywell Ward

Councillor Ian Brandon – Councillor for Callowland Ward

Councillor Karen Collett – Councillor for Woodside

Councillor Sue Greenslade – Councillor for Meriden Ward

## SUMMARY OF MEETINGS

### First Meeting - 9 January 2013

Councillor Martins was elected Chair.

The Task Group and officers discussed problems residents had encountered in connection with Disabled Parking Bays.

The Head of Planning advised on the differences between advisory and statutory disabled parking bays and the rules applying to both. She further informed on the procedure for making advisory bays.

Members decided that there was a need to know the extent of residents' problems; they considered that it would be wise to survey residents to determine whether parking for disabled drivers was a serious issue. Members also wished to be informed of where in the town Disabled Parking Bays could be found.

It was AGREED:

1. that officers clarify information on advisory bays within the CPZ and whether they are enforceable
2. that officers provide information (in table form) on the different types of disabled bays both in and out of the CPZ and whether these can be enforced
3. that officers provide information on the procedure for making advisory disabled bays
4. that officers clarify whether it is possible to apply time limiting restrictions to disabled drivers using Pay and Display bays
5. that officers provide information on the scale of the problem regarding abuse of disabled bays to include the number of complaints and feedback from residents
6. that a questionnaire be sent to residents who have advisory disabled bays outside their property
7. that officers provide to Members both the current CPZ leaflet and the proposed future one
8. that officers provide details of the number of bays in the borough and the procedure for checking whether they are needed.
9. that officers and Members collate information on other councils' procedures with regard to disabled bays. Possible councils to investigate would include:  
Hastings, Hertsmere, Luton, Milton Keynes, Portsmouth, Rother, Stevenage, Three Rivers and Central and South Bedfordshire

### **Second Meeting - 29 January 2013**

The key decision for this meeting was how best to establish the extent of problems for residents with Disabled Parking Bays.

Members had received considerable background information from officers; it was suggested that evidence should be gathered through a survey of those residents who had Disabled Parking Bays.

The meeting agreed that a survey would be conducted. Officers would look at questions suggested by Members and then forward a revised list to the Task Group for consideration.

The Head of Planning agreed that two members of her team could work on the questionnaire and that this would then be sent to the households in the borough which currently had advisory Disabled Bays. They would then prepare a report for the Task Group to consider.

It was AGREED:

1. That officers conduct a survey, based on the questions proposed by the Task Group members, of the 170 households who currently have advisory disabled bays and prepare a report for the task group to consider.
2. That the next meeting of the Task Group would take place on 25th February 2013 starting at 6.00 p.m.

### **Third Meeting - 7 May 2013**

The previously scheduled meeting had had to be postponed in order to allow sufficient time for replies from residents to be received and collated.

Members had seen and noted the results of the survey of residents who had a Disabled Parking Bay, which had been circulated to them between meetings.

A full report on the results of the survey are attached at Appendix 5.

A total of 170 questionnaires were sent to residents and 99 were returned; this equates to a 58.2% response rate.

The following table provides a brief analysis:

	<b>Outside CPZ</b>	<b>Within CPZ</b>
Number of respondents	51	48
Residents who never had problems	35%	10%
Residents who occasionally had problems	49%	50%
Residents who frequently had problems	16%	40%
Residents who had made a complaint	54	52
No. of complaints to Parking shop	1	17
No. of complaints to WBC	10	9
No. of complaints to local councillors	5	7
Residents who had never complained	35	16
No. of complaints to MP	1	NIL
No. of complaints to Police	4	3
	<b>Overall</b>	
Residents who never had problems	23.2%	
Residents who occasionally had problems	49.0%	
Residents who frequently had problems	27.3%	

Members discussed the survey and then made their recommendations.

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND COMMENTS

Recommendation 1: That information be sent to those residents who have a Disabled Parking bay explaining the rules which allowed for these bays to be established outside residents' homes.

Members had asked for the rules regarding Disabled Parking Bays outside residents' homes.

The Transport and Infrastructure Section Head advised that, whilst all holders of a Blue Badge could park in the bays subject to traffic orders, not all Blue Badge holders could have a bay marked outside their own homes. Strict rules applied to those residents who were entitled to such bays. The Disabled Parking Bay Application form is attached at Appendix 3. The list below details the basic requirements:

- The applicant is a permanent resident in the Borough of Watford and the application address is their sole place of residence.
- The applicant is on the electoral register (subject to age).
- The applicant resides in the Borough for more than six months of the year.
- The applicant holds a current Disabled Blue Badge.
- The applicant is in receipt of Disability Living Allowance mobility component at the higher rate or Attendance Allowance.
- A vehicle is registered at the address where the applicant is applying for the bay to be installed.
- The vehicle is taxed and insured.
- The owner of the vehicle permanently resides at the application address and is able to drive the vehicle.
- The driver holds a valid, current driving licence appropriate to the vehicle to be used.
- The applicant does not have a driveway, garage or any other off street parking.

Recommendation 2: That information be sent to residents with a Disabled Parking bay explaining who could and who could not use the bays.

The Chair acknowledged that misuse of Disabled Parking Bays was not considerable but that, where it existed, it had caused problems for residents. The Group felt that it would be wise for residents to fully understand who could and who could not use the bay.

With regards to infringements of the rules, the Head of Planning advised that advisory bays in the CPZs could be enforced where a car belonged to a permit holder but did not display a Blue Badge but that advisory bays outside the CPZs were not enforceable.

The Transport and Infrastructure Section Head explained that within a CPZ, a resident's permit could be taken back were they to park in a disabled user's bay; a greater problem would exist outside a CPZ.

Recommendation 3: That information be sent to all ward councillors detailing where Disabled Parking Bays had been established within their wards

The Group felt that there was a need to be advised of locations in the town where Disabled Parking Bays were located.

The Transport and Infrastructure Section Head proposed that a break-down of Disabled Parking Bays in all wards be sent to all councillors so that they could be made aware of potential problems in their area.

The Group agreed that this should be effected, the Chair noting the responsibility which councillors had for residents in their wards.

Recommendation 4: That an article be written in 'About Watford' informing residents that the survey had been conducted and advising on actions residents could take in the event of encountering problems

An excellent response had been received for this survey and it was decided that a letter of thanks should be sent to the respondents.

The Transport and Infrastructure Section Head advised that, following the survey, it had become apparent that in the event of problems, residents were unsure how to proceed. It was agreed that an article should be drafted for the 'About Watford' magazine which would give information on the survey and advice on actions which residents could take when problems arose.

Recommendation 5: That all Councillors keep a data log of information on all parking problems received from residents regarding their 'Disabled' marked parking bays.

Councillors agreed that it would be helpful to keep a track of all calls received in relation to disabled parking bay problems and to enter these in a log. The details would then be passed to the Senior Admin Officer in the Planning section on a quarterly basis.

Recommendation 6: That information arising from the survey be forwarded to Disability Watford.

In order to inform those residents who were most likely to use the Disabled Parking Bays, it was agreed that information on the survey and responses be sent to Disability Watford.

## **Selection of topics and issues for scrutiny by councillors, officers or members of the public**

Anyone wishing to suggest a topic for scrutiny must complete Section 1 of this form.

### 1. Sources

The following are sources of ideas for the work programme:

- Performance indicators, both national and internal.
- Views of Cabinet and Leadership Team especially in relation to policy subjects.
- The Council's surveys, such as the annual residents' survey.
- The Complaints Report which is compiled annually by the Customer Service Centre.
- Service complaints more widely; although individual cases will not be taken up if a large volume of complaints is received about a single issue then it may be appropriate to pursue the topic.
- Reports of external inspections of services.
- The views of the Council's partners.
- Issues picked up by ward councillors in their locality.
- The Council's Forward Plan

### 2. Outcomes

Success indicators could include:

- Having identified local needs;
- Having evaluated alternative ways of working/how a service could improve and making recommendations to the Executive or the Council's partners;
- Having developed an awareness of any contractual, economic, legal or structural constraints on Council's or its partners approach.

### 3. Criteria

To qualify for consideration the topic must meet the following criteria:

- Affect a group or community of people. Scrutiny will not normally look at individual service complaints.
- Relate to a service, event or issue in which Watford Borough Council has a significant stake.
- Not be an issue that Scrutiny has covered during the last year.
- Not be a planning or licensing issue, or any other matter dealt with by another council committee.
- To match one or more of the Council's current priorities.
- To be feasible and able to be completed within the timescale projected for the work.
- There must be availability within the relevant department/service to support the review.
- Be a topic that members wish to scrutinise.

On completion please return to Sandra Hancock, Committee and Scrutiny Officer

By email – [sandra.hancock@watford.gov.uk](mailto:sandra.hancock@watford.gov.uk)

By post – Legal and Property Services, Watford Borough Council, Town Hall, Watford, WD17 3EX



### Suggestions for topics to be scrutinised – evaluation table

A Member, Officer or member of the public suggesting a topic for scrutiny must complete Section 1 as fully as possible. Completed tables will be presented to Overview & Scrutiny for consideration.

<b>Section 1 – Scrutiny Suggestion</b>	
<b>Proposer: Councillor/Officer/Member of public</b>	
<p><b>Topic recommended for scrutiny:</b></p> <p><i>Please include as much detail as is available about the specific such as;</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>areas which should be <u>included</u> in the review.</i></li> <li>• <i>areas which should be <u>excluded</u> from the review.</i></li> <li>• <i>Whether the focus should be on past performance, future policy or both.</i></li> </ul>	<p>Management of Disabled Parking Bays and Parking by Blue Badge Holders</p> <p>Two problems have been brought to my attention</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The council does not enforce Disabled Parking Bays Thus they are merely advisory and do not serve the purpose they are intended for, namely to assist people with physical disability who are only able to walk a limited distance without assistance</li> <li>2. Under our current rules any person with a Blue Badge is able to Park at any Parking Bay for an unlimited period without payment. Thus in some areas premium parking spaces are blocked for hours on end.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Why have you recommended this topic for scrutiny?</b></p>	<p>Some of my constituents have a Disabled Parking Bay marked outside their house because one of the occupants of the property has severe mobility problems</p> <p>However on numerous occasions they find that other vehicles with a general parking permit have occupied he slot This causes them extreme hardship</p> <p>The problem occurs because these bays are not for the exclusive use of people with Blue Badges</p> <p>Thus anyone with a Parking Permit for the area is able to Park there – and they frequently do</p>

**What are the specific outcomes you wish to see from the review?**

*Examples might include:*

- *To identify what is being done and what the potential barriers are;*
- *To review relevant performance indicators;*
- *To compare our policies with those of a similar authority;*
- *To assess the environmental/social impacts;*
- *To Benchmark current service provision;*
- *To find out community perceptions and experience;*
- *To identify the gap between provision and need*

1. Review and amendment of the system for Disabled Parking Bays
2. Introduction of system for Enforcing Disabled Parking Bays
3. Review of use / abuse of the Blue Badge System and introduction of appropriate measures to combat identified problems

<p><b>How do you think evidence might be obtained?</b></p> <p><i>Examples might include</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Questionnaires/Surveys</li> <li>• Site visits</li> <li>• Interviewing witnesses</li> <li>• Research</li> <li>• Performance data</li> <li>• Public hearings</li> <li>• Comparisons with other local authorities</li> </ul>	<p>Give details</p> <p>Questionnaire to residents who currently have Disabled Parking Bays</p> <p>Interviewing residents with Disabled Bays who are known to have complained to councillors and / or officers</p> <p>Asking authorities who enforce Disabled Parking Bays particularly in CPZ areas</p>
<p><b>Does the proposed item meet the following criteria?</b></p>	
<p>It must affect a group or community of people</p>	<p>Yes</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Affects individuals who require a Parking Space outside their property because of their personal circumstances</li> <li>2. Affects general public, particularly in some shopping areas because blue badge holders block Parking Spaces</li> </ol>
<p>It must relate to a service, event or issue in which the council has a significant stake</p>	<p>Operation of the CPZ Scheme</p>

<p>It must not have been a topic of scrutiny within the last 12 months</p> <p><i>There will be exceptions to this arising from notified changing circumstances. Scrutiny will also maintain an interest in the progress of recommendations and issues arising from past reports.</i></p>	<p>Meets this criteria</p>
<p>It must not be an issue, such as planning or licensing, which is dealt with by another council committee</p>	<p>Meets this criteria</p>
<p><b>Does the topic meet the council's priorities?</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Improve the health of the town and enhance its heritage</li> <li>2. Enhance the town's 'clean &amp; green' environment</li> <li>3. Enhance the town's sustainability</li> <li><b>4. Enhance the town's economic prosperity and potential</b></li> <li><b>5. Supporting individuals and the community</b></li> <li>6. Securing an efficient, effective, value for money council</li> <li>7. Influence and partnership delivery</li> </ol> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Please confirm which ones</i></p> <p>4 and 5</p>

<p><b>Are you aware of any limitations of time, other constraints or risks which need to be taken into account?</b></p> <p><i>Factors to consider are:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>forthcoming milestones, demands on the relevant service area and member availability:</i></li> <li>• <i>imminent policy changes either locally, regionally or nationally within the area under review.</i></li> </ul>	No
<p><b>Does the topic involve a Council partner or other outside body?</b></p>	CPZ Enforcement Contractor

<p>Are there likely to be any Equality implications which will need to be considered?</p> <p><i>Protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Age</li> <li>• Disability</li> <li>• Gender reassignment</li> <li>• Pregnancy or maternity</li> <li>• Race</li> <li>• Religion or belief</li> <li>• Sex</li> <li>• Sexual orientation</li> <li>• Marriage or civil partnership (only in respect of the requirement to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination)</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Give details</i></p> <p>Residents with Disabilities which qualify for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Residential Disabled Bays</li> <li>b) Blue Badges</li> </ul>
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**Sign off**

*(It is expected that any Councillor proposing a topic agreed by Overview and Scrutiny Committee will participate in the Task Group)*

**Cllr Rabi Martins**

**Date: 12<sup>th</sup> Nov 2012**

**The following sections to be completed by Democratic Services in consultation with the relevant Head of Service and Overview and Scrutiny Committee as necessary**

<b>Section 2</b>	
<b>Consultation with relevant Heads of Service</b>	
<i>It is important to ensure that the relevant service can support a review by providing the necessary documents and attending meetings as necessary. The Head of Service's comments should be obtained before the request to hold a review is put to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.</i>	
Has the relevant Head of Service been consulted?	Yes
Is there any current or proposed review of service which would affect this suggestion?	<i>Yes/no (if yes, please provide details)</i>
Is this a topic which the service department(s) is able to support	<p><i>I do not believe that this would be a suitable topic for a task group for the reasons listed as follows.</i></p> <p>Cllr Martins has suggested a review and amendment of the system for Disabled Parking Bays. There are two forms of disabled bays: advisory disabled bays and disabled bays that are the subject of a Traffic Regulation Order.</p> <p>In residential roads, residents who meet criteria set by the Council can apply to have an advisory disabled bay marked on the road. These bays are not legally enforceable as disabled bays in their own right, but are normally respected by other drivers, and remain enforceable as permit bays contained within the CPZ Traffic Regulation Order, meaning that any vehicle not displaying a residents parking permit is liable for the issue of a Penalty Charge Notice.</p> <p>Within the CPZ, if a disabled bay is parked in by a driver with a residents permit, the Council has</p>

the sanction of withdrawing the permit under the rules of the CPZ scheme.

We have no record of advisory disabled bays being abused within or outside the CPZ.

In shopping areas, or car parks for example, disabled bays are provided that are subject to a Traffic Regulation Order. This means that anyone with a Blue Badge can park there at any time. These bays are enforced.

If advisory disabled bays were converted to statutory disabled bays this would mean that within the CPZ any disabled driver could legally park in them at any time and for any period. This would be likely to reduce available parking for residents, including disabled residents, within the CPZ. Additionally, the Council would have no information relating to the driver and would not be in a position to contact them and advise them of the inconvenience caused to the disabled resident that the bay was implemented for, which can currently be done in relation to CPZ permit holders. This is likely to pose a particular problem in match day zones when a significant number of blue badges are used by travelling fans from out of town.

A conversion to statutory disabled bays will also incur initial and ongoing costs as this will require the making of new Traffic Regulation Orders and subsequent amendment or revocation, which will be invoked where the resident that the bay has been provided moves away from the CPZ or otherwise.

No evidence has been produced to suggest that the current system is not operating effectively. No review would therefore appear to be warranted.

There is a system for enforcing Disabled Parking Bays as referred to above.

Please note that Blue Badge holders can park in limited wait bays for any time. This is subject to national regulation. Please see attached note. This cannot therefore be changed.

The Blue Badge system has recently been reviewed nationally, which has resulted in new style centrally issued blue badges and Council access to the County Council blue badge holder database. The Council has been working with the Police to identify fraudulent use of Blue Badges since December 2011. This is a partnership known as Operation Clamp and involves the deployment of Police Officer's, Civil Enforcement Officer's and Council Fraud Officer's to areas where the use of blue badges is known to be high, such as in the High Street and surrounding areas, Whippendell Road, St Albans Road and other locations in North Watford. These Officer's



	<p>jointly approach motorists arriving at a destination or returning to their vehicles who are relying upon the display of a blue badge. Where it is established that the holder of the badge is not present, the badge is seized and the driver is later interviewed under caution by the Fraud team. This has proved to be a highly effective and successful operation, which has resulted in a number of prosecutions and very positive comment from members of the public to both the Police and Parking Service. Whilst this operation also addresses the potentially significant loss of income to the Council caused by this form of fraud, it achieves the greater objective of ensuring that genuinely disabled members of the community have a higher chance of accessing the bays that have been provided for their use and social inclusion.</p>
<p>When was the last time this service was the subject of a scrutiny review?</p>	
<p>Is the issue something which will be of significant interest to the public and if so, how should this be managed?</p>	

**Sign off by Head of Service**

**Jane Custance, Head of Planning**

**Date:**

<b>Section 3 – Follow up Actions</b>	
Agreed by Overview & Scrutiny Committee	Yes
Agreed Membership	Councillors Nigel Bell, Ian Brandon, Karen Collett, Sue Greenslade, Rabi Martins
Anticipated completion date	None set
Likely number of meetings	
Where will the findings of the Task Group be reported to and approximately when?	Cabinet – September 2013



## Disabled Parking Bay Application Watford Borough Council - April 2011

Watford Borough Council will consider applications to provide disabled parking bay markings close to properties where a resident's mobility is severely impaired so that they need to park their car immediately outside their home.

Any disabled bay provided under these circumstances is advisory only. Other motorists are not legally excluded from parking in the bay and no legal order will be created. Nevertheless, these markings are generally well respected by other road users due to the stringent criteria necessary to qualify for a disabled bay and the fact that neighbours are consulted.

The disabled bays are usually provided in residential roads where there is a heavy demand for parking and where there are no other formal waiting restrictions (yellow lines) in place. Advisory disabled bay markings cannot be provided where there are yellow lines.

A bay will not be provided for residents who have an off-street parking facility.

Advisory bays are marked in line with the traffic sign regulations and general directions. A box will be marked on the road in white paint to accommodate a car. The word 'DISABLED' will be written alongside the bay on the road. They do not have a restriction sign - showing the blue disabled symbol - accompanying them.

If a bay is provided in a Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ) then the vehicle using it must display a valid permit for the zone in which the bay is located. Failure to do so would result in a parking ticket (Penalty Charge Notice) being issued.

**The detail of each part of the application process is provided below.**

### Here's what to do

**New applicants:** first check you meet the basic criteria before applying.

### Basis requirements:

- You are a permanent resident in the Borough of Watford and the application address is your sole place of residence.
- You are on the electoral register (subject to age).
- You reside in the Borough for more than six months of the year.
- You hold a current Disabled Blue Badge.
- You are in receipt of Disability Living Allowance mobility component at the higher rate or Attendance Allowance.
- A vehicle is registered at the address where you are applying for the bay to be installed.
- The vehicle is taxed and insured.
- The owner of the vehicle permanently resides at the application address and is able to drive the vehicle.
- The driver holds a valid, current driving licence appropriate to the vehicle to be used.
- You **do not** have a driveway, garage or any other off street parking.

If you can answer 'yes' to all the above, then please go to stage 1 below for further details.

If you answered 'no' to any of the above, unfortunately it is unlikely we will be able to install a disabled bay and we would not advise you to continue. However you may do so if you wish although your application is unlikely to be successful.



## Application for an Advisory Disabled Bay

Please use this form to apply for an on-street advisory disabled bay marking. Complete using black or blue ink and print. ALL sections must be completed providing as much detail as possible to support your application.

If you are applying on behalf of the applicant and wish to be the contact in relation to the application, please fill in the box below then move on to 'step 1' below.

**If you are applying on your own behalf, please go straight to 'Step 1' below.**

### Contact information

If you are applying on behalf of the applicant and wish to be the contact in relation to the application, please fill in the following section. This contact information will be used for all subsequent correspondence.

First name(s)	
Last name	
House name or number	
Street	
Postcode	
Home telephone	
Mobile telephone number	
Email	

### Step 1 – Applicant personal details

First name(s)	
Last name	
House name or number	
Street	
Postcode	
Home telephone	
Mobile telephone number	
Date of birth	
Email	

### Step 2 – Blue badge details

Blue Badge Number	
Date issued	
Expiry date	

Is the blue badge registered at the address for which the application relates? YES  NO

Tel No: 01923 278079  
Fax No: 01923 278562  
Ref: Disabled Bay Review  
20 February 2013

**Are You Always Able to Use Your Disabled Bay ?**

The Council is undertaking a scrutiny review of Disabled Parking Bays that have been installed within the Borough.

In order to ascertain if the way we manage Disabled Bays needs to be reviewed, it would be helpful if you could provide us with a response to the two questions below relating to your Disabled Bay.

**Question 1.** How often have you been unable to use the bay because someone else has parked in the marked bay?

- a) never;
- b) occasionally (less than once a week);
- c) frequently (more than twice a week).

**Question 2.** Have you ever complained about the problem of cars parking in your allocated Disabled Bay? If yes who have you complained to:

- a) The Parking Shop
- b) Watford Council
- c) Your local Councillors

What was the outcome of the complaint?

Please use the reverse of this questionnaire for any comments.

Your input and any other comments you may have would be helpful. I have therefore included a pre paid envelope for your convenience. Please respond by Friday 15 March 2013.

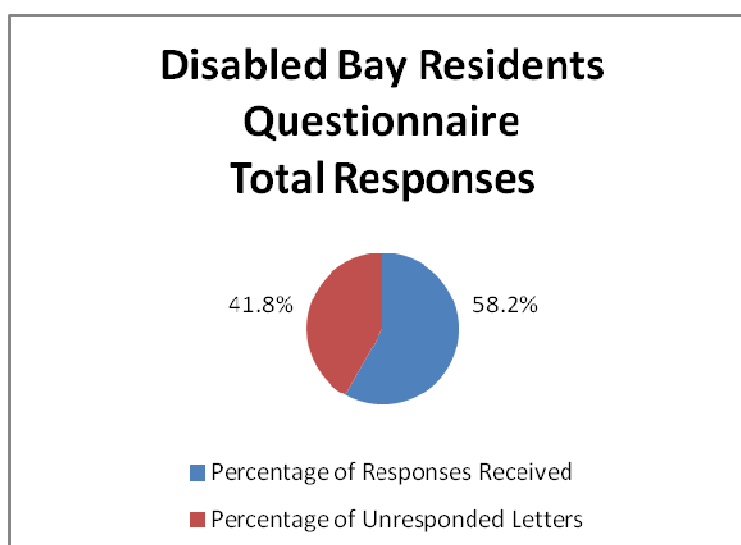
Many thanks

Barbara Staples  
Senior Administration Officer

### **Disabled Bay Scrutiny Panel**

A total of 170 questionnaires were sent out in mid February to residents in the Borough who currently meet the criteria and have a disabled bay marked on the road within the public highway.

We received 99 responses which provided a 58.2% response rate to the questionnaire which is a very good response for surveys of this type.



#### **Question 1. Do you have problems with your Disabled Bay?**

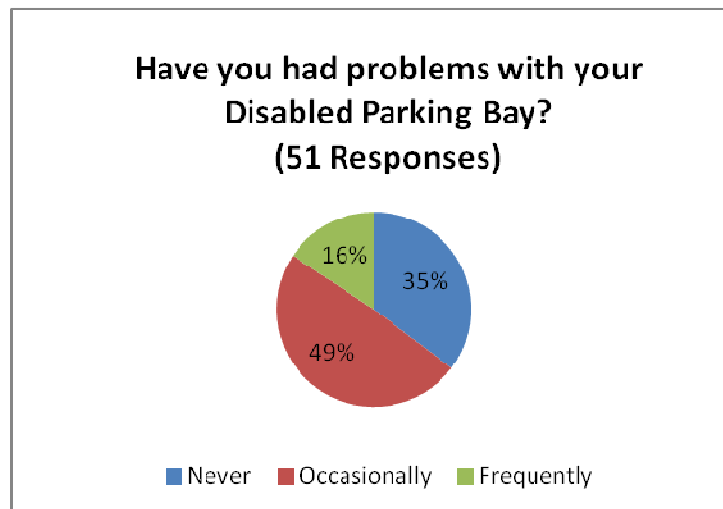
We received a total of 51 replies from residents living outside the CPZ.

18 residents have never had problems with their bay.

25 residents told us that they occasionally had problems and this included things like tradesman working at neighbours parking in their bay

8 residents reported that they frequently had problems with their bay and this included inconsiderate parking at school times and when there is football on.

The pie chart below shows the response as a % of the 51 residents who completed and returned the questionnaire.



**Question 1. Do you have problems with your Disabled Bay?**

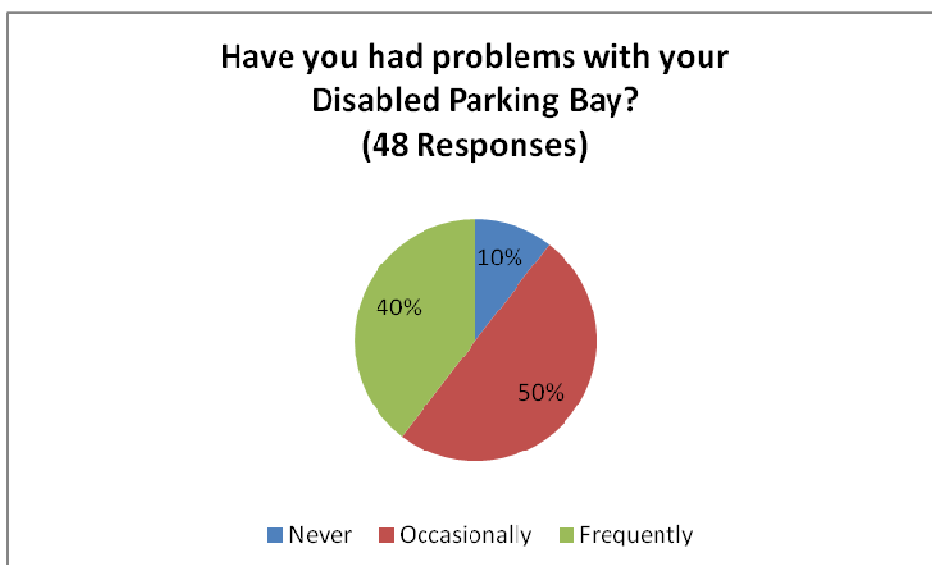
We received a total of 48 replies from residents living within the CPZ.

5 residents have never had problems with their bay.

24 residents told us that they occasionally had problems and this included things like tradesman working at neighbours parking in their bay

19 residents reported that they frequently had problems with their bay and this included inconsiderate parking at school times and when there is football on.

The pie chart below shows the response as a % of the 48 residents who completed and returned the questionnaire.

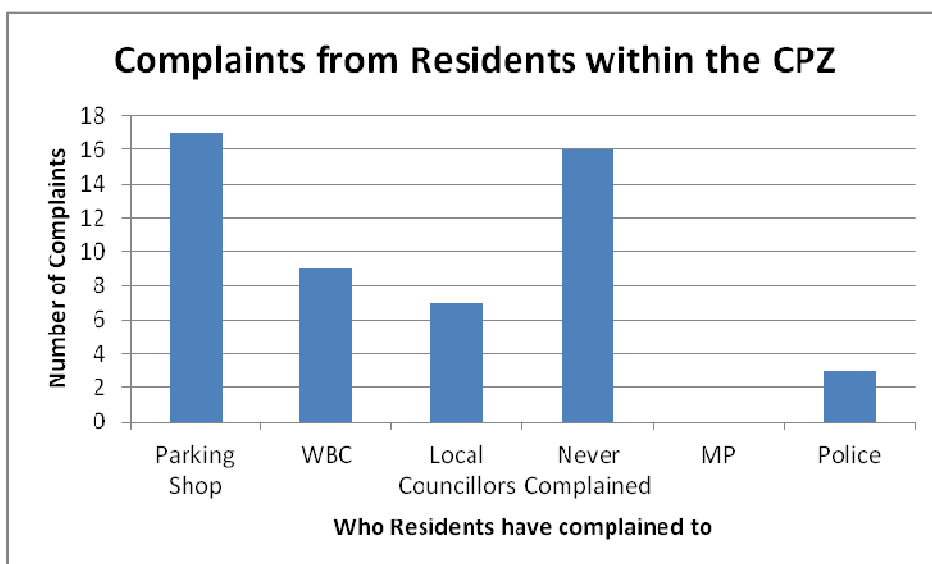


**Question 2. Who have you complained to?**

The column chart below relates to question 2 of the questionnaire.

Some residents told us that they had complained to more than one person. We received a total of 52 replies from residents living within the CPZ.

All of the responses have been included within the analysis.



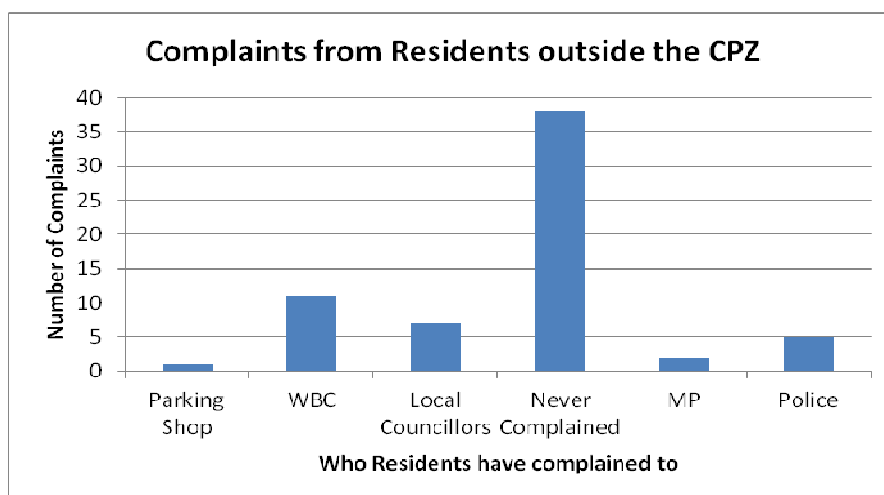
**Question 2. Who have you complained to?**

The column chart below relates to question 2 of the questionnaire.



Some residents told us that they had complained to more than one person. We received a total of 54 replies from residents living outside the CPZ.

All of the responses have been included within the analysis.



### **Other General Comments received from residents**

We received a wide range of General Comments from residents which included the following:

4 residents told us that they had contacted the Council and letters had been sent by the Council which resolved problems with neighbours using their bay.

A total of 10 residents would like their Disabled Bay to be made larger with hatching placed either side to help with access.

11 residents told us that they have problems during school times and on match days.

7 residents told us that they would like the bay repainted in yellow paint, would like a sign as this would help during snow and would also like their house number put within the bay.

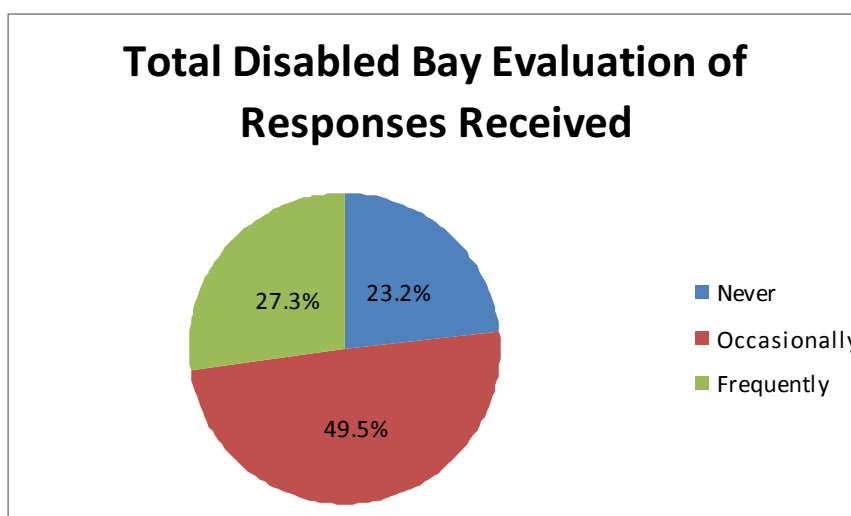
16 residents told us that they understand that the bay is advisory only.

13 residents told us (9 within the CPZ area and 4 outside the CPZ) that their bay had been used by other blue badge holders.

### Overall summary and evaluation of the questionnaire

The pie chart below shows that of the 99 responses 72 % of the residents never or only occasionally had problems with their Disabled Bay.

A total of 27.3% (19 within the CPZ and 8 outside the CPZ) had frequent problems with other motorists using their bay. Many of the problems occur during school times or on match days.



### Response to the General comments

We have enforcement powers available to us to deal with non permit holders parking in Advisory Bays located within the CPZ areas that is associated with school traffic and (where the match day scheme applies) football related traffic. For permit holders who use Advisory Bays inappropriately the Council already takes action by way of correspondence and this has proved to be effective in addressing the issue.

Outside the CPZ areas the level of problem is significantly less with only 16% of respondents indicating frequent problems.

The Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2002 regulation 1028.3 provides the dimension details for Disabled Bays. The size for bays is a minimum 6.6m in length and a width of between 2.7m – 3.6m. To maximise road space Disabled Bays in Watford are marked out to the following dimensions L:5.5m W:2m and lettering size of 330mm.

The Regulations require Disabled Bays to be painted in white, lettering on the outside of the bays and no symbol required.

**Officers Recommendations as a result of the survey**

Highlight to the applicants the powers the Council has to address inappropriate use of the Advisory Bays. This advice could readily be included in the application paperwork and within routine correspondence sent out to existing residents with bays.

That the recently completed residents Disabled Bay survey/questionnaire be repeated in three years time to identify if the level of abuse has changed.

Consider the outcome of the survey in relation to the forthcoming CPZ review in relation to requests for expansion of zone operating hours to incorporate match day. This will provide addition protection for Advisory Bays from football related traffic.

## **MANAGEMENT OF DISABLED PARKING BAYS TASK GROUP**

**9 January 2013**

Present: Councillor Martins (Chair)  
Councillors Bell (for minute numbers 3 - 5), Brandon, Collett  
and Greenslade

Also Present: Councillors Lynch (for minute numbers 3 - 5) and Mills

Officer: Head of Planning  
Committee and Scrutiny Officer  
Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer

### **1. ELECTION OF CHAIR**

The Task Group was asked to elect a Chair for the Task Group.

AGREED

that Councillor Martins be elected Chair of the Management of Disabled Parking Bays Task Group.

### **2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

### **3. TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The Chair suggested that the Task Group consider the terms of reference and then determine how to proceed.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer advised on the time frame. She said that it would be advisable for the group's report to be presented at the March Cabinet. In order to achieve this, the report should be ready for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 7 March.

The Chair recommended that the group decide what information would be required. He suggested that if it were not possible to complete the final document report by the March overview meeting, at the very least, an interim report should be presented at this time.

#### 4. **MANAGING DISABLED PARKING BAYS - DISCUSSION**

The Chair advised that residents had reported that whilst there were disabled bays within the Controlled Parking Zones (CPZs) problems still arose for people who needed parking spaces within a short distance from their homes.

The Head of Planning pointed out that enforcement was possible within the CPZs; this could be achieved by taking the permit away from the culpable non-disabled resident.

The Chair asked whether, since the disabled bays in CPZs were advisory, any residents who had a permit could park in these spaces.

The Head of Planning replied that this was not the case and explained that when a resident with no 'blue badge' parked in a designated disabled bay, their permit could be confiscated following a complaint to the Parking Shop. She added that the Parking Shop had no records of such complaints.

Councillor Lynch noted seeming discrepancies in Queens Road. She advised that in this street there were both Pay and Display bays as well as two disabled bays. She said that blue badge holders could park for two hours in a disabled bay but could remain all day in the Pay and Display spaces.

The Head of Planning explained that this ruling complied with national regulations. She drew attention to page 16 of the Department of Transport booklet which stated that at 'on-street' parking meters and Pay and Display machines, Blue Badge holders could park free of charge and for as long as they needed to.

The Chair considered that there was a need to understand the extent of the problems and also to be advised where in the town the disabled parking bays were located.

The Head of Planning advised that two problems had been reported and that both had been reviewed. The first centred on a bay still remaining marked on the highway after the relevant disabled resident had died. The Chair had reported the second problem which concerned a vehicle, which did not display a Blue Badge, parking in a disabled bay.

The Chair suggested that it would be wise to survey residents to determine whether this issue was a serious problem for them.

The Task Group discussed cases where problems had arisen.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer suggested that it would be wise to circulate the rules for advisory disabled bays within CPZs in the borough to all members of the Task Group. Further useful information for the group would be:

- whether it would be possible to apply time limiting restrictions to disabled users in Pay and Display bays
- Information on the scale of the problem regarding abuse of advisory disabled bays.

With regard to the survey suggested by the Chair, the Committee and Scrutiny Officer asked whether such a survey should be sent to all residents with an advisory disabled bay or to a sample of residents.

The Chair said that this would be best decided when it was known which questions the group would like answered. It was also agreed that it would be useful to know how many advisory bays existed before deciding who to contact. It was also necessary to consider the cost of carrying out the survey.

The Head of Planning added that the Task Group might like to know the procedure for making advisory disabled bays.

The Head of Planning then gave an explanation of the various types of bays for disabled users:

- Disabled bays, such as those provided for shoppers were subject to the statutory regulations: disabled users could only park if they displayed a Blue Badge.
- Advisory disabled bays in the CPZs could be enforced where the car belonged to a permit holder and did not display a Blue Badge.
- Advisory bays outside the CPZs were not enforceable.

The Head of Planning added that the installation of disabled bays within the CPZs generally promoted good neighbourliness and respect. In response to a suggestion from the Committee and Scrutiny Officer, the Head of Planning agreed that the required information could be supplied in table format.

Councillor Bell noted that outside the CPZ there was an average of two disabled bays in each road.

The Head of Planning advised that there had been a review of these advisory bays and that residents had been asked whether the bays were still required. Officers had then responded appropriately.

Councillor Mills reported that most local residents were accommodating in relation to the disabled bays but that occasionally visitors from other areas were not so considerate.

The Head of Planning replied that if the incident were reported then officers could write to the offender. She added that officers had recently reviewed the CPZ leaflets so that they were easier to understand.

Councillor Lynch asked how many residents had had their permits revoked.

The Head of Planning said that this information could be obtained from the Parking Shop.

The Chair considered that it would be wise to survey all residents who had an advisory bay.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer suggested that all questions Members wished to be included in the survey should be sent to the Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer and these could then be collated and prepared as a questionnaire for final agreement at the next meeting.

The Chair suggested that the Task Group look at other councils' procedures with regard to disabled bays.

Members suggested that the group consider: Hastings, Hertsmere, Luton, Milton Keynes, Portsmouth, Rother Three Rivers District Council and South and Central Bedfordshire. It was decided that Members should also use their personal knowledge and contacts to help research the problems and possible solutions.

AGREED –

1. that officers clarify information on advisory bays within the CPZ and whether they are enforceable
2. that officers provide information (in table form) on the different types of disabled bays both in and out of the CPZ and whether these can be enforced
3. that officers provide information on the procedure for making advisory disabled bays

4. that officers clarify whether it is possible to apply time limiting restrictions to disabled drivers using Pay and Display bays
5. that officers provide information on the scale of the problem regarding abuse of disabled bays to include the number of complaints and feedback from residents
6. that a questionnaire be sent to residents who have advisory disabled bays outside their property
7. that officers provide to Members both the current CPZ leaflet and the proposed future one
8. that officers provide details of the number of bays in the borough and the procedure for checking whether they are needed.
9. that officers and Members collate information on other councils' procedures with regard to disabled bays. Possible councils to investigate would include: Hastings, Hertsmere, Luton, Milton Keynes, Portsmouth, Rother, Stevenage, Three Rivers and Central and South Bedfordshire

5. **DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

- Tuesday 29 January 2013

Members agreed that 5.30 p.m. would be the optimum time to hold the meeting.

Group

The meeting started at 5.35 p.m.  
and finished at 6.20 p.m.

Chair

Disabled Parking Bays Task

17/1/13



## **MANAGEMENT OF DISABLED PARKING BAYS TASK GROUP**

**29 January 2013**

Present: Councillor Martins (Chair)  
Councillors Brandon, Collett and Greenslade

Also Present: Councillor Lynch  
Councillor Mills (for minute numbers 8 - 10)

Officer: Head of Planning  
Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer

### **6. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillor Bell.

### **7. MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 9<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2013**

The minutes were agreed and signed.

### **8. REPORTS AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Members of the Task Group had received considerable background information from officers. It was agreed that, consequently, the Task Group had a more thorough understanding of procedures and regulations for Controlled Parking Zones (CPZs) and Advisory Parking bays.

The Chair said the key decision for the meeting was how best to establish the extent of the problem for residents with disabled parking bays. He suggested that evidence should be gathered through a survey of those residents who were affected.

Councillors Brandon and Collett advised that they had both had little casework concerning advisory bays.

Councillor Greenslade, however, stated that she was personally affected and that she considered that the criteria by which residents were entitled to a bay were very stringent.

The Chair reiterated that there was a need to test the situation as, at that point, Members had only hearsay evidence and little casework to go on. He considered that it would be wise to ask all those who had a bay whether they had encountered problems.

Councillor Lynch detailed the experiences of a resident in her ward and explained that problems with parking had caused the resident additional stress. She said that parking arrangements should be such that they improved residents' quality of life and suggested that each bay should be identified by the numbers of both the blue badge and CPZ permit.

The Chair agreed with Councillor Lynch but said that the issue for the Task Group at this point was to examine the situation with advisory disabled bays. The point made by Councillor Lynch, however, could be considered at a later date or when the group was considering ways to address problems identified through the survey.

Councillor Brandon suggested that one question on the survey could identify whether the types of problem Councillor Lynch had referred to were widespread. He agreed that a survey of residents would be wise.

The Head of Planning noted that there had been very little casework on the subject so far but agreed that a questionnaire could be sent out to ask those with advisory bays if they did have problems. She referred to Councillor Lynch's suggestion regarding displaying numbers of both the blue badge and the permit number and said that the Traffic Regulation Order for the CPZ could be amended to require both a resident's permit and blue badge to be displayed in marked disabled bays. Outside the CPZ, bays would have to be made statutory.

Councillor Mills expressed concern that blue badges would be stolen if left in cars over night.

Councillor Greenslade referred to the proposed loss of eleven parking bays at the Town Hall end of Watford and advised that motorists would then be inclined to use residents' bays.

The Head of Planning pointed out that the eleven spaces would be re-provided in Church car park and further noted the number of existing disabled bays as listed in the agenda.

Councillor Lynch advised that a permit for parking in the multi-storey car parks could be purchased for £10. She felt that a question for the survey could be whether, were residents to buy such a permit, they would use the multi storey car parks more frequently.

The Chair said that this and other related issues could be considered by the Task Group as a separate piece of work.

The Head of Planning advised that any new work would require a fresh proposal form.

## 9. SURVEY FOR RESIDENTS

The meeting agreed that they would conduct a survey and then discussed how this could best be achieved.

The Head of Planning considered that the list of questions as detailed in the agenda could be reduced and suggested that officers revise the list and forward on to the task group for their consideration.

The Chair agreed that the survey based on the questions proposed by members of the Task Group should be conducted by officers and the results considered at the following meeting of the group.

The Head of Planning offered to draft the survey and to circulate to the Task Group members prior to conducting the exercise.

In reply to a query from Councillor Brandon, the Head of Planning said that two people from her team could work on the survey. She pointed out that to receive a reasonable number of returned surveys it would be wise to wait until after the schools' half term break so that residents had sufficient time to consider their replies. The Head of Planning would advise of the timeframe for this exercise.

**ACTION:** Head of Planning

In view of the above, the committee noted that the original date of 9<sup>th</sup> March 2013 to report back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee would now need to be revised.

**AGREED –**

That officers will conduct a survey, based on the questions proposed by the Task Group members, of the 170 households who currently have advisory disabled bays and prepare a report for the task group to consider.

That the next meeting of the Task Group would take place on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2013 starting at 6.00 p.m.

10. **DATE FOR NEXT MEETING**

- Monday 25<sup>th</sup> February 2013 at 6.00 p.m.

**Task Group**

The meeting started at 5.30 p.m.  
and finished at 6.00 p.m.

5/2/13

**Chair**

Management of Disabled Parking Bays

## **MANAGEMENT OF DISABLED PARKING BAYS TASK GROUP**

**7 May 2013**

Present: Councillor Martins (Chair)  
Councillors Brandon, Collett and Greenslade

Officers: Transport & Infrastructure Section Head  
Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer (RW)

### **11. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillor Bell.

### **12. MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 29<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2013**

The minutes were agreed and signed.

### **13. RESIDENTS' RESPONSES TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE**

The Chair thanked the Members of the Task Group. He noted that this had been a much needed topic for scrutiny and had established the extent of the problems. He acknowledged that whilst misuse of disabled parking bays was not considerable, it did constitute an issue for some residents.

The Chair referred to the questionnaire and noted that most respondents had said that they had had a problem. He considered that this was significant and that these issues should be addressed.

The Transport and Infrastructure Section Head agreed that the survey had been useful and said that it had advised on problems which had not been realised beforehand. He noted that 99 responses had been received which demonstrated residents' interest in the subject.

The Task Group then discussed the findings in the Officer's report.

Councillor Brandon noted that parking generally was a problem in Callowland ward and said that it would be interesting to discover whether the overall parking issues in the borough were similar to those encountered by disabled drivers.

The Transport and Infrastructure Section Head advised that in the event of problems, residents were unsure what they could do. He explained that all holders of Blue Badges could park in those bays which were subject to a traffic order. Not all Blue Badge holders, however, could have a bay marked outside their own homes. He advised that strict rules applied to those who were entitled to such bays.

He suggested that one Recommendation be that information should be sent to residents explaining the rules for the disabled Parking Bays. He added that within the Controlled Parking Zones (CPZs), problems should be minimal since a resident's permit could be taken back were they to infringe the rules. He agreed that outside the CPZs a greater problem would exist.

He noted that one suggestion from residents had been to make the bays longer. He advised, however, that a balance needed to be kept between the needs of those with a disabled bay and those of other residents.

Councillor Brandon suggested that issues could be communicated to councillors in the wards where problems had been encountered. He said that not all problems would occur in all wards.

The Transport and Infrastructure Section Head suggested that a breakdown of disabled parking bays in all wards could be sent to all councillors in order that they could be made aware of potential problems in their areas.

The Chair agreed that this list should be sent and noted the responsibility that ward councillors had for their residents.

Councillor Collett commented on the permit which could be obtained by disabled drivers for use in the Intu Watford (Harlequin Centre) managed car parks but not the Watford Borough Council car parks. This permit would allow holders to park all year round for a £10.00 fee.

The Chair added that an article could be written for the 'About Watford' periodical with information on the survey and what actions residents could take in the event of problems.

Councillor Collett suggested that a letter of thanks should be sent to the 99 residents who had responded to the questionnaire as this would demonstrate that their opinions were valued and would be acted upon.

Councillor Brandon suggested that a survey be conducted every three years in order to monitor whether problems followed similar trends from year to year.

The Transport and Infrastructure Section Head commented that there could be additional feedback in the CPZ survey.

In response to queries on road markings, the Transport and Infrastructure Section Head advised that the markings were yellow but that under the current ruling road markings for disabled Parking Bays should be white. He advised that as a result of a suggestion raised at the previous meeting, he had asked Herts County Council Highways department whether the house number could be marked within the bay. He had been informed that this was not possible.

Councillors agreed that it would be wise to keep track of all calls received in relation to disabled parking bay problems by entering these in a 'log'.

Councillors also agreed that information from the survey be forwarded to Disability Watford.

#### 14. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

AGREED –

1. That information be sent to residents explaining the rules which allowed for disabled parking bays to be established outside residents' homes.
2. That information be sent to residents explaining who could and who could not use the disabled parking bays.
3. That information be sent to all ward councillors detailing where Disabled Parking Bays had been established within their wards.
4. That an article be written in 'about Watford' informing residents that the survey had been conducted and advising on actions residents could take in the event of encountering problems.
5. That a letter of thanks be sent to all respondents to the survey.
6. That all Councillors keep a data log of information on all parking problems received from residents.

7. That information arising from the survey be forwarded to Disability Watford.
8. That information on the Disabled Driver Car Parking Scheme as used in the Intu Watford (Harlequin Centre) car parks be forwarded to members of the Task Group

Chair  
Management of Disabled Parking Bays

Task Group  
The meeting started at 6.00 p.m.  
and finished at 6.20 p.m.

f-21/5



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**The  
Parking  
Service**

The Parking Shop Watford Borough Council  
71-73 Market Street, Watford, Hertfordshire, WD18 0PS  
Tel: 01908 223508 Fax: 01923 248902  
Website [www.watford.gov.uk](http://www.watford.gov.uk)

---

M

TRA/02/1/JB/SE

Watford  
Hertfordshire  
WD

17 August 2011

Dear Mr,

**Re: Disabled Car Park Pass Card**

Thank you for your recent application for a Disabled Drivers Car Park Pass. Your application has been accepted and I have enclosed a Card for entry to the Harlequin Car Parks and a copy of the Terms and Conditions of use. The expiry date for your Card No. \*\*\*\* is \*\*\*\*\* 201\*. However, we will contact you in plenty of time prior to this date to arrange renewal

If you no longer require your card or change any of the details on your Application Form, please contact us on the telephone number above as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely

Watford Council Parking Service

**DISABLED DRIVERS CAR PARK PASSES**  
**TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF ISSUE**

1. A person who is registered as a disabled driver and is the holder of a valid “Blue Badge” issued by Social Services, may apply for a Disabled Drivers Car Park Pass provided that: -
  - (a) The applicant is either permanently resident or has permanent employment within the Borough of Watford **AND**
  - (b) The applicant is in receipt of one of the following income related benefits:-
    - Housing Benefit, in the form of Rent Allowance or Local Housing Allowance for people living in rented accommodation
    - Council Tax benefit
    - Income Support
    - Job Seekers Allowance (Income based)
    - Working Tax Credit
    - Child tax credit
    - Guaranteed Pension Credit (not 'Savings Pension Credit')
    - Employment and Support Allowance (Income based)
2. There is an annual charge of £10.00 for a pass, which is valid for a period of twelve months, and your pass will be valid as soon as you receive it (or continue to be valid if you are renewing). It should be noted that passes are not automatically renewed and therefore, an application form must be submitted each year, together with a copy of **both sides** of your valid blue badge, your current vehicle registration number and proof of one of the income related benefits listed above.
3. Applications should be made to Watford Council c/o The Parking Shop and the application form must be accompanied by the annual charge.
4. No refund of the annual charge may be claimed.
5. **The pass is not transferable - it is issued subject to its use only by the disabled person to whom it is issued** and to the terms and conditions of the Borough of Watford (Off - Street Parking Places) Order 1990, (Variation No. 4) Order 1995.

**Improper use of the pass will lead to forfeiture.**

6. **The pass is issued only to the applicant and his/her vehicle;** accordingly please notify Watford Council immediately if the vehicle for which the pass is issued is replaced by another vehicle. Please note: **you must be present** on every occasion that the pass card is used and any misuse may lead to its immediate withdrawal.

7. The pass will be valid on any day for the multi-storey car parks in Watford that are operated by Capital Shopping Centres Plc., subject to a parking space being available. When parking your car, your blue disabled badge must be clearly displayed within the vehicle and you are asked to use the special wide disabled bays if they are available. The pass **must** be used both when entering **and** leaving the car park.
8. Vehicles and their contents are left in the car parks at the owners risk and Watford Borough Council, their servants or agents shall not be responsible for any injury to any person nor for any loss or damage to any vehicle or its contents, howsoever caused.
9. A charge of £7.00 will be made for lost cards.
10. The foregoing terms and conditions of issue may be subject to amendments by Watford Council.

**All enquiries relating to the scheme should be forwarded to Watford Council, The Parking Shop, 71 - 73 Market Street, Watford, Herts. WD18 0PS. Telephone 01908 223508.**

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

The following documents were found to be useful:

1. The Blue Badge Scheme: rights and responsibilities in England

This is a useful leaflet for people issued with a Blue Badge . It includes and explains information on: who can use the badge, how it should be displayed, where users can and cannot park and other useful facts.

Copies of this leaflet can be downloaded from the DfT website at :

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/206022/blue-badge-rights-responsibilities.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/206022/blue-badge-rights-responsibilities.pdf)

2. Watford Borough Council Parking Service Annual Parking Enforcement Report 2011/2012

In accordance with the Traffic Management Act 2004, local authorities that carry out Civil Parking Enforcement are expected to be accountable and transparent and as such are required to publish an annual report within six months of the end of every financial year.

This document gives information which includes enforcement activity, the financial aspect of civil parking enforcement and plans for the future.

The report can be downloaded using the link below.

<http://www.watford.gov.uk/ccm/content/parking/annual-parking-enforcement-report-2010-11.en>

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

21 November 2012

- Present: Councillor Collett (Chair)  
Councillor Khan (Vice-Chair),  
Councillors Aron, Bell, Greenslade, Hastrick, Hofman, Martins and Rackett
- Also present: Councillor Watkin, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Shared Services (for minute numbers 35 to 43)  
Councillor Meerabux  
Eric Fehily, Associate Director of Infrastructure, West Herts Hospital NHS Trust (for minute numbers 35 to 39)
- Officers: Director of Corporate Resources and Governance, Three Rivers District Council (for minute numbers 35 to 43)  
Head of Revenues and Benefits (for minute numbers 35 to 43)  
Partnerships and Performance Section Head (for minute numbers 35 to 43)  
Committee and Scrutiny Officer

### 35. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

There were no apologies for absence.

### 36. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

There were no disclosures of interest.

### 37. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 September 2012 were submitted and signed.

### 38. SCRUTINY PANELS/TASK GROUPS

The Scrutiny Committee was asked to note the minutes of the following Scrutiny Panels and Task Groups which had been published since Overview and Scrutiny Committee's last meeting –

- Budget Panel 11 September and 23 October 2012
- Outsourced Services Scrutiny Panel 18 September 2012
- Community Safety Partnership Task Group 10 October 2012

RESOLVED –

that the minutes of the various Scrutiny Panels and Task Group be noted.

39. **PREVIOUS REVIEW UPDATE: HOSPITAL PARKING CHARGES TASK GROUP**

The Chair introduced Eric Fehily, the Associate Director of Infrastructure for West Herts Hospital NHS Trust. She invited him to respond to the Hospital Parking Charges Task Group's recommendations.

Mr Fehily explained his role at the Trust and that he was responsible for services at the three hospitals within the Trust. He confirmed that he would be speaking to the Scrutiny Committee about the Watford site when responding to the Task Group's recommendations. He informed Members that the funds had been confirmed for the new access road to the hospital and that a preferred bidder for the development had been agreed.

Recommendation 1 – Information on concessions to be made clearer and available in an information booklet

Mr Fehily informed the Scrutiny Committee that prior to his attendance at the Task Group he had received complaints from visitors about the information available on concessions. Since that meeting work had been carried out with the Patient and Liaison Services (PALS) to improve the information on the Trust's website. Details were included on noticeboards in the hospital's wards. Staff were aware of the procedures. Since his attendance at the Task Group he had not received any complaints.

Recommendation 2 – Parking charges to start at £2.50 for a two hour stay

Mr Fehily said that there were significant difficulties with this recommendation. The car park was managed by a contractor on behalf of the Trust and the parking charges had been agreed. The contract had a further 18 months to run and it was not possible to change the pricing structure. If the Trust had introduced this lower charge it could not afford to run the car park and NHS funds would have to have been used.

Recommendation 3 – Stakeholders to be surveyed prior to increase in parking charges

Mr Fehily informed the Scrutiny Committee that this was an agreed procedure by the Trust. He added that there were no current plans to increase charges.

Recommendation 4 – Vouchers to be offered in the event that visitors park for longer than their anticipated stay

Mr Fehily stated that the actual cost to administer a voucher scheme would be too costly. He explained that the Trust took a 'softly softly' approach and that penalty notices were mainly issued to staff for incorrect parking.

#### Recommendation 5 – Pay on exit scheme to be introduced

Mr Fehily explained that as part of Watford Health Campus a new multi storey car park would be built. This would increase the number of spaces for all users. The recommendation would be introduced with the new car park. At the present time it would be too costly to introduce as it would require the installation of four gates and barriers and the required equipment.

#### Recommendation 6 – Signage and information on the free '30 minute' bays to be improved

Mr Fehily confirmed that the signage was in place; however, the spaces were currently available to all users. The reason for this was that due to the increase in activity at the site the car park was regularly full. The signage was being ignored as the spaces were needed in order to be able to run the hospital.

#### Recommendation 7 – Signage and information on parking areas for visitors to be improved

Mr Fehily advised that the signage had been improved throughout the site. The signage was constantly under review. There were proposals for a new surgery ward to be built on the car park and therefore signage would be reviewed.

#### Recommendation 8 – Signs informing on slippery roads to be installed

Mr Fehily said that instead of 'slippery' the signage would state 'car park on slope – caution'. This needed to be completed.

#### Recommendation 9 – Signs to indicate distance to hospital reception to be installed

Mr Fehily informed the Scrutiny Committee that there were car park attendants located in the car park in the morning in order to direct people to the correct entrance. The Acute Admissions Unit had a different entrance to the main hospital. The Renal Unit was located in a different building. The car park attendants were proactive.

In conclusion Mr Fehily stated that the most difficult recommendation was regarding the £2.50 charge. The Trust had a contractual relationship until 2015 and it would be costly to break that contract.

The Chair asked whether, at a later date, the Trust would consider a charging scheme based on the amount of time spent in the car park.

Mr Fehily responded that a business case for the car park had been prepared and would be presented to the Business Case Review Group. If the Review Group agreed to the proposals they would then be presented to the Trust's Board for approval. All parking options for the multi-storey car park would be considered. He added that £150,000 had been invested in the car park, including road repairs, lines, new disabled bays and access.

Councillor Bell questioned whether penalty notices were only issued to staff as he had received complaints from other users. He also asked whether the new multi-storey car park would be large enough to replace the existing car parks.

Mr Fehily advised that if a visitor had parked illegally then they would receive a penalty notice. However, they were mainly issued to staff. He said that the car park was managed as sensitively as possible. The majority of penalty notices were quashed.

With regard to the new multi-storey car park, he explained that consultants had been employed to review the parking arrangements. The consultants felt that the number of spaces needed to be increased to 1,600. It was acknowledged that the Trust needed to work on its Green Travel Plan. Once the new road had been built people would be encouraged to use bicycles. The first 10 minutes and the last 10 minutes of a person's experience at a hospital were important and this was not good if they had problems parking.

Mr Fehily added that car parking providers would be asked for their views on parking arrangements through market testing. The most suitable option for the hospital would be implemented. Stakeholders would be involved in the development.

Councillor Greenslade commented that there had been discussions since the 1980's about a multi-storey car park for the hospital. She asked for assurances that it would definitely be built this time.

Mr Fehily responded that the business case had been written. It would be delivered in partnership with Kier and the development partners. Following a question from Councillor Greenslade about height restrictions, he assured her that all aspects including the height of vehicles would be taken on board.

Councillor Khan referred to a recent visit to the hospital. It had taken him some time to find a space. He asked how long the Associate Director thought the current situation would continue and whether there was anything the Council could do to assist the hospital.

Mr Fehily explained that the current problems were due to the building works. The staff used a car park in Cardiff Road which had been leased from the Council. More space was needed. Activity levels went up in line with the complexity of cases seen at the hospital. More people requested outpatient appointments at Watford. The Trust's website advised people to leave plenty of time to find a parking place. The building works should be completed by Christmas and the parking situation should improve in January. The multi-storey car park would take approximately 12 months to build. Planning approval was likely to be sought in the summer; therefore it would take approximately 18 months to complete it.

Following a further question, Mr Fehily added that once the Trust's Board signed off the business case, the Health Authority would be asked to approve the scheme. Once approved, the Trust could go to the market and select a preferred bidder.



Councillor Martins said that he was disappointed that the recommendation of a £2.50 charge had not been implemented. He asked whether the business case ruled out the £2.50 charge. He commented that he understood the reason for issuing penalty notices for illegal parking and asked about penalty notices for those people who overstayed the time on their ticket.

Mr Fehily advised that he did not have details of the business case available. He assured Members that the parking contractor's role was not to penalise patients and visitors. If people did have an issue they could go to the PALS office. He explained that each complaint would be considered on its own merits. He reiterated that the hospital took a 'softly softly' approach.

Councillor Martins asked for details of the number of penalty notices issued and the number of appeals.

Councillor Hofman asked whether the business plan had taken account of the Croxley Rail Link when assessing the number of spaces required.

Mr Fehily confirmed that the forecast had been based on the future activities at the hospital. It assumed that a number of people would use the train and a number of people would cycle to the site.

Councillor Hofman noted that the overflow car park was not used at the weekends. He suggested that the Trust could open it and charge a fee to those going to the football ground.

Mr Fehily explained that it was not used due to a planning condition imposed by the Council. He said that ideally the Cardiff Road car park would be open for staff thereby freeing spaces in the main car park for visitors.

Councillor Meerabux commented that the charge of £4.00 was too high. He was aware that people passed their unexpired tickets on to other car park users.

The Chair responded that this matter had come out in the review. At the Task Group meeting Mr Fehily had stated that he would take the comments back to the Trust.

Mr Fehily added that the Trust was aware the exchange of tickets occurred but turned a 'blind eye'. The multi-storey car park would have an automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) system and this would mean that people would not be able to transfer tickets. ANPR was a mechanism used to manage car parks.

The Chair thanked Mr Fehily for attending the meeting and updating Members on the Trust's plans for the hospital car park.

The Scrutiny Committee agreed that the Committee and Scrutiny Officer would contact the Associate Director in six months to check on the progress of the plans for the car park which would then be circulated to Members.

RESOLVED –

that a further update on the car park be provided to the Scrutiny Committee in six

months.

ACTION: Committee and Scrutiny Officer

40. **CALL-IN**  
No Executive decisions had been called in.

41. **OUTSTANDING ACTIONS AND QUESTIONS**

The Scrutiny Committee received an update incorporating the outstanding actions and questions raised at previous meetings. Responses were included within the document.

Members considered the responses to each of the outstanding actions and questions.

PR 5 Neighbourhood Forums – articles in About Watford

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer informed the Scrutiny Committee that she had had further discussions with the Communications Team regarding articles in About Watford relating to Neighbourhood Forums. She advised Members that the Communications Team would shortly be contacting all Councillors with details of the publication deadline for the next edition of the Council magazine. Members would be able to have articles highlighting projects in their wards, including pictures, and publicise any forthcoming Neighbourhood Forum meetings.

RESOLVED –

that the outstanding actions and questions' update be noted.

42. **QUARTER 2 2012/13 PERFORMANCE REPORT**

The Scrutiny Committee received a report of the Partnerships and Performance Section Head setting out the Key Performance Indicators and the second quarter performance measures for 2012/13. The Partnerships and Performance Section Head highlighted some of the key aspects of the report. She reminded Members that benchmarking information could be provided if required.

In response to a question from the previous meeting, the Partnerships and Performance Section Head confirmed that Environmental Services took the service lead for all complaints received by the Council. It was no longer covered by Corporate Services as this service no longer existed within the Council. The figures in the report were therefore for the whole of the Council.

ES9 (percentage of the total tonnage of household waste arising which have been recycled)

Following a question from Councillor Bell, the Partnerships and Performance Section Head advised that she understood that due to the poor weather it was

difficult to keep the garden waste down. This was likely to have an impact through the year.

Councillor Khan noted the high level of wastage. He asked whether the Council had considered a weekly collection.

The Partnerships and Performance Section Head informed the Scrutiny Committee that the Council needed to collect 40% of recyclables in order to receive recycling credits and it was currently on target.

Councillor Rackett said that it was important that the Council considered the feasibility of a weekly collection and what this would do to the recycling rates and the cost of providing the service. He was aware that in many terraced areas the recycling boxes were full after one week and residents then put their recycling into the household waste instead.

#### CS13 (KPI6) (number of households living in temporary accommodation)

Councillor Bell noted the target and actual data for this measure. He asked whether officers expected this figure to rise due to the impact caused by changes to housing benefits.

The Partnerships and Performance Section Head informed the Scrutiny Committee that officers were working with the private sector to find accommodation. The Housing Team's structure had changed during the year. One team concentrated on the supply of accommodation. This included properties with Registered Social Landlords and the private sector.

Councillor Bell said that he was aware of the budget of £150,000 to pay for bed and breakfast accommodation. He asked whether it was likely that more resources could be required.

The Partnerships and Performance Section Head advised that she would contact the service for future projections.

#### HR1 (KPI8) (sickness absence – working days lost)

Following a question from Councillor Khan regarding sickness absence, the Partnerships and Performance Section Head advised that the statistics in the report did not separate the short term sickness and the long term sickness. The Council had implemented new management procedures for short term sickness. For example a letter was sent to the employee by their manager on the second day of absence. For those on long term sickness there were other procedures in place including occupational health advice. The overall figure could be broken down further.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer informed Members that recently a monthly bulletin had been started setting out details of sickness across the Council. It was available on the Intranet and she would forward the information to the Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Meerabux asked whether the sickness level was linked to the possibility

of outsourcing services and the risk of redundancy. For example the officers might be feeling under pressure.

The Partnerships and Performance Section Head responded that any organisation going through a period of change had an impact on its staff. Stress was included in the detailed statistics. It was possible to compare data over a period of years.

#### Cor2 (complaints resolved at stage one)

Councillor Martins noted the low level of complaints resolved compared to the target of 90%.

The Partnerships and Performance Section Head confirmed that this measure was below target. Response to complaints had to be fitted into the day to day work of services and this was sometimes difficult to achieve. The analysis of complaints included those that had been upheld and those that had not been upheld.

#### CS12 (KPI5) (number of affordable homes delivered)

Councillor Aron referred to actual number of affordable homes delivered in the second quarter compared to the target. She asked whether the 49 properties were on the Cassio Campus site. She also enquired if this would have an impact on the waiting list.

The Partnerships and Performance Section Head explained that sometimes targets were based on previous years. It was possible that the service had been too optimistic when setting the target but this could be difficult with an area like the delivery of housing. With regard to the impact on those waiting for a property, the Partnerships and Performance Section Head advised that the service had commented that it was fortunate that a number of premises had become available. There could be an impact at a later date if the supply of new homes coming through were to fall.

The Chair referred to the appendix and the various abbreviations used throughout the document. She asked that in future reports the abbreviations were explained.

RESOLVED –

1. that the Scrutiny Committee's comments on the performance of the council's key performance indicators for 2012/13 at the end of quarter 2 be noted.
2. that the Scrutiny Committee's comments on the additional performance measures at the end of quarter 2 be noted.

ACTION: Partnerships and Performance Section Head

#### 43. **BENEFITS DEPARTMENT UPDATE**

The Scrutiny Committee received a report of the Head of Revenues and Benefits which provided an explanation of the improvement in Performance Indicators for

the Benefits service and the background to the statistics.

The Head of Revenues and Benefits explained the procedures that had been implemented to meet the service's increasing workload. He assured Members that when people were asked for additional information it did not affect the start date of their claim. The claim began from the first date they approached the service.

The Head of Revenues and Benefits informed the Scrutiny Committee that the Shared Services Joint Committee had agreed that external sources could be used to help reduce the backlog of claims. A review was carried out of the external provider's quality of work. In some cases the service made a complaint and some of the external provider's agents were removed from the work. The Council also monitored the workload of its own staff.

The Head of Revenues and Benefits referred Members to paragraph 3.2 of the report and the performance data for each month from April. He advised the Scrutiny Committee that if claimants informed the Council of a change in their circumstances they were allowed one month to provide all the relevant information required. This delay added to the average time taken to process the changes and was reflected in the performance indicator.

The Head of Revenues and Benefits informed the Scrutiny Committee that officers were aware of the request to report on the number of cases outstanding rather than the number of documents. The software had been amended and in the future officers would be able to provide information based on the number of cases.

Councillor Bell acknowledged the improved performance indicators and that help had been provided by two external companies. Additional funding had been granted to carry out this work. He said that external companies did not have face to face contact with the public whereas the Council staff did. He said that he felt this was more stressful for the internal staff and asked whether this was taken into account when monitoring their work. In addition he enquired how the forthcoming benefit changes would affect Watford.

The Head of Revenues and Benefits advised Members that he was aware of the face to face and telephone contact the internal staff had with the public and this was taken into account when monitoring them.

In response to the second part of Councillor Bell's questions, the Head of Revenues and Benefits explained that the changes would begin to be introduced in April 2013. The first change related to a reduction in housing benefit for social housing tenants if their property was deemed to be too large for their needs. Tenants would still be able to claim housing benefit but might not receive the same amount. There was potential for people to be at risk of not paying their full rent. Discussions were taking place with the Housing Team. Officers were working with the Watford Community Housing Trust to try and identify potential clients who may experience problems in the future.

The Head of Revenues and Benefits advised that Universal Credit would begin to be introduced from October 2013, however he was not aware of the exact date it would affect Watford. It was likely to be phased in from October 2013, which

could mean a reduction in caseload from November or December 2013. However, it was not envisaged that initially there would be a large reduction in caseload. He confirmed that officers from different departments were looking at help for vulnerable tenants.

Councillor Aron noted that the officer had stated that many claimants did not provide all the information on making their application. She asked whether they were provided with details setting out the documents required.

The Head of Revenues and Benefits explained that the application form included a checklist of the types of documents that would be required. When claimants came to the Customer Service Centre an officer would go through the form and provide the applicant with a checklist of required documents. When that information was provided the application was then fast tracked.

The Head of Revenues and Benefits added that applications were received from various sources and not only direct from the client. For example, applications could be made at Job Centre Plus. Job Centre Plus would require some information but the Council would require information about the client's application to Job Centre Plus. Officers suggested that applications were submitted as soon as possible rather than waiting for all the information to be available, as this would affect the date of the application. Some applicants brought all their information when making the claim whereas other cases might take longer than 28 days.

Following a question from the Chair, the Head of Revenues and Benefits stated that Job Centre Plus had similar procedures to the Council, the difference being that they would look at applications for Job Seekers Allowance or Income Support. The Council would need to wait for the result of the application to Job Centre Plus before being able to process applications for Housing Benefit.

Councillor Rackett asked for details of the increase in budget for the service and whether the work carried out by the Customer Service Centre was included.

The Head of Revenues and Benefits informed Members that the financial details were presented to the Shared Services Joint Committee in September 2012.

Councillor Khan commented that he was pleased the figures were going down. He said that he had been very critical of the service at the Shared Services Joint Committee. The changes to the benefits system meant that there was a degree of uncertainty. He felt it was a valid point that some families would be stretched.

The Head of Revenues and Benefits responded that the service was placed to meet the changes and the reduction in caseload. The service currently had a backlog of applications but steps had been put in place to reduce this. By April the service should be able to meet the forthcoming changes. The changes included the Council Tax Support Scheme which would be a different scheme to administer. People would have less income and would be making decisions on what they would pay. The service needed to review its enforcement practices and strike a balance between those who paid on time and those who needed assistance. In addition the service would need to identify those who were unable to pay and those people who chose not to pay. It would be necessary to look at debts holistically. People would be encouraged to pay and not penalised.

The Director for Corporate Resources and Governance informed the Scrutiny Committee that the Shared Services Joint Committee had asked officers to look at a soft market test for the service. He added that nationally there had been a 20% increase in Housing Benefit cases, however in Watford the increase had been 29%. In respect of Council Tax Benefit, nationally the increase had been 15% and in Watford it had been 19%. Until the impact of the Universal Credit it was not prudent to employ staff and then have to make cuts at a later date. This had been the reason the authorities had looked at other sources to provide support through the current period.

Councillor Meerabux asked about the length of the application form and the difficulties some people might experience in understanding it, particularly due to language.

The Head of Revenues and Benefits responded that the form was normally between 24 and 28 pages, but not all questions were relevant to all applicants. The form covered all eventualities. The e-claim form was intelligent and bypassed the questions which were inappropriate to the claimant. The service had visiting officers who went out to vulnerable people in their own homes, including those who had difficulty with reading. The officers were busy every day. When the officers returned to the office they then processed the claims.

The Partnerships and Performance Section Head added that the Council used the services of a company called Languageline. Both Housing and the Benefits teams used this service.

The Portfolio Holder said that he wished to acknowledge the work the Head of Revenues and Benefits and Director for Corporate Resources and Governance had done. He had seen improvements over the last six months. When there were fewer claims outstanding there were less people chasing their claim and contacting the office.

The Chair thanked the Director for Corporate Resources and Governance and Head of Revenues and Benefits for the information and responding to Members' questions.

RESOLVED –

1. that the report be noted.
2. that a further update be provided in six months time on progress.

ACTION: Committee and Scrutiny Officer and Head of Revenues and Benefits

#### 44. **SCRUTINY REVIEW**

The Scrutiny Committee received a report of the Committee and Scrutiny Officer setting out details of a review of the scrutiny structures introduced in May 2011.

Executive Decision Progress Report

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer informed the Scrutiny Committee of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 and how it affected scrutiny. She explained that the Forward Plan was no longer required and instead the Council had to give 28 days notice of any executive decision. The notices were included in one document, which was similar to the Forward Plan.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer advised that prior to the new regulations she had been working with the Democratic Services Manager on a new way of reporting relevant information about the Forward Plan to Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Following the introduction of the new regulations the new reporting mechanism had been developed further and was attached to the report as Appendix 1. The new document would be built up over a year from May and would form a comprehensive list of decisions which had been proposed and completed or withdrawn. Explanations would be provided as necessary. The document would also highlight where the item had not met the 28 days deadline and that the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee had been informed. It would also report on items where the Chair had been asked to agree whether a decision could be classed as urgent and then exempt from call-in. Officers were required to provide a reason an item was urgent which would then be explained to the Chair.

As part of the new Regulations, if the Scrutiny Committee believed a non-key decision should have been classed as a key decision it could ask for a report to be submitted to Council. The document would also make it clear whether an item was key or non-key.

Councillor Khan advised that when Members received notification that a new plan had been published, it only referred to the Intranet and not the Internet.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer asked if the Councillor could forward the email to her and she would investigate the matter and amend it as necessary. She assured Members that the notice was published on the Council's website.

The Chair said that she felt the document was much clearer and Councillor Bell said that he was pleased with how it was set up.

#### Revised Scrutiny Proposal Form

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer informed the Scrutiny Committee that the revised Scrutiny Proposal form would become a complete record of a review. She explained that additional information had been included to assist people when putting forward suggestions. It would also record Overview and Scrutiny Committee's decision and the agreed membership.

#### General comments

Councillor Rackett stated that scrutiny was the main way other Members could hold the Executive to account. Under the previous structure there had been two main scrutiny committees and various Task Groups. He said that he was frustrated with the way scrutiny was moving. In his view the system was not



working. He was concerned that things would be missed.

Councillor Martins asked the Councillor for an example where there was a deficit in scrutiny.

Councillor Rackett said that he had noted that there was a scrutiny suggestion on the agenda but there were likely to be other suggestions. Officers had said that only one Task Group could be carried out at one time.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer advised that a number of local authorities were reviewing their scrutiny arrangements. She had recently responded to an enquiry from Stevenage Borough Council about the scrutiny structure at Watford. She agreed that officers had stated that only one time limited Task Group could be set up since the introduction of the new Outsourced Services Scrutiny Panel. Officers had, however, agreed to monitor the team's workload and if there were capacity for additional Task Groups they could be set up. She reminded Members that she was only able to present scrutiny suggestions to Overview and Scrutiny Committee when suggestions had been proposed.

Councillor Aron said that she was pleased that officers had attended the meeting and updated officers on the progress of the Housing Benefits Team. She asked that when Task Groups were established they should be party to all information. It was frustrating when Members were not provided with information as they could not make a decision. Councillor Hastrick agreed with these comments.

Councillor Bell said that he agreed with Councillor Rackett. The agenda for this meeting had been very heavy. He understood the officer's comments, but previously there had been an officer working solely on scrutiny.

RESOLVED –

1. that the Executive Decision Progress Report, attached as Appendix 1 to the report, be approved and included as a regular report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
2. that the revised Scrutiny Proposal Form, attached as Appendix 2 to the report, be approved and used with immediate effect.
3. that the report be noted.

ACTION: Committee and Scrutiny Officer

#### 45. **PREVIOUS REVIEW UPDATE: AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

The Scrutiny Committee received a report of the Committee and Scrutiny Officer including an update on the second recommendation of the Affordable Housing Review. The recommendation had last been reviewed in July 2011.

RESOLVED –

that the latest update be noted and that it be further reviewed in October 2014.

ACTION: Committee and Scrutiny Officer

46. **PREVIOUS REVIEW UPDATE: CHOICE BASED LETTINGS**

The Scrutiny Committee received a report of the Committee and Scrutiny Officer which provided an update on Cabinet's response to the recommendations originally agreed by Call-in and Performance Scrutiny Committee in February 2011.

Cabinet's response and its minutes were attached to the report.

RESOLVED –

that the latest update be noted.

47. **VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR COMMISSIONING FRAMEWORK TASK GROUP**

The Scrutiny Committee received a report of the Committee and Scrutiny Officer including Cabinet's minutes from the meeting on 8 October 2012.

Councillor Aron informed Members that, as Chair of the Task Group, she would be working with the Portfolio Holder and Head of Community Services on the criteria for the small grants fund. She agreed to report back to Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the outcome.

It was agreed that an update report would be presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting in June 2013.

RESOLVED –

1. that the Cabinet's decision be noted.
2. that an update be provided in June 2013.

ACTION: Committee and Scrutiny Officer

48. **TASK GROUP SUGGESTIONS**

The Scrutiny Committee received a scrutiny suggestion from Councillor Martins to review the management of disabled parking bays and parking by Blue Badge holders.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer informed the Scrutiny Committee that she had received a response from the Head of Planning, a copy of which was circulated to the Members.

Councillor Martins explained why he had put forward the suggestion. He felt that the Head of Planning assumed that there was not a problem that needed to be resolved. He said that he was aware of problems related to local residents' disabled bays.

Councillor Rackett said that he supported this suggestion. He would also like to suggest that a Task Group could be set up to look at the Property Review. Previously Members had been told not to commission a Task Group. He had been told that the review was under way. He felt that there was some work for scrutiny to do. Councillor Bell agreed that this review needed to be carried out.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer advised that a scrutiny proposal form had never been completed for the Property Review. She added that Budget Panel would be receiving a presentation on the subject of Property at its meeting in February.

Councillor Rackett returned to Councillor Martins' suggestion and the Head of Planning's response. He felt the Head of Service was stating that there was no evidence of any problems. He received complaints from residents. It had also been commented on how long it took to get bays removed when they were no longer required. He agreed that this was a topic to be done.

Councillors Hastrick and Khan agreed that Councillor Martins' concern was valid.

Councillor Khan said that he would also like to propose a topic for review on the Housing Trust. He commented that between 40% and 50% of his casework related to the Housing Trust.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer stated that she would forward the new scrutiny proposal form to Members for completion.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer informed the Scrutiny Committee that only one non-executive Member had responded to her email asking for volunteers for the Task Group should it be agreed. Councillor Brandon had expressed an interest in taking part in the review.

Councillors Bell, Collett, Martins and Greenslade said that they were interested in taking part in the Task Group to look at disabled parking bays.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer advised that she would transfer the proposal on to the new template and circulate it to all those interested in taking part. The first meeting would be arranged as soon as possible.

RESOLVED –

1. that a Task Group be established to review the management of disabled bays and parking by Blue Badge holders.
2. that Councillors Bell, Brandon, Collett, Greenslade and Martins be appointed to the Task Group.
3. that the Committee and Scrutiny Officer circulates the Scrutiny Proposal form

to those Councillors interested in putting forward topics for future review.

ACTION: Committee and Scrutiny Officer

49. **DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS**

- Thursday 20 December 2012 (For call-in only)
- Tuesday 15 January 2013 (For call-in only)
- Wednesday 23 January 2013

Chair  
Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The meeting started at 7.00 p.m.  
and finished at 9.25 p.m.

F- 30/11/12

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

27 June 2013

Present: Councillor Collett (Chair)  
Councillor Khan (Vice-Chair),  
Councillors Aron, Bell, Hastrick, Johnson, Lovejoy and Martins

Also present: Louise Gaffney, Director of Strategy and Infrastructure, West Herts Hospitals NHS Trust (for minute numbers 1 to 4)  
Frank Hennessy, Programme Director, Change Review, West Herts Hospitals NHS Trust (for minute numbers 1 to 4)  
Councillors Connal and Joynes  
Councillor Watkin, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Shared Services (for minute numbers 1 to 5)

Officers: Head of Revenues and Benefits (for minute numbers 1 to 5)  
Partnerships and Performance Section Head  
(for minute numbers 1 to 6)  
Committee and Scrutiny Officer

### 1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP**

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Greenslade.

### 2. **DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

There were no disclosures of interest.

### 3. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meetings held on 26 March and 22 April 2013 were submitted and signed.

### 4. **HOSPITAL CAR PARK UPDATE**

Louise Gaffney, the Director of Strategy and Infrastructure spoke to the Scrutiny Committee about the results of the 'listening exercise' that had been carried out by the West Herts Hospitals NHS Trust. The aim of the consultation was to involve people in the Trust's decision-making process for the car park and other transport related matters. There had been over 3,000 responses to the consultation. It was clear from the responses that there were no easy answers, as there were many contradictory comments. The Trust would not be able to implement all the suggestions submitted.

Ms Gaffney informed Members about the proposals for the inter-site bus service. The Trust would be promoting discounted fares for public transport to staff.

The results of the consultation showed that 66% felt that blue badge holders should be given free parking. The Trust had discussed the parking arrangements with members from the Disability Forum, who had stated that they were willing to pay for an appropriate service. The matter would be discussed further when the hospital's new car parking facilities had been developed. 17% of the responders stated they had blue badges.

The majority of those who had selected an option had chosen option 3. This included an hourly charging structure with no free parking time. The Trust was re-considering the original option and adapting it. It was felt that the 30-minute free waiting time should be retained. 582 of the responders had suggested different pay structures. The concessions would be continued.

Ms Gaffney advised the Scrutiny Committee that the Trust would be making its decision on the charging structure and the charge for the intersite bus within the next two weeks. The information would be circulated to contact groups and the media.

Members welcomed the news that blue badge holders would not be charged for parking when the new charging structure was introduced. They were also pleased that the free 30-minute waiting time would be retained. It was hoped that consultation would continue to be carried out by the Trust in the future. Reference was made to the Task Group's original recommendations and how Members had felt the introduction of an automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) system would be a solution. Members asked the Trust to remember patients when it was making its decisions.

Ms Gaffney stated that the Trust had listened to people, including patients through the 'listening exercise'. This had been the reason for deciding to introduce an hourly-rate structured parking scheme. The Trust would like to move to an ANPR system but it was unable to do this with the current infrastructure. When a new car park had been built it would be possible to consider the introduction of a pay on exit system. At the present time this was not possible due to the number of different exits on site.

Following questions about the car park being used as a means for the Trust to make money and about the current contractor, Ms Gaffney explained that currently the Trust made a loss on the car park. The Trust was aiming to break even with the new charging structure. The income from the intersite bus did not subsidise the car parking. The income from the car park charges was used to maintain the car parks and their security. There were also overheads to pay, for example charges for the land which was not owned by the Trust. She add that if the right charging structure was not in place then the car parking budget would have to be subsidised by other budgets within the hospitals.

Ms Gaffney explained that the current car park contract expired in 2014. The Trust had already started to look at the requirements for a new contract. Tenders would be sought ready for next year. She informed Members how the income from the car parks was divided between the Trust and the contractor.

Frank Hennessy added that the base contract set an agreed anticipated income. The Trust was therefore guaranteed a minimum income. Any additional income

from the car parks was then split through a profit share arrangement.

It was agreed that the Committee and Scrutiny Officer would circulate information relating to the new payment structure to the Scrutiny Committee once it had been made available.

The Chair thanked Louise Gaffney and Frank Hennessy for attending the meeting and updating the Scrutiny Committee on the results of the consultation.

**ACTION:** Committee and Scrutiny Officer

## 5. **BENEFITS DEPARTMENT UPDATE**

The Scrutiny Committee received a report from the Head of Revenues and Benefits providing an update on the progress of the Benefits department.

The Head of Revenues and Benefits highlighted some of the impacts on the service and additional measures which had been implemented.

The Portfolio Holder stated that he shared Members' concerns about the performance indicators for the completion of change in circumstances. This indicator still remained high and was not reducing as fast as he would wish.

Members commented on the report and posed a number of questions.

The Head of Revenues and Benefits informed the Scrutiny Committee that the service still used SERCO to assist with the change in circumstance applications. The service no longer contracted out work to Liberata. He confirmed that SERCO did not have direct contact with claimants unless they needed to obtain specific information. The Head of Revenues and Benefits explained that he had been set the objective of achieving the 8-day target for processing applications by the end of March 2014. He added that the new Director of Finance came from an authority which had made huge strides in reducing the time taken to process claims.

Following a question about the average processing time within Hertfordshire, the Head of Revenues and Benefits advised that the last data he had received related to Quarter 2 in 2012/13. The average was 18 days. This resembled the level of performance in Three Rivers District Council prior to the introduction of Shared Services.

The Chair thanked the officer for the update. It was agreed that a further update would be given in six months time.

The Chair asked the Head of Revenues and Benefits to pass on the Scrutiny Committee's best wishes to David Gardner on his retirement from Three Rivers District Council.

**RESOLVED –**

that a further update be presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee in six

months.

ACTION: Committee and Scrutiny Officer

**6. UPDATE ON THE COUNCIL'S KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS AND MEASURES – END OF YEAR (QUARTER 4) 2012/13**

The Scrutiny Committee received a report of the Partnerships and Performance Section Head setting out the Key Performance Indicators and the end of year performance measures for 2012/13. The Partnerships and Performance Section Head highlighted some of the key aspects of the report.

The Partnerships and Performance Section Head informed the Scrutiny Committee that with effect from 1 July 2013, those indicators related to waste and recycling, street cleansing and ICT would be transferred to the report presented to the Outsourced Services Scrutiny Panel. This Scrutiny Committee would receive the first quarter's results at its meeting in July.

HR1 / KPI 8 – Sickness absence

Following a question about the target being reduced to 5, the Partnerships and Performance Section Head explained that the figure of 4.5 quoted in the report had been reviewed. The revised figures showed a cumulative absence rate for those staff not being transferred as just over five days. She explained that sickness monitoring was carried out very differently at Watford Borough Council compared to Three Rivers District Council. Shared Services had just started using First Care, the same as Watford Borough Council, and there had been an increase in sickness rates reported since the introduction.

Data for services transferred to Veolia

The Partnerships and Performance Section Head informed the Scrutiny Committee that Veolia would be required to provide regular performance information to the Council's Client Team. The information would be provided to the Outsourced Services Panel as part of its regular report.

ES7 – Flyposting

In response to a question from the Chair regarding flyposting, the Partnerships and Performance Section Head explained that flyposting was used as a cheap form of advertising. The service was very rigorous in dealing with this matter and had been disappointed with the performance results, which were a result of increased activity.

ES6 / KPI4iii – Graffiti

The Partnerships and Performance Section Head informed the Scrutiny Committee that as far as she was aware the performance indicator definitely related to graffiti on public land but would check whether the removal of graffiti from private property was included.



### Co5 - % of stage 1 complaints resolved within 10 days

Following comments from the Vice-Chair, the Partnerships and Performance Section Head informed the Scrutiny Committee that the current three stage system was being streamlined to a two stage system. The complaints form was in the process of being revised. It was also possible to submit a complaint online.

The Partnerships and Performance Section Head advised that she would confirm whether Councillors contacting the Town Hall with a resident's complaint would be registered in the complaints system.

RESOLVED –

1. that the performance of the Council's key performance indicators for 2012/13 at the end of quarter 4 be noted.
2. that the performance of the additional performance measures at the end of quarter 4 be noted.
3. that the current set of indicators continues in 2013/14, noting that those associated with Environmental Services and ICT will be reported to the Outsourced Services Scrutiny Panel from quarter 2.

ACTION: Partnerships and Performance Section Head

## 7. **OUTSTANDING ACTIONS AND QUESTIONS**

The Scrutiny Committee received an update incorporating the outstanding actions and questions raised at previous meetings. Responses were included within the document.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer advised Members that following discussions with the Housing Section Head it was proposed to reschedule the review of the performance of the Council's new Nomination Policy to March 2014. She explained that the proposed Nomination Policy was not due to be presented to Cabinet until September. Members agreed with this suggestion.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer informed the Scrutiny Committee that, following a discussion with the Chair, it had been decided to move the two items related to the voluntary sector to 25 July. This meeting had originally been due to only consider any called in Executive decisions.

Members considered the responses to each of the outstanding actions and questions.

RESOLVED –

that the outstanding actions and questions' update be amended as discussed.

ACTION: Committee and Scrutiny Officer

8. **EXECUTIVE DECISION PROGRESS REPORT**

The Scrutiny Committee received the final edition of the Executive Decision Progress Report for 2012/13 and the latest edition for 2013/14.

Members asked to be provided with updates on the progress of the Shared Services software upgrade and the Local Authority Mortgage Scheme.

RESOLVED –

that the latest update be noted.

ACTION: Committee and Scrutiny Officer

9. **HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S HEALTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer informed the Scrutiny Committee that Watford Borough Council appointed a representative to the County Council's Health Scrutiny Committee. The Health Scrutiny Committee comprised 10 County Councillors and 10 District/Borough Councillors, one from each of the District and Borough Councils within Hertfordshire. The Health Scrutiny Committee covered all aspects of health, including Clinical Commissioning Groups, NHS Trusts, the Health and Wellbeing Board, Healthwatch Hertfordshire and Public Health. Councillor Martins, the Council's representative on the Health Scrutiny Committee, had been invited to provide an update at Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Martins advised that he had attended the first meeting for the current Municipal Year earlier that day. The Health Scrutiny Committee had received 10 presentations, many of which concentrated on the recommendations in the Francis Report. The Members had decided to gather information at this meeting and then consider which areas they wished to scrutinise further. They would set up small Task Groups in order to cover as many areas as possible. It had been reported that HealthWatch had established stakeholder panels in all areas in the county. He was currently waiting for details of contact points. The Committee and Scrutiny Officer was asked to obtain this information.

It was agreed that the Committee and Scrutiny Officer would circulate the links to the Health Scrutiny Committee's agendas as they became available on the County Council's website.

RESOLVED –

that the update be noted.

ACTION: Committee and Scrutiny Officer

## 10. **OUTSOURCED SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL**

The Scrutiny Committee received a report of the Committee and Scrutiny Officer setting out the proposed membership for 2013/14 and amendments to the Panel's Terms of Reference.

The Scrutiny Committee raised a number of concerns about the Scrutiny Panel, including the number of meetings a year, reporting mechanisms and training.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer advised that although the Terms of Reference referred to the panel meeting a maximum of four occasions during the year, if it were felt that additional meetings were required then these could be arranged. The Scrutiny Panel was a sub-panel of Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee agenda listed all other scrutiny meetings that had taken place. These included Budget Panel, Outsourced Services Scrutiny Panel and Community Safety Partnership Task Group. Members requested that in future the Chairs of Outsourced Services Scrutiny Panel and Budget Panel should attend Overview and Scrutiny Committee to provide a verbal update on the work of their panels. Members also requested paper copies of all minutes for these groups.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer informed the Scrutiny Committee that officers were trying to identify appropriate training for the members of Outsourced Services Scrutiny Panel. Some of the training courses covered the whole procurement procedure and very little on monitoring contracts.

### RESOLVED –

1. that the membership of the Outsourced Services Scrutiny Panel be agreed as follows –
  - Councillor Shirena Counter
  - Councillor Sue Greenslade
  - Councillor Kareen Hastrick
  - Councillor Anne Joynes
  - Councillor Steve Rackett
2. that the revised Terms of Reference for Outsourced Services Scrutiny Panel be agreed.

ACTION: Committee and Scrutiny Officer

## 11. **COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP TASK GROUP**

The Scrutiny Committee received a report of the Committee and Scrutiny Officer which contained details of those Councillors who wished to join the Community Safety Partnership Task Group.

Councillors Khan and Lovejoy stated that they had not replied to the original email but wished to continue as members of the Task Group. This was agreed. It was

noted that the membership would be the same as in 2012/13.

RESOLVED –

that the membership of the Community Safety Partnership Task Group be agreed as follows –

- Councillor Jeanette Aron
- Councillor Anne Joynes
- Councillor Asif Khan
- Councillor Ann Lovejoy
- Councillor Rabi Martins
- Councillor Kelly McLeod
- Councillor Malcolm Meerabux

## 12. **MANAGEMENT OF DISABLED PARKING BAYS TASK GROUP**

The Scrutiny Committee received a report of the Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer including the Task Group's report.

Councillor Martins, Chair of the Task Group, presented the report to the Scrutiny Committee. He highlighted the large response to the survey. The Task Group had agreed that it would be necessary to monitor the number of complaints in a year's time.

The Scrutiny Committee asked that recommendation 5 be re-worded as it was not clear what type of parking problems should be recorded.

RESOLVED –

1. that the Management of Disabled Parking Bays Task Group conclusions and recommendations be agreed subject to an amendment to number 5.
2. that the report be forwarded to Cabinet for its comments.

**ACTION:** Committee and Scrutiny Officer and Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer

## 13. **WATFORD COMMUNITY HOUSING TRUST TASK GROUP**

Councillor Khan, the Chair of the Watford Community Housing Trust Task Group, provided an update to the Scrutiny Committee. He informed Members that to date there had been two meetings. The initial meeting discussed the topic and how they wished to carry out the review. The second meeting was an open meeting for tenants, who had been invited to speak to the Councillors about their experiences with the Housing Trust.

Other Members of the Task Group also commented. They had noted how a theme had appeared in the residents' comments.

Further meetings were to be arranged including one with the Housing Trust. They felt it was important that the Housing Trust's Chief Executive should respond to the Task Group's questions.

RESOLVED –

that the update be noted.

#### 14. **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Scrutiny Committee received the latest version of the Work Programme. The Committee and Scrutiny Officer advised that following discussions at this meeting it would be updated further. She added that she would also include updates from the Property Task Group which was due to start in September.

RESOLVED –

that the rolling work programme be noted and amended as appropriate.

#### 15. **DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS**

- Thursday 25 July 2013
- Thursday 26 September 2013
- Thursday 24 October 2013 (For call-in only)

Chair  
Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The meeting started at 7.00 p.m.  
and finished at 9.05 p.m.

4/7/13

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## PART A

**Report to:** Cabinet  
**Date of meeting:** 7 October 2013  
**Report of:** Head of Revenues & Benefits Services  
**Title:** Irrecoverable Write Offs

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### 1.0 **SUMMARY**

1.1 This report proposes that debts owed to the council in respect of business rate are written off as irrecoverable.

### 2.0 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 To approve the writing off of irrecoverable monies owed to the council in accordance with the Financial Procedure Rules of the council.

### **Contact Officer:**

For further information on this report please contact: Phil Adlard, Head of Revenues & Benefits Services.  
Telephone Ext 8023

**Report approved by:** Joanne Wagstaffe, Director of Finance

### 3.0 **DETAILED PROPOSAL**

3.1 The Director of Finance has the power to approve the write off of irrecoverable debts up to an approved limit. The approved limit is £3,001 for council tax, business rate and sundry debt.

3.2 Where an irrecoverable debt requiring write off is in excess of the approved limit, and the debt can still legally be recovered the approval of Cabinet is required.

3.3 Revenues and Benefits Services have a policy and procedure document for writing off debts (for all funds) as approved by Council on the 13 June 2011. All write offs are implemented in accordance with this document. Only cases where all avenues of recovery are exhausted are recommended for write off.

3.4 The writing off of irrecoverable monies owed to the Council in respect of council tax, business rates, housing benefit overpayments and sundry debtors should be

done on a regular basis as cases arise. This report covers the write off of business rate and is supported by required audit trails and supporting documentation. Provision for bad debts has already been made.

3.5 Case 1  
Business Rate - £10,815.07  
Reason for write off – Company Dissolved.

3.6 Case 2  
Business Rate - £4,373.01  
Reason for write off – Unable to trace debtor

#### 4.0 **IMPLICATIONS.**

##### 4.1 **Financial**

4.1.1 Provision for bad debts has already been made in determining the authority's baseline in respect of business rate retention.

##### 4.2 **Legal Issues** (Monitoring Officer)

4.2.1 The Head of Democracy & Governance comments that the legal implications are contained within the body of the report.

##### 4.3 **Equalities**

4.3.1 None identified

##### 4.4 **Potential Risks**

Potential risk	Likelihood	Impact	Overall score
By not writing off irrecoverable debt in a timely manner will lead to criticism from external audit.	3	2	6
Failing to keep adequate paperwork can lead to monies which would normally be reimbursed being forfeited.	2	4	8

##### 4.5 **Staffing**

4.5.1 None identified

##### 4.6 **Accommodation**

4.6.1 None identified

##### 4.7 **Community Safety**

4.7.1 None identified

##### 4.8 **Sustainability**

4.8.1 None identified



## Appendices

None

## Background Papers

The information contained in the background papers is confidential in accordance with paragraph 7, Part 1, Schedule 12a, Local Government Act 1972. The names and addresses of individuals and personal information are contained in the supporting paperwork for the report.

## File reference:

Head of Revenues and Benefits Services records

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**Report to:** Cabinet  
**Date of meeting:** 7 October 2013  
**Report of:** Housing Section Head  
**Title:** Watford Borough Council's Homelessness Review and Strategy 2013-2018

## 1.0 SUMMARY

- 1.1 Each local authority has a statutory duty to produce a Homelessness Review and Strategy for its local authority area at least once every five years. Watford Borough Council's current homelessness review and strategy covers the period 2008-2013 and is due to expire on 31 December 2013.
- 1.2 The development of a new Homelessness Review and Strategy allows the following exercises to be undertaken in order to meet current and new challenges:
- i) Reassessment of priorities.
  - ii) Reassessment of the allocation of resources.
  - iii) Setting of new activities and targets in order to meet emerging needs.
- 1.3 A new Homelessness Review and Strategy for 2013-2018 has now been produced. Prior to presentation to Cabinet, it has been circulated for internal and external consultation and has been presented to the Housing Policy Advisory Group (HPAG).

## 2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Cabinet notes the contents of the Homelessness Review, Strategy and Action Plan and approves these documents for publication.
- 2.2 That Cabinet delegates authority to the Portfolio Holder for Housing to approve amendments to the Review, Strategy and Action Plan on an annual basis

**Contact Officer:**

For further information on this report please contact:  
Helen George, Housing Strategy Officer  
Telephone extension: 8163,  
E-mail: [heleng@watford.gov.uk](mailto:heleng@watford.gov.uk)

**Report approved by:**

Rachel Dawson, Housing Section Head

## 3.0 DETAILED PROPOSAL

- 3.1 Watford Borough Council's current Homelessness Review, Strategy and Action Plan were produced in 2008 and were scheduled to cover the period up to the end of 2013. The action plan contains targets under the following strategic priorities:

- a) To prevent homelessness
- b) To monitor and make best use of the supply of temporary accommodation
- c) To improve access to settled accommodation.
- d) To provide support to manage life and health issues.

It is proposed that, with minor modifications, these strategic priorities are retained for the Homelessness Review and Strategy for 2013-2018. All remain relevant to the current situation.

3.2 Details of the achievements in preventing and tackling homelessness under the Homelessness Review and Strategy for 2008-2013 are included in the new Strategy document.

3.3 The context within which the new Homelessness Review and Strategy has been produced is markedly different from the circumstances surrounding the production of the previous ones. The various factors which are affecting, and will affect, homelessness in Watford include:

- The Welfare Reform Act 2012 and its associated changes.
- The new affordable housing development regime.
- The new nomination policy for the allocation of social housing.
- The changes in the level of resources for local authorities, voluntary organisations and health organisations.
- Demographic changes in Watford.

3.4 The guiding principles which have been proposed for the new Homelessness Review and Strategy are:

- To prevent homelessness occurring by assisting households in remaining in their current settled home, or by encouraging them to follow planned pathways to a settled home.
- Where homelessness cannot be prevented, to provide sufficient support to prevent homelessness occurring in the future, and to improve aspects of the lives of homeless households including health, access to education and employment opportunities.
- To work in partnership with organisations in and around Watford to prevent and tackle homelessness
- To manage demand for local services and the supply of affordable housing.

3.5 Because of the discrete amount of resources available to prevent and tackle homelessness, it is proposed that the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan focuses its actions upon a limited number of homeless groups, and that the Action Plan is reviewed and updated on an annual basis. It is proposed that the homeless groups who are the focus of the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan for 2013/2014 are:

- Households who are homeless because of parental eviction
- Households who are homeless because of the ending of a privately rented tenancy.
- Households living in temporary accommodation.
- Single people with an element of vulnerability.

3.6 The principles upon which high priority for resources and action within the homelessness strategy action plan have been chosen are:

- High numbers of households experiencing particular types of homelessness in Watford.
- Identified gaps in provision for particular groups.
- Identified ability of certain projects to have a high impact in preventing or tackling homelessness.

3.7 It is also proposed that the priority groups, and the actions associated with each, are reassessed at each annual review. This will ensure that the Homelessness Strategy action plan remains responsive to changing circumstances and emerging trends, and can be modified accordingly. For example, the full impact of the changes introduced by the Welfare Reform Act 2012 are not yet clear; by mid 2014 it may be apparent that new actions need to be introduced to assist households who are having difficulty sustaining their tenancies due to changes in the amount of benefits which they receive.

3.8 The new homelessness review and strategy will aim to support the work of local stakeholder organisations who provide assistance to particular groups of people in housing need. These organisations include Watford New Hope Trust, Watford YMCA, Herts Young Homeless, GROW, and registered providers.

3.9 The Homelessness Review and Strategy 2013-2018 will be linked closely to the following corporate policies and strategies, all of which will be completed by the end of June 2014:

- The Housing Strategy
- The Nominations Policy
- The Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy.

3.10 A consultation exercise on the homelessness review and strategy took place in May and June 2013, prior to the presentation to Watford Council's Leadership Team. The consultation included the views of service users and voluntary and statutory agencies as well as elected members and council officers. Full details of those consulted is available on request.

Responses from the consultation exercise have been incorporated into the Review and Strategy.

3.11 Two special consultation events with stakeholders were held on 21 March and 4 July, and a focus group meeting was held with residents of the YMCA in August 2013.

#### 4.0 IMPLICATIONS

##### 4.1 Financial

The implementation of the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan can be met within existing staffing resources and grant resources.

4.1.1 The Shared Director of Finance comments the report's recommendations have no additional financial implications .

##### 4.2 Legal Issues (Monitoring Officer)

The Homelessness Review and Strategy will allow Watford Borough Council to meet its obligations under the following legislation:

- The Housing Act 1996, Part VII
- The Homelessness Act 2002
- The Localism Act 2011

4.2.1 The Head of Democracy and Governance comments that the legal implications are contained within the body of the report.

##### 4.3 Equalities

***Watford Borough Council is committed to equality and diversity as an employer, service provider and as a strategic partner. In order to fulfil this commitment and its duties under the Equality Act 2010 it is important to demonstrate how policies, practices and decisions impact on people with different protected characteristics. It is also important to demonstrate that the Council is not discriminating unlawfully when carrying out any of its functions***

An analysis of the effects of the Homelessness Review and Strategy upon protected characteristic groups has been carried out. The analysis has drawn on monitoring information and the results of research projects. We are satisfied that the outcomes of the Homelessness Review and Strategy will be positive in terms of furthering equality aims. The analysis of the effects of the Homelessness Review and Strategy is available for examination if requested.

##### 4.4 Potential Risks

Potential Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Overall score
A decrease in Government resources e.g. Homelessness Grant withdrawn, Single Homelessness Project monies withdrawn	2	4	8
A decrease in Corporate resources	2	3	6
A decrease in resources among partner organisations, reducing their ability to deliver against the homelessness strategy action plan.	2	3	6

Unforeseen economic or demographic change causing an increase in homelessness	3	4	12
Publication delayed – unable to meet legal obligations under the Homelessness Act 2002 of publishing a new Homelessness Review and Strategy by 31 December 2013.	1	3	3
<i>Those risks scoring 9 or above are considered significant and will need specific attention in project management. They will also be added to the service's Risk Register.</i>			

#### 4.5 **Staffing**

4.5.1 The implementation of the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan can be achieved within existing staffing resources or those funded through partner organisations or the DCLG homelessness grant. .

#### 4.6 **Accommodation**

4.6.1 There are no accommodation implications.

#### 4.7 **Community Safety**

4.7.1 The Homelessness Review and Strategy aims to promote Community Safety with its focus on the following issues:

- Preventing illegal eviction
- Assisting persons who are being discharged from hospital
- Assisting persons who suffer from a number of health conditions which reduce their ability to find their own home.
- Assisting victims of domestic violence
- Supporting organisations who work with people sleeping rough in Watford

#### 4.8 **Sustainability**

4.8.1 The Homelessness Review and Strategy contributes to the following objectives within the Watford Sustainable Community Strategy:

- Objective 1: A well-planned town with homes to suit all needs.
- Objective 3: A healthy town
- Objective 4: A prosperous and educated town.

The Homelessness Review and Strategy aims to promote strong sustainable communities and support tenants in maintaining their tenancies.

#### Appendices

Appendix One: Watford Borough Council Homelessness Review 2013-2018

Appendix Two: Watford Borough Council Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan 2013-2018

Appendix Three: Duty to produce a Homelessness Strategy

#### Background Papers

No papers were used in the preparation of this report.

File Reference

None





# Homelessness Review 2013-2018

Watford Borough Council

September 2013

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**Executive Summary**

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## **Foreword from the Mayor of Watford.**

We are all aware of the national pressures which impact on households in difficult economic times and the demands on local services which seek to support them. There has never been a more important time to review and refresh our Homelessness Review and Strategy.

Under the Homelessness Act 2002 every local authority in England is required to publish a plan to show how they will prevent and tackle homelessness in their area. This is the third homelessness review and strategy which Watford Borough Council has published since 2003. It builds on the work which has been carried out in previous years.

Homelessness is usually an extremely stressful experience. There is a very large number of reasons it occurs. A young family may be asked to leave the parental home because there is no longer room for them to live there; a household may have to leave their accommodation because it is no longer safe for them to live in it; a person with a physical disability or illness may find that their home is no longer suitable for their needs; an individual may leave hospital, local authority care or the Armed Forces and have nowhere to go; a household may no longer be able to afford their rent or mortgage payments. Watford Borough Council has a strong corporate commitment to both tackling the causes of homelessness and alleviating the impact of the symptoms.

Watford is a very dynamic borough. It has seen big demographic, economic and tenure-related changes since 2001. It is a popular place to live and there is high demand for all types of housing in the borough. Consequently, demand for somewhere to live is very high, and a high number of households are not able to meet their housing needs by renting or purchasing market-priced housing. Watford Council aims to increase the number of households in the borough who follow a planned path to settled accommodation rather than undergoing the often traumatic experience of homelessness.

A review of homelessness in Watford has been carried out. On the basis of this, an action plan has been compiled. We have selected groups of homeless households whom we consider should have high priority for resources and assistance. A range of tasks for preventing and tackling homelessness has been assigned to each group. Examples of the tasks included in the action plan are:

- Educating young people in secondary schools on their housing options, aiming to manage their expectations and allowing them to remain in a secure family home for as long as possible;
- Devising methods of preventing illegal eviction in the private rented sector;
- Increasing the supply of affordable accommodation and good quality information to single homeless persons;
- Linking housing schemes with employment and training initiatives.
- Improving the standard of temporary accommodation for households who do become homeless;
- Defining the Private Rented Sector offer which we make to both private landlords and tenants.

We recognise that, in a time of great change, our homelessness strategy action plan needs to be as agile and responsive as possible. Consequently, we will review the action plan on an annual basis to re-allocate priorities and resources as appropriate. We very much value our partnership working with the range of organisations in Watford who also work to prevent and tackle homelessness in the borough. We are confident that we can work together so that we address the challenges ahead to maximum effect.

## Executive Summary

- i) Watford Borough Council's Housing Review, Strategy and Action Plan have been written in response to the Council's legal obligation to produce these documents, at least once every five years, under the Homelessness Act 2002.
- ii) Homelessness is not just a housing-related problem; it is often the most vulnerable members of the community who are affected, and it often incurs a high cost to other public sector areas such as health, education and welfare benefits.
- iii) The number of households applying to Watford Council for assistance under homelessness legislation and the number being accepted for assistance under homelessness legislation have both increased significantly since 2008 when the last homelessness review and strategy were written. New measures to both prevent and tackle homelessness in Watford are required.
- iv) Homeless households are provided with assistance under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 and the Homelessness Act 2002. The review focuses upon this and more recent contexts within which the homelessness review and strategy are being written include: the Localism Act 2011, the Welfare Reform Act 2012, the increase in the number of single and vulnerable people requiring assistance in Watford, a possible increase in the amount of in-migration to the borough from elsewhere in the United Kingdom and overseas, an increase in the levels of overcrowding in Watford.
- v) The Homelessness Review, Strategy and Action Plan do not focus upon the regulations for the allocation of social rented housing in Watford. This is the role of the Nominations Policy. The purposes of the Homelessness Review, Strategy and Action Plan are to allocate resources for preventing and tackling homelessness in the borough and to manage demand for affordable housing. The aim of the Action Plan is to introduce new services and initiatives in response to identified gaps in need.

- vi) The guiding principles for the homelessness review and strategy consist of the following:
- To **prevent homelessness** occurring by assisting households in remaining in their current settled home, or by encouraging them to follow planned pathways to a settled home.
  - Where homelessness cannot be prevented, to provide **sufficient support** to prevent homelessness occurring in the future, and to improve aspects of the lives of homeless households including health, access to education and employment opportunities.
  - To **work in partnership** with organisations in and around Watford to prevent and tackle homelessness.
  - To **manage demand** for local services and the supply of affordable housing.
- vii) The Homelessness Strategy Action Plan contains a set of coherent actions that are designed to carry out the guiding principles. The actions will be grouped into the four strategic priorities:
- a) Prevention of homelessness
  - b) Making best use of temporary accommodation
  - c) Improving access to settled accommodation (this will focus primarily on use of existing housing stock, while new affordable housing will be included in the new Housing Strategy).
  - d) Providing support to manage life and health issues.
- viii) The Homelessness Strategy Action Plan will be reviewed and updated on an annual basis to ensure that it is agile and responsive to changing circumstances.
- ix) The tasks within the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan for 2013/3014 will focus on the following high priority issues:
- Preventing and tackling homelessness due to Parental Eviction.
  - Ending of privately rented tenancies
  - Households in temporary accommodation.
  - Single people with an element of vulnerability

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 The definition of Homelessness

Under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 homelessness is defined as follows:

*“A person is defined as homeless if he has no accommodation suitable for his occupation in the United Kingdom or elsewhere which he is entitled to occupy by virtue of an interest in it or by virtue of an order of a Court. A person is also homeless if he has accommodation but cannot secure entry to it, or it is not reasonable for him to occupy. A person is threatened with homelessness if it is likely that he will become homeless within 28 days.*

## 1.2 The duty of local authorities to produce a Homelessness Review and Strategy

Under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 and the Homelessness Act 2002 every local authority has a duty to assist persons and households who are homeless. Under the Homelessness Act 2002 all local housing authorities must have in place a homelessness strategy which is based on all forms of homelessness in their district. It must be renewed at least every five years. The strategy must set out the local authority’s plans for the prevention of homelessness and for securing that sufficient accommodation and support are or will be available for people who became homeless or are at risk of doing so. (*Homelessness Code of Guidance 2006*).

## 1.3 What is a Homelessness Review?

Under the Homelessness Act 2002, Homelessness Reviews are described as follows:

(1) *“For the purposes of the Act, “homelessness review” means a review by a local housing authority of:-*

- (a) The levels, and likely future levels, of homelessness in their district.*
- (b) The activities which are carried out for any purpose linked to the above, or which contribute to their achievement; and*
- (c) The resources available to the authority, the social services authority for their district, other public authorities, voluntary organisations and other persons for such activities.*

(2) *“The purpose of the Homelessness Review is for:*

- (a) preventing homelessness in the district of their authority*

*(b) securing that accommodation is or will be available or people in the district who are or may become homeless.*

*(c) providing support for people in the district:*

*(i) who are or may become homeless; or*

*(ii) who have been homeless and need support to prevent them becoming homeless again.”*

The Homelessness Review and Strategy play a very different role from the Nominations Policy. The Nominations Policy provides information on how social rented housing in Watford will be allocated, including which groups will receive priority for accommodation and why they will receive this priority. The Homelessness Review and Strategy provides a framework for allocating resources to lessen the demand for social rented housing. This will be achieved by either preventing homelessness or, if the homelessness has already occurred, by undertaking measures to prevent the household from experiencing homelessness again in the future. Demand management is a crucial part of the Homelessness Review and Strategy.

## **2. The Watford Homelessness Review and Strategy**

### **2.1 The impact of Homelessness**

*“Homelessness can have significant negative consequences for people who experience it. At a personal level, homelessness can have a profound impact on health, education and employment prospects. At a social level, homelessness can impact on social cohesion and economic participation.*

Homelessness Code of Guidance, 2006.

The number of households applying to Watford Council for assistance under homelessness legislation and the number of households being accepted for assistance under homelessness legislation have increased significantly since the last homelessness review and strategy was produced in 2008. This is particularly the case during the two year period 2011-2013. Homelessness is not just a housing-related problem; it is often the most vulnerable members of the community who are affected, and it often incurs a high cost to other public sector areas such as health, education and welfare benefits.

### **2.2 A Diagnosis to define the nature of the challenge**

Homelessness is the opposite of a planned route to settled accommodation. It poses the following problems for households, local authorities and other public sector agencies:

- Prior to making a homelessness application a household can be living in poor housing conditions, ranging from overcrowded homes and poor quality housing to the worst manifestation of homelessness which consists of sleeping outdoors.
- Homelessness incurs substantial costs to local authorities in accommodating households in temporary housing while they await the outcome of their homelessness application or an offer of settled accommodation.
- Its sudden nature can dislocate households from support networks, often leading to increased levels of stress and poor health.
- It can prevent households from focusing upon education and employment opportunities while they are in temporary accommodation. Homeless households may give up their jobs prior to moving into temporary accommodation because they have had to move further away from their place of work.
- High levels of homelessness can concentrate allocations of social housing disproportionately highly to homeless households, while households who attempt to access social housing as part of a planned move to settled accommodation have to wait longer to be allocated accommodation.
- Homelessness can impact on the stability of communities, particularly in areas where homelessness is very visible and there is high turnover of housing and population.

Our research has shown the levels of stress caused by housing conditions which lead to homelessness, as illustrated in eviction letters. These letters describe arguments, severe relationship breakdowns, cramped living conditions, high levels of stress and deteriorating levels of personal health.

### 2.3 The Guiding Principle

The Guiding Principle is an overall approach chosen to cope with or overcome the obstacles identified in the diagnosis. The policy adopted to guide the homelessness strategy will take the following four approaches:

- To **prevent homelessness** occurring by assisting households in remaining in their current settled home, or by encouraging them to follow planned pathways to a settled home.
- Where homelessness cannot be prevented, to provide **sufficient support** to prevent homelessness occurring in the future, and to improve aspects of the lives of homeless households including health, access to education and employment opportunities.
- To **work in partnership** with organisations in and around Watford to prevent and tackle homelessness, and to monitor and tackle key risks.
- To **manage demand** for local services and the supply of affordable housing.

### 2.4 A set of Coherent Actions



The Homelessness Strategy Action Plan will contain a set of coherent actions that are designed to carry out the guiding principles. These steps will be co-ordinated with one another to work together in accomplishing the guiding principles. The actions will be grouped into these four strategic priorities:

- a) Prevention of homelessness
- b) Making best use of temporary accommodation.
- c) Improving access to settled accommodation.
- d) Providing support to manage health and life issues.

## 2.5 The consequences of *not* employing a strategy to prevent homelessness

The consequences of *not* employing a strategy to prevent and tackle homelessness among the categories identified in the review are:

- Households will retain protection and entitlement to priority for the allocation of social rented housing under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 and the Homelessness Act 2002. Applications for assistance under homelessness legislation will continue to be made and a high percentage of social rented housing in the borough will be allocated to homeless households.
- Households who apply for assistance under homelessness legislation will mostly be entitled to an offer of temporary accommodation for them to use while enquiries are being carried out and while they are waiting for an appropriate offer of affordable housing. This can be very costly to the local authority, especially when demand is high and Bed and Breakfast accommodation has to be used.
- Without intervention, the number of rough sleepers and other people living in unsuitable conditions will continue to rise. This will lead to higher demand for resources from other public services and organisations to deal with issues associated with environmental health, crime and health.

## **3. Links to other policies and strategies**

The Homelessness Review and Strategy will be supported by the following policies and strategies:

### 3.1 The Watford Borough Council Corporate Plan 2013-2017

Corporate Priority – Making Watford a better place to live in

- Developing new homes – target of 260 new dwellings per annum
- Identifying and managing ways to tackle homelessness and demand for housing and increase supply, while improving conditions through the revised Housing Strategy, Homelessness Strategy and Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy.

### 3.2 One Watford: Watford Sustainable Community Strategy

Objective 1: A well-planned town with homes to suit all needs.

Objective 3: A healthy town

Objective 4: A prosperous and educated town.

### 3.3 The Watford Council Nominations Policy

This policy is being reviewed in response to the Localism Act 2011. The revised policy will set out the following:

- The policy framework within which social housing in Watford will be allocated. This includes the priorities which will be awarded to different types of housing applications. The Choice Based Lettings system through which social rented housing in Watford is allocated, Herts Choice Homes, contains five priority bands. The highest priority band is Band A and the lowest priority band is Band E. Homeless households are given the level of priority which is appropriate to their needs, and which will also meet the need for balanced communities to be sustained.
- The private rented sector offer which will be made to homeless households.
- The Council's policy for move-on accommodation. Residents of temporary accommodation housing schemes will be expected to accept reasonable offers of accommodation in order to move to a settled home.
- The local connections policy around which households living in temporary accommodation schemes in Watford would be entitled to apply for social housing in Watford.

### 3.4 The Watford Council Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy

This policy is being reviewed. The proposed aims of the new Private sector Housing Renewal Policy are likely to include supporting an accessible private housing sector that provides health, safety and sustainability. It would also provide assistance to those most in need, comply with legislation, and support Watford Borough Council's corporate objectives.

This policy will support the homelessness strategy action plan by detailing the Council's policies relating to the private rented sector, houses in multiple occupation and overcrowding.

### 3.5 The Watford Council Housing Strategy 2014

This strategy is being developed and will set out the Council's strategy and action plan relating to the following:

- Promoting the development of new affordable housing in Watford.
- Improving the condition of private housing.
- Strengthening the contribution of housing to the Council's regeneration agenda.
- Increasing the provision of housing for people with special needs in Watford.

The Housing Strategy will contain full details of how Watford Council will assist its registered provider partners in developing new affordable homes in Watford under the new affordable housing development funding regime. This will include:

- Use of the New Homes Bonus and other Council resources
- Working with Housing and Regeneration Initiative (HARI) partners (see section 8.7)
- Identifying land opportunities
- Devising supportive housing-related policies
- Working with the Planning team
- Helping registered partners to access funding streams.

### 3.6 The Watford Tenancy Strategy 2012-2015

Tenancy strategies are a new tool which have been introduced for local authorities to use by the Localism Act 2011. The two overall aims of tenancy strategies are:

- To make best use of affordable housing stock.
- To improve partnership working with registered providers.

The Watford Tenancy Strategy 2012-2015 provides guidance to its registered provider partners on the following:

- i) Tenancy policies
- ii) Rent levels for both existing and new housing
- iii) Flexible tenancies and Lifetime tenancies.
- iv) Discharging the homelessness duty into the private rented sector.
- v) Local lettings policies.

The Watford Tenancy Strategy can be used as a tool for preventing homelessness by maintaining rents at a reasonable level and effectively discharging the homelessness duty into the private rented sector.

### 3.7 The Housing and Regeneration Initiative (HARI) Homelessness Prevention Agreement

The Housing and Regeneration Initiative (HARI) is a partnership between Watford Council, Three Rivers Council and the registered providers in both local authority areas. As part of its housing management activities, HARI members have drawn up a Homelessness Prevention Agreement.

This agreement was finalised in 2012. The primary objective of the agreement is to specify the approach to be taken by all registered providers within the Watford and Three Rivers areas in seeking to prevent homelessness. The general principles to which HARI registered providers adhere are:

- To work co-operatively with the local authorities in reducing and dealing with homelessness, including assisting with the achievement of specific objectives within the local authorities' housing and/or homelessness strategies.
- To ensure that the registered provider role in minimising the occurrence of homelessness, including taking measures to prevent tenancies from failing, is embedded within their strategies and policies.
- To fully participate in the operation and development of the Choice Based Lettings Scheme and related policies.

## **4. The Watford Scene**

### **4.1 A portrait of Watford**

Watford is an attractive town and a popular place to live. It has excellent road and rail links with London and a very wide range of facilities. Consequently, demand for housing in Watford is high from local residents, households living elsewhere in the United Kingdom (including London), and also from households who have been living overseas.

Most notably, Watford offers a wide range of partnerships and services; a large number of services for homeless people are based in the town. The 2011 Census has provided excellent information on the dynamic and increasingly diverse character of Watford. Between 2001 and 2011 the town's population increased by 13.3%, rising from 79,726 persons in 2001 to 90,301 persons in 2011. The number of households increased by 13.4%, from 32,350 in 2001 to 36,681 in 2011. Significantly, the 0-4 year old age group grew from 6.4% of the population in 2001 to 7.5% of the population in 2011, making it the fastest growing age group.

There are some very notable characteristics of Watford's population growth between 2001 and 2011. The percentage of the population which was White British decreased from 79.1% in 2001 to 61.9% in 2011. Conversely, the White Other population grew from 3.9% to 7.7%, the Asian population grew from 8.2% to 17.9%, and the Black African-Caribbean population grew from 2.7% to 5.8%. In addition, the percentage of the population of Watford born outside the United Kingdom rose from 13.8% in 2001 to 24.7% in 2011.

The period between 2004 and 2009 saw some high levels of migration to Watford from new residents who were born outside the United Kingdom. The West Watford wards of Vicarage, Holywell and Central contain the highest numbers of Watford residents who were born outside the United Kingdom and who have arrived since 1991. In terms of the "new" migration of residents born in countries admitted to the European Union between April 2001 and March 2011, Central ward appears to have been the most popular destination. By March 2011 47.7% of these Watford residents lived in one of the three wards of Central, Vicarage or Callowland.

The big population increase in Watford between 2001 and 2011 has prompted concerns for rising levels of overcrowding in Watford. While the number of unshared dwellings in Watford rose by 13.3% (from 33,163 in 2001 to 37,577 in 2011), in some wards new homes growth has fallen behind household growth. It is possible that there has been a significant growth in shared housing in Watford.

Other significant changes in Watford between 2001 and 2011 are:

- *Household Composition* – the most common household type in Watford is now single persons aged under pensionable age, rising from 17.5% in 2001 to 21.1% in 2011.
- *Tenure* – the private rented sector has risen as a percentage of the housing stock from 9.8% in 2001 to 20.1% in 2011 (a rise in number from 3,170 to 7,371). Conversely, the percentage of homes owned with a mortgage has fallen from 46.1% in 2001 to 37.2% in 2011.
- *Accommodation type* – The most significant development has been the increase in purpose built flats as a percentage of the housing stock, from 19.9% in 2001 to 27.0% in 2011 (a rise in number from 6,583 to 10,139).
- *Economic Status* – There have been notable falls in the percentage of the population in full-time employment, retired or looking after home/family. Conversely, there have been rise in the percentages of the population working part-time, self-employed, unemployed and students.
- *Industry of Employment* – There has been a big decrease in the percentage of persons working in manufacturing. The biggest employment areas for Watford residents in 2011 were:
  - Wholesale and retail, trade and repairs at 17.2%
  - Transport, storage, communication and information at 12.6%
  - Human health and Social Work at 12.3%

#### 4.2 Deprivation in Watford

The Indices of Multiple Deprivation for January 2010 show the number of Watford's neighbourhoods which ranked within the top 25% of deprived neighbourhoods in England.

Measure of deprivation	Number of Watford neighbourhoods within the 25% most deprived in England
Overall deprivation	2 Watford neighbourhoods 1 in Meriden ward 1 in Central ward
Income deprivation	6 Watford neighbourhoods 1 in Stanborough ward 1 in Meriden ward 1 in Central ward 2 in Holywell ward 1 in Oxhey ward
Employment deprivation	1 Watford neighbourhood 1 in Central ward.
Health and Disability deprivation	4 Watford neighbourhoods 1 in Meriden ward 2 in Central ward

	1 in Vicarage ward
Education deprivation	8 Watford neighbourhoods 1 in Woodside ward 1 in Stanborough ward 2 in Meriden ward 1 in Leggatts ward 1 in Callowland ward 2 in Holywell ward
Barriers to housing and other services. This takes into account: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Household overcrowding</li> <li>• Homelessness</li> <li>• Housing affordability</li> <li>• Road distance to a GP surgery</li> <li>• Road distance to a food shop</li> <li>• Road distance to a primary school</li> <li>• Road distance to Post Office</li> </ul>	10 Watford neighbourhoods 1 in Woodside ward 1 in Stanborough ward 2 in Meriden ward 1 in Leggatts ward 1 in Nascot ward 1 in Park ward 1 in Central ward 2 in Oxhey ward
Crime deprivation	5 Watford neighbourhoods 1 in Meriden ward 1 in Callowland ward 3 in Central ward
Living Environment deprivation	12 Watford neighbourhoods 3 in Callowland ward 1 in Nascot ward 1 in Park ward 3 in Central ward 3 in Vicarage ward 1 in Holywell ward
Income deprivation affecting children	5 Watford neighbourhoods 1 in Stanborough ward 1 in Meriden ward 1 in Central ward 1 in Vicarage ward 1 in Oxhey ward
Income deprivation affecting older people	5 neighbourhoods 1 in Leggatts ward 1 in Callowland ward 1 in Central ward 1 in Vicarage ward 1 in Oxhey ward.

In terms of the neighbourhoods which rank in the top 25% most deprived in England, the most deprived wards in Watford are Meriden, Central, Vicarage and Holywell. Homelessness tends to be more concentrated in deprived neighbourhoods. The Homelessness Strategy Action Plan, as it evolves each year, will take into account the need for any locally-based initiatives.

#### 4.3 Changes to Welfare Benefit levels

The Welfare Reform Act is being implemented in the following stages:

- Restrictions upon Local Housing Allowance levels to shared home rates in the private rented sector to single people aged under 35 from January 2012.

- Restrictions to Housing Benefit for households aged under pensionable age who are renting in the social rented sector and who are under-occupying their home from April 2013.
- Overall benefit caps for both single person households, households consisting just of couples, and households with dependent children from September 2013.
- Universal Credit, phased in from a national basis, which will provide one comprehensive payment to households. This payment will include housing costs: there will be no separately identifiable payment made exclusively for housing costs. Information is not yet available on when Universal Credit will be introduced for new or existing claimants living in Watford.
- Direct payments of Universal Credit to tenants instead of directly to landlords.

It has been calculated that approximately 250 households in Watford will be affected by the under-occupation restrictions, and that 93 households in Watford will see a reduction in their income due to the Benefit caps.

#### 4.4 Housing costs in Watford

Watford's popularity as a place to live is reflected in the high prices and rents of privately owned homes

*Average house prices in Watford October – December 2012 (Source: The Land Registry)*

- Overall                      £248,879
- Detached                    £581,550
- Semi-detached            £303,345
- Terraced                    £248,087
- Flat                            £183,704

*Average rents of privately rented accommodation in Watford April 2013 (Source: Home.co.uk)*

Property type	Average open market rents	Local Housing Allowance caps for Watford 2013	National Local Housing Allowance caps 2013
One bedroom	£736 per month	£600 per month	£1,000 per month
Two bedroom	£1,096 per month	£734 per month	£1,160 per month
Three bedroom	£1,441 per month	£923 per month	£1,360 per month
Four bedroom	£2,160 per month	£1,431 per month	£1,600 per month

This information shows the difficulty which residents who are benefit dependent have in accessing self-contained accommodation in the private rented sector, with a large shortfall between average rents and the maximum level of Local Housing Allowance which can be paid per property.

Social Rents are charged by registered providers and usually consist of 50%-60% of market rents. Affordable Rents are also charged by registered providers; they were introduced into the new affordable housing development regime in February 2011 as a method of raising income for developing new homes. They consist of up to 80% of market rents. The following table compares Social Rents, Affordable Rents and Market Rents in Watford in April 2013:

Property type	Social Rent per week	Affordable Rent per week	Market Rent per week
One bedroom	£87.32	£144.23	£184.00
Two bedroom	£100.45	£171.71	£274.00
Three bedroom	£127.56	£201.02	£360.25
Four bedroom	£138.81	Information not yet available.	£540.00

#### 4.5 Incomes in Watford

Watford has a vibrant local economy. The number of jobs available in the town is likely to increase with new developments such as the new Croxley Rail Link, the redevelopment of Charter Place and the development of the Ascot Road site. However, recent research has shown that average local salaries are usually not sufficient to allow open market purchases in Watford without a substantial deposit.

In April 2013 the median average total household income in Watford was £26,900, above the national median which is £26,845. By comparison, the Hertfordshire figure is £35,814. (*Source- District Profile: An Economic, Social and Environmental Summary Profile of Watford*). The following information shows the variation of earnings between occupations in Watford:

*Average salaries for occupations in Watford in April 2013 (source: Payscale.com)*

- Office Administrator £16,000 per annum
- Administrative Assistant £16,000 per annum
- Executive Assistant £27,250 per annum
- Office Manager £28,000 per annum
- Accountant £32,492 per annum
- Human Resources Manager £34,933 per annum
- Financial Controller £63,054 per annum.

In June 2013 research on a sample of homelessness applicant households which contained an employed member found the following average gross annual incomes:

#### Households with one income

- Mean average annual income £10,062
- Median average annual income £8,400
- Lowest annual income in range £520



- Highest annual income in range £36,000

#### Households with two incomes

- Mean average annual income £26,427
- Median average annual income £26,160
- Lowest annual income in range £8,040
- Highest annual income in range £42,500

#### 4.6 The Housing Register

In April 2013 a total of 5,422 households were on the housing register, representing a 21.1% growth on the 4,477 households who were on the register in April 2012. Comparisons between April 2012 and April 2013, in terms of the size of dwellings being sought by housing register applicants, is as follows:

<b>Property size being sought</b>	<b>April 2012 – households (live and suspended applications)</b>		<b>April 2013 – households (live and suspended applications)</b>	
1 bedroom	2,492	55.7%	3,018	55.7%
2 bedroom	1,356	30.3%	1,674	30.9%
3 bedroom	488	10.9%	533	9.8%
3< bedroom	108	2.4%	68	1.2%
Property size required unspecified	33	0.7%	129	2.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,477</b>		<b>5,422</b>	

In April 2013 the sizes of property sought overall, by older person households and by younger households were as follows:

<b>Property size</b>	<b>Total housing register applicants</b>		<b>Housing register applicants aged under 60</b>		<b>Housing register applicants aged 60 and over</b>	
1 bedroom	3,018	55.7%	2,600	52.5%	418	88.6%
2 bedroom	1,674	30.9%	1,640	33.1%	34	7.2%
3 bedroom	533	9.8%	523	10.6%	10	2.1%
3< bedroom or property size unspecified	197	3.6%	187	3.8%	10	2.1%

Total	5,422	4,950	472
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In April 2013 the priority bands in which all housing register applicants were placed contained the following numbers of households:

Priority band	Total housing register applicants		Housing register applicants aged under 60		Housing register applicants aged 60 and over	
Band A (highest priority)	1	-	1	-	-	-
Band B	100	1.8%	69	1.4%	31	6.6%
Band C	149	2.8%	143	2.9%	6	1.3%
Band D	1,136	21.0%	1,090	22.0%	46	9.7%
Band E (lowest priority)	4,036	74.4%	3,647	73.7%	389	82.4%
Total	5,422		4,950		472	

Band B has been the banding in which homeless households whom the local authority has a duty to rehouse have placed in order to ensure they receive sufficient priority for the allocation of an affordable home.

#### 4.7 Lettings of affordable housing for rent, including both existing and newly built homes

The number of affordable homes for rent which were let in Watford between April 2010 and March 2013 were:

	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013
<b>Lettings of affordable housing for rent</b>	390	282	470

#### 4.8 Increasing the supply of new homes for households in housing need

Any increase in the supply of new homes for households in housing need encompasses both newly built affordable homes and existing privately rented homes

which become available for Council nominees through assistance from the Housing Supply Team. The numbers of homes which have become available are:

*Newly built affordable homes:-*

	Units completed					
	Total	Social rented	Intermediate rented	Affordable Rent	Low cost home ownership	Other
<b>2008/2009</b>	48	27	6	-	15	-
<b>2009/2010</b>	159	110	-	-	49	-
<b>2010/2011</b>	311	131	166	-	14	-
<b>2011/2012</b>	14	14	-	-	-	-
<b>2012/2013</b>	184	122	8	31	23	-

Current “pipeline” new affordable housing schemes in Watford for 2013-3015 are:

	Social Rent/Affordable Rent	Low cost home ownership	Total
<b>2013/3014</b>	76	58	134
<b>2014/2015</b>	11	4	15
<b>Total</b>	87	62	149

*Private rented homes which have become available through assistance from the Council’s Housing Supply Team:-*

	Total homes						
	1 bedroom flat	2 bedroom flat	2 bedroom house	3 bedroom flat	3 bedroom house	4 bedroom house	Total
2012-2013	18	21	7	2	12	2	62

## Summary

These contexts could have the following impacts upon levels of homelessness in Watford:

Context	Possible impact upon levels of homelessness
Overall	<p>Watford is a highly dynamic borough which has seen significant housing-related changes between 2001 and 2011. This includes demographic, economic and tenure-related changes. The changes can lead to increased competition for the borough's housing stock in terms of both purchasing or renting a home in which to live or purchasing a home as an investment. Homelessness in Watford is dominated by an increase in households whose economic and personal circumstances prevent them from competing successfully in acquiring a home in the borough.</p>
Deprivation in Watford	<p>There is evidence that households living in deprived neighbourhoods are more likely to become homeless for the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Income deprivation, Employment deprivation, Education deprivation, Barriers to housing and other services (housing affordability)</b> – households are less likely to have the economic means to acquire their own home.</li> <li>• <b>Crime deprivation and Living Environment deprivation</b> – It may no longer be safe for a household to continue living in their current home or neighbourhood.</li> <li>• <b>Health and disability deprivation</b> – It may no longer be reasonable for a household to continue living in their current home because of health problems or a disability. A person may have a mental health issue which increases their vulnerability to becoming homeless.</li> </ul>
Housing costs in Watford	<p>Watford is a popular place to live and there is high demand for all types of housing in the borough. Consequently a large proportion of households are unable to afford market-priced housing in either the owner-occupied or privately rented sector.</p>

	Housing which is priced at levels below market rates need to be available to meet the housing needs of this group.
Incomes in Watford	Watford has a successful economy which can offer highly paid employment to suitably qualified individuals. However, a considerable number of residents working in sectors essential to the local economy, e.g. service industries, do not earn a sufficient income to acquire market priced housing.
The Housing Register and the supply of Affordable Homes	Information in this section shows that demand for affordable housing greatly exceeds supply. Households who are unable to wait to bid successfully for accommodation through the housing register and who have not explored other housing options may resort to applying for accommodation through homelessness legislation.

## 5. Homelessness in Watford

Homelessness in Watford is characterised by the following:

- A high number of families seeking assistance. These households may have priority need for assistance under homelessness legislation and, if so, may be assisted by the local authority into settled accommodation.
- A significant number of single people, without dependants, seeking assistance. This is linked to a number of factors including the cost of housing, limited supply of housing, and the fact that Watford is a county hub for voluntary sector services for this group. Although single homeless people do not usually receive priority for assistance under homelessness legislation (Priority Need as defined under Section 189 of the Housing Act 1996), the large numbers and complex needs of this group means that the issue of single homelessness will be a priority area in the homelessness review and strategy.

### Demand Management

Demand Management is an essential part of preventing and tackling homelessness in Watford. Examples of demand management activities are:

- Education programmes in schools and further education establishments to demonstrate to young people that they will be necessarily be able to acquire a social rented home, and that there are other housing options to which they might aspire.
- Visits to households who have applied for assistance under homelessness legislation to explain that they will not necessarily be offered a social rented home and that the local authority's duty to them may be discharged in other ways e.g. privately rented housing.

- Informing single people who may arrive in Watford to use medical, accommodation and support services that they will be eligible to acquire social rented housing in Watford only if they have a formal local connection with the borough i.e. they have lived in Watford for five out of the last six years. Stays in temporary accommodation schemes do not count towards a local connection. The Watford YMCA and Watford New Hope Trust operate Reconnections Schemes to assist single people who have been using their services to return to their area of origin.

## 5.1 The local authority role

Local authorities are required to provide assistance to homeless or potentially homeless households by Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 and the Homelessness Act 2002. The following charts show the changes in homelessness applications and acceptances in Watford between 2008 and 2012.

- a) *Total decisions* – the total number of decisions has risen by 48.8%, from 127 in 2008-2009 to 189 in 2012-2013. The number of households found to be entitled to assistance under homelessness legislation has risen by 79.1%, from 86 in 2008-2009 to 154 in 2012-2013.

	2008-2009	2012-2013
Eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need	<b>86*</b> (67.7%)	<b>154*</b> (81.5%)
Eligible, homeless and in priority need, but intentionally so	9 (7.1%)	-
Eligible, homeless but not in priority need	9 (7.1%)	5 (2.6%)
Eligible but not homeless	20 (15.7%)	29 (15.3%)
Ineligible	3 (2.4%)	1 (0.5%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>189</b>

\* Only these households have been included in the later tables as having been accepted for assistance.

- b) *Accepted for assistance: ethnic groups* – There has been a general rise among all groups. The most notable increase has been among members of the Black African-Caribbean community and the White Other community.

	2008-2009	2012-2013
White British	53 (61.6)	84 (54.5%)
White Irish	1 (1.2%)	3 (1.9%)
White Other	6 (7.0%)	14 (9.1%)
Black African-Caribbean	8 (9.3%)	29 (18.8%)
Asian	14 (16.3%)	15 (9.7%)
Mixed Race	4 (4.7%)	7 (4.5%)
Other	-	1 (0.7%)
Not stated	-	1 (0.7%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>154</b>

- c) *Accepted for assistance: age of applicants* – There has been a general numerical rise across all age groups between 16 and 59. However, the most significant rise has been in the 25-44 age group.

	2008-2009	2012-2013
Heads of household aged 16-24 years	39 (45.3%)	61 (39.6%)
Heads of household aged 25-44 years	41 (47.7%)	76 (49.4%)
Heads of household aged 45-59 years	4 (4.7%)	15 (9.7%)
Heads of household aged 60-64 years	1 (1.2%)	-
Heads of household aged 65-74 years	1 (1.2%)	2 (1.3%)
Heads of household aged 75 and over	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>154</b>

- d) *Accepted for assistance: main reason for loss of last settled home for applicant households* – Parental eviction continues to be the biggest reason for loss of accommodation among those accepted as homeless to the local authority in Watford, and numbers in this category have risen notably between 2008 and 2012. The second biggest reason for homelessness is the ending of privately rented tenancies. The two categories of “Termination of assured shorthold tenancy” and “Ending of tenancy for other reason” comprised 35.1% of homelessness acceptances in 2012.

Parental eviction and ending of a privately rented tenancy together comprise 74.5% of homelessness acceptances in 2012. Therefore, the prevention and tackling of these two types of homelessness will form a major focus of the homelessness strategy action plan.

Eviction from a social rented tenancy for rent arrears has been an exceptionally small cause of homelessness. Between 2008 and 2012 only two households were accepted for assistance under homelessness legislation after they had been evicted from a social rented tenancy for rent arrears. Numbers found intentionally homeless are similarly low. However, once the impact of Welfare Reform becomes better understood in Watford it is anticipated that this could become an area where further actions are required.

	2008-2009	2012-2013
Parents no longer willing to accommodate	27 (31.4%)	54 (35.1%)
Other relatives or friends no longer willing to accommodate	5 (5.8%)	16 (10.4%)
Non-violent relationship breakdown	4 (4.7%)	6 (3.9%)
Violent breakdown of relationship with a partner	4 (4.7%)	10 (6.5%)
Other violence	-	4 (2.6%)
Forms of harassment	-	1 (0.6%)
Mortgage Arrears	5 (5.8%)	2 (1.3%)
Rent arrears	1 (1.2%)	1 (0.6%)
Private rented tenancy: termination of assured shorthold tenancy	27 (31.4%)	36 (23.4%)
Private rented tenancy: reasons other than above	9 (10.5%)	13 (8.4%)
Required to leave asylum seeker accommodation	2 (2.3%)	-

Left an institution, prison or local authority care	1 (1.2%)	5 (3.2%)
Other reasons	1 (1.2%)	6 (3.9%)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>154</b>

e) *Temporary Accommodation* - Watford Council has access to a range of temporary accommodation for households whose application for assistance under homelessness legislation is being investigated, or for whom a duty to assist has been accepted, and they are awaiting an offer of settled accommodation. The use of temporary accommodation by households who were being assisted by the local authority from 2010 to 2013 was as follows:

	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013
<b>Number of households in temporary accommodation, e.g. hostels and self-contained units, on 31 March</b>	86	90	103
<b>Number of households in bed and breakfast accommodation on 31 March</b>	6	18	15

f) *Prevention of homelessness* – information is recorded on cases where homelessness was prevented by the local authority. The most effective ways of preventing homelessness between April 2010 and March 2013, in terms of the number of households assisted, were as follows:

- Access to the private rented sector with a landlord scheme = 150 households
- Access to the private rented sector without a landlord scheme = 111 households
- Resolving rent or service charge arrears in the social or private rented sector = 59 households
- Conciliation including visits for family/friend evictions = 54 households
- Assistance with finding social housing = 52 households

## 5.2 The Voluntary Sector role

Watford remains a county-wide hub for services for single people who are homeless. The organisations who provide assistance to single homeless people in Watford are:



- *The Watford YMCA* – the Watford YMCA provides safe and secure accommodation, with 24 hours support, to males and females aged between 18 and 59 for a maximum stay of two years.
- *Group for the Rootless of Watford (GROW)* – the purpose of GROW is to provide accommodation, support and help for vulnerable and disadvantaged people within Watford and the surrounding area. In addition to short to medium term hostel accommodation, GROW provides a range of welfare services, education and support in partnership with both voluntary and statutory agencies. GROW takes agency referrals and self-referrals.
- *Watford New Hope Trust* – The role of Watford New Hope Trust (WNHT) is to serve homeless and vulnerably housed people by providing accommodation and opportunities to rebuild lives. WNHT provides seven accommodation services with a total of 56 beds. There are six support services, consisting of street outreach, a 24/7 emergency homelessness helpline, a day centre, a mental health worker, a tenancy support service, and a central support team. Schemes in development include a community market garden, a workshop programme and a back to work scheme.
- *Herts Young Homeless* – Herts Young Homeless (HYH) services are open to all 16-24 year olds who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. HYH provides information and support as well as emergency accommodation through the Crashpad scheme. HYH works with other agencies throughout Hertfordshire towards improving local provision and preventing youth homelessness.

*Schemes to assist single homeless people:*

- The Transitions Scheme, run by Watford New Hope Trust, began in May 2012 and provides short-term emergency alternatives to sleeping rough for single homeless people in the Watford area. Between May 2012 and March 2013 182 single homeless people were assisted by the scheme. Characteristics of the scheme users were:
  - 79.7% were male and 20.3% were female.
  - 26.9% were aged between 18 and 25, 56.6% were aged between 26 and 50, and 16.5% were aged over 50.
  - 44.8% self-referred to the scheme, 26.5% were referred to the scheme by the Police, and 18.8% were referred to the scheme by the outreach service.
  - Among move-on destinations, 22.0% of persons moved on to the WNHT nightshelter, 11.5% went to stay with friends and 5% were reconnected with their area of origin.
- Watford New Hope Trust also provide an outreach service for single homeless people to identify those who are habitually sleeping rough. A Rough Sleeper Group, consisting of representatives from Watford New Hope Trust, the Police and the local authority, meets regularly to identify single people who have a history of sleeping rough and to monitor their progress in moving to a settled

home. Recent counts have estimated the following numbers of rough sleepers in Watford:

	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013
<b>Rough sleeping estimate</b>	8	5	8

Watford Council is leading a Hertfordshire-wide single homelessness project to increase access to accommodation for single person, including those who have been sleeping rough. Further details of this project are included in paragraph 8.7.

### 5.3 The role of Registered Providers

The registered providers who own and manage housing stock in Watford play a considerable role in preventing homelessness in the borough, in terms of providing supported housing schemes for particular client groups and managing services for their tenants generally. They provide new affordable homes to rent or buy through low cost home ownership. The following registered providers who have a presence in Watford are undertaking the following measures to assist households who are affected by the changes brought about in the Welfare Reform Act 2012:

Registered Provider	Action taken in response to the Welfare Reform Act 2012
A2 Dominion	A2 Dominion has a Welfare Benefit Team which consists of welfare advisers who will help tenants manage their money. The advisers can give assistance on a range of issues from avoiding debt to claiming benefits to which a tenant might be entitled.
Circle	Circle has introduced a new money management service to assist tenants with managing their money.
Aldwyck	Aldwyck has identified all people who will be affected by the changes. A Money Adviser has been in place since September 2012 to assist residents, in particular new tenants. Financial assessments are being carried out. The Rent Services Group will also be focusing on residents who are likely to be affected. There have been local roadshows on the Welfare Reform Act for Hertfordshire residents.
Hanover	Hanover's housing is designated mainly for older people. Hanover's Estate Managers can advise tenants on the range of benefits available.
Hightown Praetorian and	Hightown has been reviewing their allocations policy in response to the Welfare Reform Act 2012. They are

Churches	making decisions on what would constitute affordability and have identified those residents who are most likely to struggle. The Rent Arrears team will play the major role in assisting households who will be affected by the Welfare Reform Act.
London and Quadrant	London and Quadrant is inviting its Revenue Team to discuss any concerns about changes to benefits. London and Quadrant has published a booklet entitled <u><i>Your money in your hands</i></u> to assist its tenants.
Network Stadium	Housing Benefit and welfare advice can be found on Network Stadium's website. Tenants are invited to contact the Income Management Team if they wish to discuss any concerns about the changes to benefits.
Origin	Origin is inviting tenants to contact the Customer Services Team for an appointment if they have any concerns about the changes to benefits. Origin has published an information booklet entitled <u><i>What you need to know about the changes to Housing Benefit</i></u> .
Paradigm	Paradigm has undertaken an initiative to target households who are currently in rent arrears. They are also updating their website to provide information on the Welfare Reform Act. Specific measures being undertaken are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Pre-tenancy interviews to assess a household's ability to pay rent on their new home.</li> <li>➤ Housing officers having full records on who will be affected by the Welfare Reform changes.</li> <li>➤ Two officers will specifically undertake work in spreading the message about the Welfare Reform Act.</li> </ul>
Places for People	Places for People's Money Advice Team offers a free and confidential service for Places for People tenants. There is a website page on the Welfare Benefit changes.
Riversmead	Riversmead Housing Association is inviting tenants who are concerned about the changes to benefit levels of contact the Riversmead Income Management Team. There is also a Welfare Benefit website page for Riversmead tenants.
Sanctuary	Sanctuary are giving out budgeting forms to prospective tenants when they view a property to ensure that they can afford the rent. The sign-up packs now give information on changes to benefit levels. A Welfare

	Officer has been recruited and Income Officers are trained to give advice. All new tenants must pay a full week's rent at sign-up to ensure that their rent is paid in advance.
South Anglia	The Income Team deal with all issues associated with the Welfare Reform Act.
Watford Community Housing Trust	Considerable work has been carried out to identify households who are likely to need support from April 2013. The Tenancy Support Officer will play a major role in assisting households affected by the Welfare Reform Act. Extensive resources are being devoted to social inclusion work and more work is being undertaken on new tenancy sign-ups. An officer has been appointed specifically to assist under-occupying households to downsize if they wish to do so. Watford Community Housing Trust has increased its support for local Credit Unions and the Watford Foodbank.

#### 5.4 The Partnership role

*Prevention of Single Homelessness Consortium (PoSH)* – the PoSH Consortium meets on a regular basis and consists of housing organisations in Watford who provide services to single homeless people. The Terms of Reference for PoSH are:

- To make optimum use of all available resources to tackle homelessness in Watford, identifying opportunities to work together.
- To ensure agencies' policies and procedures prevent homelessness wherever possible and do not contribute to homelessness.
- To address the wider problems of homeless clients including health, support, advice, training and employment.
- To stimulate open discussion, acknowledging the different pressures being experienced by partners.
- To concentrate on action, including delivery of Watford Borough Council's Homelessness Strategy, and respond to local issues when they arise.
- To monitor and report on successes, emerging issues and trends in homelessness.

*Domestic Violence Forums* – The Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) which covers Dacorum, Watford and Rivers, holds monthly meetings to discuss high risk cases of domestic violence and to examine the best options for each victim. In addition, the Watford and Three Rivers Domestic Violence Abuse Forum meets every three months to look at any issues that are affecting domestic violence in both districts. The Forum also shares local news, especially the reporting of any increase in domestic violence.

*Housing and Regeneration Initiative (HARI)* – HARI is a partnership between Watford Council, Three Rivers Council and the registered providers who own and

manage affordable housing in both local authority areas. HARI members meet regularly to discuss housing management and development issues. The purpose of HARI is:

- To maximise the delivery of affordable housing in the geographical region covered by Watford Council and Three Rivers Council.
- To assist Watford Council and Three Rivers Council in attracting the maximum amount of funding and to meet the strategic housing objectives of all parties.
- To assist in the delivery of housing management related projects.

## **6. Contexts for the Homelessness Review and Strategy**

### **6.1 The changing context since 2008**

A number of the contexts for the 2008-2013 homelessness review and strategy no longer exist. They are:

- *Supporting People* – now termed as Housing Related Support and awarded by Hertfordshire County Council to a range of service providers. The use of this fund is monitored regularly to ensure that service providers are meeting targets and outcomes.
- *The Regional Housing Strategy for the East of England* – this strategy used to guide investment for new affordable housing and co-ordinate homelessness activities at the regional level. The current government has dismantled regional structures.
- *The Regional Spatial Strategy* – this plan set targets for the development of new homes across the East of England region. Targets for housing development are now set at the district and unitary council level.
- *The London Commuter Belt Sub-regional grouping* – this group of ten Hertfordshire and five Essex local authorities used to channel some government funding for homelessness. Now no longer convenes and cross-authority working takes place on a county-wide basis.
- *Local Area Agreement* – this was a three year contract between central government and partners in Hertfordshire, setting out priorities for the county. It provided some funding for homelessness activities. It has now been discontinued.

### **6.2 The Contexts for the Homelessness Review and Strategy 2013-2018**

*The Government's Ten Homelessness Challenges*

The Government has set ten homelessness challenges for local authorities to meet. These challenges will guide the homelessness strategy action plan. The challenges are:

- i) Adopt a corporate commitment to prevent homelessness which has buy-in across all local authority services.
- ii) Actively work with voluntary sector and other local partners to address support, education, employment and training needs.
- iii) Offer a housing options and homelessness prevention service, including written advice to all clients.
- iv) Adopt a *No Second Night Out* model or an effective local alternative.
- v) Have housing pathways agreed or in development with each key partner and client group that includes appropriate accommodation and support.
- vi) Develop a suitable private rented sector offer for all client groups, including advice and support for both clients and landlords.
- vii) Actively engage in preventing mortgage repossessions including the Mortgage Rescue Scheme.
- viii) Have a homelessness strategy which sets out a proactive approach to preventing homelessness, and is reviewed annually so that it is responsive to emerging needs.
- ix) Not place any young person aged 16 or 17 in Bed and Breakfast accommodation.
- x) Not place any families in Bed and Breakfast accommodation unless in an emergency, and then for no longer than six weeks.

A major context for the new homelessness review and strategy is the **Localism Act 2011**. The provisions of the Act relating to homelessness are:

- Local authorities have the freedom to determine who will go on their housing register.
- Local authorities have the flexibility to bring the homelessness duty to an end with an offer of accommodation, which the local authority is satisfied is suitable for the applicant, in the private rented sector without requiring the household's agreement.

In March 2013 a large group of representatives from housing stakeholder organisations in Watford convened a meeting to identify the top ten issues which they believed would have a significant impact upon homelessness in Watford over the next ten years. The ten issues and risks which they identified were:

### **i) The Welfare Reform Act 2012 and associated changes**

- There may be a larger number of people in Watford who lose their tenancies.
- When Universal Credit is introduced it will involve monthly payments directly to the tenant. This could involve difficulty with budgeting, difficulty with on-line transactions, repeat homelessness.
- There is the issue of vulnerability – many people may not be able to cope with monthly payments and cannot handle monthly budgeting.
- Domestic violence may increase because of household pressures.
- There may be more alcohol abuse among single homeless people who are unable to cope with the new financial pressures.
- The change to Local Housing Allowance introduced in January 2012, restricting the levels for single people aged under 35 to the rent for shared housing, is having a big impact on the availability of options for single people in housing need.
- Discretionary Housing Payments are intended to assist households who are experiencing difficulties in meeting rent payments. However, they are intended to be awarded on a short-term basis only. In addition, it is planned that Discretionary Housing Payment funds from central government will be reduced on a year-by-year basis.
- Citizens Advice Bureaux in both Watford and Three Rivers have expressed concerns that there may be an increase in households arranging expensive payday loans in order to pay off debts.

### **ii) Working with private landlords**

- The Localism Act 2011 now allows local housing authorities to discharge their duty under homelessness legislation with an offer of privately rented accommodation without the homeless household being offered a choice.
- We need to provide a more attractive service to private landlords. This is particularly important, with the ending of direct payments. Landlords usually do not want to take risks.
- We need to access more good quality and well managed shared housing for single people e.g. rooms in houses in multiple occupation.
- The Environmental Health Team has identified illegal eviction from the private rented sector as a continuing problem.
- Households often require assistance when moving from one privately rented tenancy to another. They often require assistance with covering the costs of rent deposit and/or rent in advance.

### **iii) Single homeless people in Watford**

- Watford remains a hub for attracting single people in housing need. We could consider a reconnections service.
- The number of single homeless people is increasing due to restrictions in benefits, such as the Single Room Rate of Local Housing Allowance for single people aged under 35.

- Partners report a development over the past twelve months which has been the increase in more single younger women without children who have become homeless.
- There has also been a recent increase in homelessness among single people aged between 40 and 60.
- The Housing Demand Team and the Customer Services Team have identified single people leaving hospital as an group who require additional support.

#### iv) **Vulnerable People**

- More support is needed for vulnerable people to stop them becoming homeless.
- Cuts to all services. Levels of need and demand are increasing at the same time, with cases getting more complex.
- People with low level mental health needs are often not meeting thresholds to receive help from health agencies.
- We need to access funding from the new Hertfordshire Health and Well-being Board in order to assist vulnerable people.

#### v) **European Union – possible arrival of people from Romania and Bulgaria**

- Numbers may arrive.
- We need to assess the impact, particularly in anticipation of the proposed legislation (announced in May 2013) to tackle landlords who exploit persons who have arrived recently in the United Kingdom.

#### vi) **In-migration from London boroughs**

- Large numbers may arrive.
- We need to assess the impact of this. It is likely that it will place increased pressure on the supply of accommodation and associated support services.

#### vii) **Overcrowding**

- Overcrowding can occur in a number of different ways: one household in a home which is too small for them, a household which contains a “hidden” new household wanting their own home; a large number of separate households living in a house in multiple occupation.
- There may be an increase in overcrowding, leading to a rise in homelessness applications.



viii) **“New” client groups emerging**

- This may include young people leaving university with debt who are unable to access social housing, owner-occupation or the current private rented sector.
- In 2013 Watford New Hope Trust reported an increase in single homeless people without particular special needs, such as alcohol misuse, drug misuse or mental health issues. These persons have become homeless because of issues such as relationship breakdown, eviction because of rent arrears, or job losses.

ix) **More affordable housing is needed in Watford**

- There is now a new affordable housing development funding regime. We need to maximise the opportunities of this new regime. Full details of how Watford Borough Council will provide support to its registered provider partners in developing new affordable homes under the new funding regime will be included in the Watford Borough Council Housing Strategy.
- The “relaunched” Right to Buy may see an increase in purchases by Watford residents holding the Preserved Right to Buy, decreasing the overall amount of affordable housing in Watford.
- Within every local authority area the supply of affordable housing can be restricted by tenancy fraud, with homes being acquired by a person or household who has no right to it. Examples of tenancy fraud are: subletting a social rented home at a market rent; exploiting the Right to Buy scheme; exploiting the Right to Succession scheme. Households who are evicted from a home which has been let due to Tenancy Fraud will need to be assisted when appropriate.

x) **Mortgage issues**

- There is the potential problem of an increase in mortgage arrears. This particularly affects interest-only mortgages where mortgage holders have not made sufficient arrangements to pay off their capital.

xi) **The need for more joined up working**

- There needs to be much more joined-up working in Watford.
- There needs to be better communication between Watford Borough Council and other partners such as West Herts College.
- We need to get housing and health thresholds aligned.

## **7. Priorities**

With the multiplicity of changes which are affecting levels of homelessness, the Watford Council homelessness review and strategy will be reassessed on an annual basis to ensure that it is responsive to changes which will impact on homelessness.

### **The setting of priorities**

In the homelessness strategy action plan certain categories of homeless household are given priority for resources for preventing and tackling homelessness. This does not mean that they are automatically given high priority for the allocation of social housing – the criteria which are relevant to this are included in the Nominations Policy. The homelessness strategy action plan seeks to lessen the number of households who need to apply for assistance as homeless and, therefore, receive high priority for social rented housing through the homelessness route.

Where an area of activity is defined as being a priority, this means that resources, including staffing, project time and funding, will be directed towards achieving the associated objectives. Outcomes will be monitored through a suite of indicators designed for this purpose.

The priorities and related tasks in the homelessness strategy action plan will focus on new schemes or improvements and expansions to existing schemes. They will not focus on tasks and schemes which are already being implemented on a day-to-day basis.

Because of the discrete level of resources for preventing and tackling homelessness, the homelessness strategy and action plan will focus upon the most urgent and widespread homelessness causes and issues. The principles upon which high priority for resources and action will be chosen are:

- High numbers of households experiencing particular types of homelessness in Watford.
- Identified gaps in provision for particular groups.
- Identified ability of certain projects to have a high impact in preventing or tackling homelessness.
- Capacity of project leads to make progress

In implementing this formula, certain categories of homeless households will not be the focus of the action plan in 2013/2014. An example of this is the homeless category of victims of domestic violence with children, as this category currently receives a high comprehensive level of support and accommodation provision in Watford.

In the homelessness strategy and action plan homelessness causes and actions will be grouped into three priority categories:

#### **A. The Red Category - high priority**

These homelessness causes and issues will all be included in the homelessness strategy action plan, and specific tasks will be assigned to them. The homelessness causes and issues which will be included in the Red Category in 2013 will be:

- Preventing and tackling homelessness due to Parental eviction
- Ending of privately rented tenancies
- Households in temporary accommodation.
- Single people with an element of vulnerability.

### **B. The Amber Category – medium priority**

These homelessness causes and issues will not, at present, be included in the homelessness strategy action plan, unless partners are already progressing initiatives which link to them. However, because of changes to legislation and/or demographic changes, they may rise in prominence within the levels of homelessness in Watford. Therefore, they will be scrutinised at the first annual review and decisions will be made as to whether they may require specific tasks assigned to them in the homelessness strategy action plan. It is likely that work is already being carried out to assist households in the Amber Category by stakeholder organisations. The homelessness causes and issues which will be included in the Amber Category in 2013 are:

- Eviction from social rented housing due to changes introduced by the Welfare Reform Act 2012.
- Domestic Violence
- In-migration from residents of Eastern European countries.
- In-migration of households from London.
- Overcrowded households.

### **C. The Green Category – low priority**

These homelessness causes and issues will not feature in the homelessness strategy action plan at present unless partners are already progressing initiatives which are linked to them. However, they may also be included as part of the annual review if this is considered advisable. The homelessness causes and issues which will be included in the Green Category in 2013 are:

- Mortgage Arrears
- Non-violent relationship breakdown
- Ex-offenders leaving prison.
- “New” client groups.

Further information on the homelessness causes and issues within each of the three categories, and explanations of why they have been included in each category, are as follows:

## **The Red Category**

#### a) Preventing and tackling homelessness due to Parental Eviction

As the most frequent reason for loss of accommodation among households who present as homeless to the council in Watford, methods to prevent and tackle homelessness due to Parental Eviction will feature significantly in the homelessness strategy action plan. This type of homelessness is a prime example of the inability of young households to afford their own independent accommodation and their view of social rented housing as their only housing option. A study of 102 parental eviction cases in Watford, almost all of whom were accepted for assistance under homelessness legislation between January 2011 and December 2012, was carried out in early 2013. The findings of the research included:

- A total of 58.7% of household heads were aged between 16 and 24 years.
- A total of 60.6% of applicant households lived in the parental home in one of the four neighbouring North Watford wards of Meriden, Leggatts, Stanborough and Woodside. Of the 57 households living in the parental home in these wards, 51 households lived in roads where social housing was located. This may indicate an expectation of an offer of social housing.
- 96.1% of these households lived in temporary accommodation while their homelessness applications were being processed and while they were awaiting an offer of settled accommodation.
- 50.0% of the households did not contain any member who was working (compared to the unemployment rate in Watford in March 2013 of 3.0%).
- 2.9% of households consisted of single males, while 97.1% were headed by single females or couples.
- 97.1% of households either contained children or a member who was pregnant.
- A total of 75.5% of households were already on the housing register at the time of their homelessness application.

Study of the eviction letters submitted to support homelessness applications show that a combination of the following factors often lead to parental eviction:

- The unplanned nature of pregnancies.
- Cramped housing conditions.
- Deteriorating relations between parents and their offspring.
- The young person being asked to leave is no longer able to earn money and contribute to household finances.

A more comprehensive approach to tackling homelessness caused by parental eviction is required.

#### b) Ending of privately rented tenancies and creating an offer to private landlords

This is the second biggest reason for loss of accommodation among those presenting as homeless to Watford Borough Council. In early 2013 a study was carried out of 31 households who had become homeless because of the ending of a privately rented tenancy. Some of the findings were as follows:

- The age profile of household heads tends to be higher than that for parental eviction, with 28.3% aged between 30 and 34, 15.7% aged between 35 and 39, and 15.2% aged between 40 and 44.
- In terms of location, 35.5% lived in Vicarage ward, 19.4% lived in Central ward, 12.9% lived in Callowland ward and 12.9% lived in Holywell ward. This is broadly consistent with the Watford wards with the largest private rented sectors.
- 90.3% of households were accommodated in temporary accommodation after they applied as homeless.
- 48.4% of households did not contain a member who worked, indicating a high reliance on Local Housing Allowance to meet the cost of rent.
- Notably, the tenancies from which applicants were being made homeless had mostly lasted a reasonable length of time, with only 3 out of the 31 lasting less than a year. 25.8% lasted 1-2 years, 29.0% lasted 2-3 years, and 12.9% lasted 4-5 years.
- Also significantly, 71.0% of these households had had one or more other private rented tenancies prior to beginning the tenancy from which they were being made homeless.
- The reasons why tenancies end can be quite complex, with a number of different reasons being given for one tenancy. Sometimes the reason for the tenancy ending which is given by the landlord can be different from the reason given by the tenant. The most frequent reasons for tenancies ending are: rent arrears for eight tenancies, landlord requiring the home for their own use for seven tenancies, and landlord selling the home for five tenancies.
- The Environmental Health Team has identified illegal eviction in the private rented sector as a continuing problem. Research will be carried out into the full extent of this activity in Watford.

Through consultation exercises, housing stakeholder organisations in Watford have advised that a more attractive offer should be made to private landlords in order to improve access to the sector and increased sustainment of tenancies. In addition, we must take account of the benefit changes which some households in the private rented sector may experience, as they may increase homelessness.

We will monitor the progress of proposed legislation (announced in May 2013) to tackle landlords who exploit tenants who have recently arrived in the United Kingdom.

c) Households in temporary accommodation

Watford Council accommodates homeless households in temporary accommodation consisting of the hostels and self-contained homes which are either owned by the council or by partner organisations. In addition, high demand for temporary accommodation can necessitate the short-term use of bed and breakfast establishments. Households are moved on from bed and breakfast accommodation to hostels or self-contained accommodation at the earliest opportunity.

On 31 March 2013 a total of 103 households were accommodated in hostel or self-contained accommodation as a result of a homelessness application. The average stay in a hostel or self-contained accommodation per household in 2012/2013 was 140.14 days.

On 31 March 2013 a total of 15 households were accommodated in bed and breakfast accommodation. The average stay in a bed and breakfast establishment per household in 2012/2013 was 29.9 days.

Watford Council intends to ensure a supply of temporary accommodation of a good standard. In addition, stays in temporary accommodation may provide an opportunity to assist homeless households with accessing support from a range of agencies such as children's centres, health visitors and Job Centre Plus. On 27 June 2013 the employment status of residents of the Council's own hostel was as follows:

- ~ 41 households in receipt of full Housing Benefit to cover their rent.
- ~ 11 households in employment but in receipt of partial Housing Benefit due to low income
- ~ 3 households employed but on maternity leave, so in receipt of partial Housing Benefit.
- ~ 1 household works and earns a sufficient amount to not qualify to receive Housing Benefit.

d) Single homeless persons with an element of vulnerability

Watford continues to be a hub of services for single homeless people, particularly single homeless males. Watford Council's stakeholder partner agencies perform a crucial role in providing accommodation, support services and move-on support for this client group. However, because of the size of this group (see previous statistics in section 5.2), continued innovation is needed to improve services and options for this group. The caps to Local Housing Allowance for privately rented accommodation, the severe restrictions to Local Housing Allowance for single persons under 35 years who wish to rent self-contained accommodation, and small supply of good quality shared housing in Watford have all presented problems for this group. As a priority within the homelessness strategy action plan, plans for this group will be taken forward by members of the Prevention of Single Homelessness group (PoSH).

Stakeholder consultation has revealed that single people with elements of vulnerability, such as those with mental health needs or learning disabilities, have been affected severely by funding reductions and contractions of services. Examples of developments are:

- Cases are becoming more complex.
- People with low mental health needs are increasingly not meeting thresholds to recover help from health agencies.
- Hospital discharge protocols are not yet working effectively.
- Clients are coming from a more diverse range of ethnic backgrounds.
- More vulnerable people are being forwarded to the voluntary sector because there is less capacity for them to access statutory services.
- In Watford there is a large number of people who “fall through the gaps”. They don’t quite meet priority need, but still require assistance from the Police, and housing and health organisations.
- Partner organisations are reporting that it can be very difficult to find appropriate accommodation for single homeless women who do not have children. This can include women who have suffered from domestic violence.
- The Meadowell Health Centre in Watford, which provides medical care for homeless people, has reported that alcohol misuse is having a considerably more detrimental effect on the health of homeless people than drug misuse.

Tasks within the homelessness strategy action plan can be devised to both prevent and tackle homelessness among this group.

### **The Amber Category**

#### a) Eviction from social rented housing due to changes introduced by the Welfare Reform Act 2012.

Historically, evictions from social rented housing have featured very little among the reasons for homelessness in Watford. However, the introduction of under-occupation charges (from April 2013), benefit caps (from Summer 2013), monthly Universal Credit and direct payments (awaiting timescale for the East of England) could see a rise in the number of social housing tenants who have not been able to adapt to these changes. However, all registered providers in Watford have put in place procedures and services for tenants who are affected by the changes. In partnership with local registered providers, we will monitor the impact of these changes as part of the annual review of the homelessness strategy action plan.

The Housing Team now contains a Benefits Advice Officer (a post which is shared with the Housing Benefits Team). This post is funded by Watford Council’s Homelessness Grant.

#### b) Domestic Violence

We have placed this group in the Amber category for two reasons:

- Numbers are currently comparatively low.
- There is already a high level of accommodation and support for this group in Watford, including a women’s refuge and associated support services. This serves households with children particularly well. We do not consider that any new services need to be introduced, and therefore included into the action plan, at present.

The violent breakdown of a relationship with a partner accounted for ten households being accepted for assistance under homelessness legislation in 2012. While this type of homelessness does have a severe impact on the well-being of a household, there are high levels of support in Watford for this group. Examples of this support are:

- ~ Watford Council provides premises which are used as a domestic violence refuge.
  - ~ Support and legal advice is available from the Watford Women's Centre
  - ~ There are two independent Domestic Violence Advisers who provide support and assistance.
- 
- ~ The Council provides financial assistance with transport for households who need to move out of the area.
  - ~ There are two multi-agency forums which focus on the needs of households with children who suffer from domestic violence.

We will monitor homelessness applications due to domestic violence annually to assess whether there needs to be an increase in support.

Single women without children who become homeless are included under the Red category of "Single People with an element of vulnerability". This can include women who have suffered from domestic violence. Research has shown that this group is under-served in term of support and assistance, and also that the number of households in this category seeking assistance in Watford has been rising. Women without dependants who suffer from domestic violence can have a high level of vulnerability.

### c) In-migration from European Countries – Romania and Bulgaria

Between 2004 and 2011 Watford undoubtedly saw a big increase in in-migration from households from countries admitted to the European Union between April 2001 and March 2011. Some indications of the presence of Watford residents who were born in Eastern European countries are:

- In March 2011 14.5% of the Central ward was from White Other categories.
- In 2012 a total of 11 households from White Other categories were accepted for assistance under homelessness legislation.
- On 1 May 2013 there was a total of 487 households from the White Other ethnic group on the housing register.

There is evidence that the great majority of members of White Other groups are economically active and rent homes in the private rented sector.

Bulgaria and Romania were admitted to the European Union in 2007. All countries in Europe must lift any labour market restrictions by 1 January 2014. However, research has shown that Bulgarian and Romanian residents who wish to move elsewhere in Europe are characterised by the following:



- Their first destinations of choice are usually Spain and Italy, with Germany the most common second choice.
- Unlike the in-migration from European citizens which occurred after 2004 and saw in-migrants disperse widely throughout the United Kingdom to areas of labour shortage, Bulgarian and Romania in-migrants prefer to live in London.

We will monitor information on the presence of this group in order to assess whether any housing-related responses need to be made.

#### d)In-migration from London

It has been anticipated that, as a neighbour to London, Watford might experience some in-migration from the London boroughs, as households affected by the benefit caps seek “cheaper” areas in which to live and local authorities seek to manage their local demand by accessing properties elsewhere. In April 2013 research by the homeless charity Crisis revealed that homelessness in London was rising at three times the national rate, and that termination of privately rented tenancies was the leading cause of homelessness recorded by London Councils.

At present, evidence of movement out of London is largely anecdotal and the level of cases coming to the attention of the council is relatively small. However, this is an area which we will continue to monitor with our neighbouring authorities across Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire to gauge the impact on supply and the need for effective communication and referral around vulnerable households who may have been displaced from their support networks.

#### e)Overcrowding

Overcrowding has undoubtedly become a more serious and widespread issue in Watford. The three basic types of overcrowding in Watford are:

- i) One household which is too big for the accommodation in which it is living.
- ii) One household within which a second household has formed e.g. a daughter may have had a baby. The second household is continuing to live within their original home, but is seeking its own accommodation.
- iii) A number of separate households occupying one dwelling. The most frequent example of this is a house in multiple occupation accommodating a large number of single person households.

The second type of overcrowded household is typical of a parental eviction homelessness case which will receive high priority within the homelessness strategy action plan.

The Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy will set out Watford Council’s policy on how the Housing and Environmental Health teams will work in partnership to tackle all types of overcrowding and set up effective procedures, particularly when Prohibition Orders are served on overcrowded homes. We will monitor the number of home losses due to overcrowding and assess what specific measures are required to assist different types of overcrowded households.

## **The Green Category**

### a) Mortgage Arrears

Historically this has been a very minor cause of homelessness in Watford, even during the recent economic recession. Mortgage lenders are obliged to comply with a protocol to assist households who are accumulating mortgage arrears. There are advice services available in the borough for those facing difficulties in paying their mortgage and the council has successfully negotiated with a number of our clients' lenders to enable alternative repayment agreements to be accepted. There have been eight acceptances of assistance under homelessness legislation due to mortgage arrears since 2008, five in 2008 and three in 2010. In addition, the new Mortgage Rescue Scheme began in April 2011 – of the 41 applications from residents in Hertfordshire, only 1 application was from a Watford resident. Consequently, this issue will not at present be a priority within the homelessness strategy action plan.

However, we will liaise with the Watford Citizens Advice Bureau on whether any future tasks relating to mortgage arrears need to be introduced. Concerns have been expressed nationally about a potential increase in mortgage arrears. This particularly affects mortgage holders with interest only mortgages who have not made sufficient arrangements to cover the full amount required to pay off the capital.

### b) Non-violent relationship breakdown

Because this type of homelessness is of such a personal nature, involving relationship breakdown, there is often very little scope for prevention work once a client requests assistance. However, efforts can still be focused on mediation or counselling services. Through our homelessness grant the council is currently funding conflict resolution sessions and a schools education project, both of which are managed by Herts Young Homeless.

### c) Ex-offenders leaving prison

Numbers in this group approaching the local authority for assistance under homelessness legislation are small. During the five year period of the homelessness review and strategy 2008-2013 the numbers of persons leaving prison who were accepted for assistance under homelessness legislation were as follows:

April 2008- March 2009 – nil households  
April 2009 – March 2010 – nil households  
April 2010 – March 2011 – nil households  
April 2011 – March 2012 – nil households  
April 2012 – March 2013 – 3 households

The Probation Service and other service providers have been successful in preventing homelessness among people in this group. St Mungo's has commenced a contract with Hertfordshire County Council to support ex-offenders and assist them in finding accommodation.

This category will be monitored. In particular we will monitor the number of applications for assistance from Schedule One offenders and how well their needs are being met by the service provided by St Mungo's

d) "New" client groups

Consultation with housing stakeholders in Watford has revealed concerns that "new" homelessness groups, such as young people leaving higher education who are unable to access housing because of high levels of debt. The issue of making a comprehensive housing offer to a range of groups, and using technology to publicise this, will be a major theme in the new housing strategy. We will monitor, through the Prevention of Single Homelessness group (PoSH) whether there has been a sharp rise in homelessness among groups who have not historically required assistance.

**The Homelessness Strategy Action Plan – tasks related to each high priority group**

The tasks which will be included in the action plan and undertaken to prevent and tackle homelessness among the four priority groups are as follows:

**Preventing and tackling homelessness due to Parental Eviction**

Tasks:

- i) Herts Young Homelessness Schools Project
- ii) Implementation of the HARI Homelessness Protocol
- iii) Review of the Housing Advice Offer
- iv) Home Visits programme
- v) Training and employment opportunities with Job Centre Plus
- vi) Defining a new Private Rented Sector Offer
- vii) Pilot Emergency Fund with Watford Credit Union (loans)

**Ending of privately rented tenancies and creating an offer to Private Landlords**

Tasks:

- i) Implementation of the HARI Protocol
- ii) Prevention of Illegal Eviction
- iii) Review of the Housing Advice Offer
- iv) Home Visits Programme
- v) Defining a new Private Rented Sector Offer

vi) Pilot Emergency Fund with Watford Credit Union (loans).

### **Households in temporary accommodation**

#### Tasks:

- i) Implementation of the HARI Protocol
- ii) Training and employment opportunities with Job Centre Plus
- iii) Expand portfolio of good standard temporary accommodation options.
- iv) Pilot Emergency Fund with Watford Credit Union (loans).

### **Single homeless persons with an element of vulnerability**

#### Tasks

- i) Implementation of the HARI Protocol
- ii) Review of the Housing Advice Offer
- iii) Single Homelessness Project implementation
- iv) Hospital Discharge Protocol
- v) Training and employment opportunities with Job Centre Plus
- vi) Herts Young Homeless Dual Diagnosis Project
- vii) Re-launch of the Prevention of Single Homelessness Group (PoSH)
- viii) New housing options for single females without dependants
- ix) Watford New Hope Trust – Street Outreach work.
- x) Pilot Emergency Fund with Watford Credit Union (loans).

## **The Annual Homelessness Review**

In each Annual Homelessness Review the following will take place:

- The tasks within the previous year's action plan will be reviewed and progress noted.
- The homelessness groups within the red, amber and green categories will be reviewed and groups will be re-assigned to new categories if required.
- A new homelessness strategy action plan containing new tasks or revising existing tasks will be devised.
- A report with the proposals for the new homelessness strategy action plan will be presented to the Prevention of Homelessness Group (PoSH) and the Council's Housing Policy Advisory Group (HPAG) for approval.

Stakeholder organisations will be consulted closely before and during the annual homelessness review. Prior to the commencement of the review they will receive a report on the progress of the current action plan. They will be invited to submit recommendations for what groups should be included in the Red category for the forthcoming year and what tasks should be included in the new action plan.

## **8. Resources**

### **8.1 Council staffing**

Watford Borough Council offers an advice and casework service for households in need of housing advice or threatened with homelessness. This is offered through our website, telephone advice, and interviews including home visits. The council manages a rent deposit scheme to assist households to access privately rented accommodation and has a small fund through our homelessness grant to tackle other practical issues which could prevent individuals retaining or accessing their accommodation.

Watford Council's staff who are responsible for assisting homeless persons/households are:

*Housing Demand Manager* – manages the Housing Demand Team with responsibility for housing advice, homelessness prevention, statutory homelessness, the housing register and cases for private sector access.

*Housing Casework Co-ordinator* – supervises the casework in relation to housing advice, homelessness prevention and statutory homelessness.

*Four Housing Advice Officers* – offer advice and assistance to applicants on housing options across all tenures including how to retain existing homes.

*Two Housing Demand Officers* – carry out activities to manage the Council's Housing Register, associated transfer lists and applications for private sector initiatives.

*The Benefits Advice Officer* – this post is funded through homelessness grant and is shared between the Housing Team and the Housing Benefit Team, and provides benefits advice and casework to local residents.

In addition, the Housing Strategy Officer chairs the Prevention of Homelessness partnership, monitors homelessness trends and produces homelessness-related reviews and strategies.

### **8.2 Homelessness Grant**

Watford receives an annual grant of £279,000 from the Government to tackle and prevent homelessness. A project commissioned to receive funding from Watford's Homelessness Grant needs to demonstrate the following:

- How it meets the defined aims, objectives, outcomes and themes within the Homelessness Strategy.
- How it demonstrates cost effectiveness and value for money.
- How it demonstrates achievable outcomes within defined timescales.
- How it takes advantage of timely opportunities to work in partnership, maximises use of existing or new resources, attracts additional resources, meets up-to-the-minute objectives, or delivers a combination of these.

The grant currently funds initiatives including:

- Additional staffing resources to tackle specific issues including money advice and peaks in casework associated with Welfare Reform.
- A secondary schools education programme, carried out by Herts Young Homeless.
- The Rent Deposit Scheme, plus incentives for landlords to participate in the Watford Rent Deposit Scheme.
- Solve it: Resolve it – a conflict resolution scheme managed by Herts Young Homeless.
- A contribution to the Dual Diagnosis service managed by Herts Young Homeless.
- An outreach worker employed by Watford New Hope Trust.
- Various communication campaigns, such as a 2013 campaign to raise awareness of the Welfare Reform Act 2012.
- The Benefits Advice Officer (a post shared with the Housing Benefits Team).
- Severe weather provision for rough sleepers managed by Watford New Hope Trust.
- A contribution to the Family Intervention Worker post proposed for Watford.
- An impact fund to enable one-off, practical interventions which will prevent homelessness at low cost e.g. travel fares, temporary heating.

### 8.3 Discretionary Housing Payments

Watford Borough Council's Discretionary Housing Payment policy became operational in April 2013. The sum of £216,854 has been allocated for 2013/2014. The aims of the policy are:

- The prevention of homelessness
- Keeping families together
- Supporting vulnerable people in the local community
- Helping claimants through personal crises and difficult events.

Discretionary Housing Payments may be awarded to cover the following:

- The shortfall in the difference between eligible rent and a Rent Officer decision.
- Reduction in Housing Benefit entitlement following changes to Local Housing Allowance rates from April 2011.

- Reduction in Housing Benefit entitlement following changes affecting households under pensionable age who are under-occupying a social rented tenancy.
- Reduction in Housing Benefit as a consequence of the Benefit cap.
- Non-dependant deductions.
- Increase in essential work-related expenditure.

Discretionary Housing Payments are intended to be awarded on a short-term basis only. In addition, the central government fund for Discretionary Housing Payments will be reduced on a year-by-year basis.

#### 8.4 The Hertfordshire Welfare Assistance Scheme

Community care grants and crisis loans made by the Department for Work and Pensions Social Fund were abolished in March 2013. In place of the Social Fund, Hertfordshire County Council is setting up the Hertfordshire Welfare Assistance Scheme which will provide one-off emergency support to people facing exceptional and unexpected pressures. Eligibility criteria will have to be met.

The scheme will be managed and administered by HertsHelp. HertsHelp will give advice to people in crisis: redirecting them to sources of help and support where appropriate, including food banks, clothing banks and furniture recycling schemes. The scheme will fund an expansion of the role of Citizens Advice Bureaux in Hertfordshire in providing financial and budgeting advice. The Family Fund is also expanding its role to support all client groups.

#### 8.5 Housing-related support

Housing-related support funding, previously Supporting People funding, is allocated by Hertfordshire County Council who monitor these schemes regularly. The following schemes in Watford receive housing-related funding and play a role in preventing homelessness:

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Service</b>	<b>Primary Group</b>	<b>No of service users across the whole service</b>
Aldwyck Housing Association	Accommodation-based service	People with mental health issues	12 (Watford only)
Aldwyck Housing Association	Accommodation-based service	People with mental health issues	6 (Watford only)
Cherry Tree Housing Association	Mental Health supported housing	People with mental health issues	28 (Watford, Hertsmere and St Albans)
Group for the Rootless of Watford (GROW)	GROW House	Single homeless people	13 (Watford only)

Hertfordshire County Council	Supported Living scheme	People with learning disabilities	353 (countywide)
Hertfordshire County Council	Supported Lodgings	Young people aged 16-25	20 (Countywide)
Herts Young Homeless	Floating Support	Young people aged 16-25	200 (Countywide)
Herts Young Homeless	Advice, information and mediation service	Young people aged 16-25	125 (Countywide)
Herts Young Homeless	Crashpad	Young people aged 16-25	35 (Countywide)
Hightown Praetorian and Churches Housing Association	Young people's supported housing scheme	Young people aged 16-25	41 (Watford and Dacorum)
Hightown Praetorian and Churches Housing Association	Supported housing – mental health	People with mental health needs, including young people	98 (Watford, Dacorum, St Albans, Hertsmere, Three Rivers, Stevenage)
Kilcullen Homes	Queens and Grosvenor Lodge	People with mental health needs	27 (Watford only)
Broadway	Watford Women's Refuge	Women escaping domestic violence	8 (Watford only)
Origin Housing	Watford and Hertsmere Floating Support	People with mental health issues	4 (Watford and Hertsmere)
Origin Housing	Watford Mental Health supported housing	People with mental health issues	9 (Watford only)
Together working for Wellbeing	Mental health supported accommodation	People with mental health issues	3 (Watford only)
Watford MENCAP	Supported housing for people with learning disabilities	People with learning disabilities	9 (Watford and Three Rivers)
Watford New Hope	Supported housing	Single homeless	30 (Watford only)



Trust		people	
Watford New Hope Trust	Floating Support	Single homeless people	100 (Watford only)
YMCA, Watford	YMCA Hostel, Watford	Single homeless people	150 (Watford only)

### 8.6 Register Providers – affordable housing development

Watford Council’s registered provider partners have teams who work on the development of new affordable homes in Watford.

### 8.7 HARI (Housing and Regeneration Initiative) resources

The Housing and Regeneration Initiative oversees a fund for improving housing management services across the Watford and Three Rivers districts. This fund has covered the cost of a Tenancy Support Officer who assisted social housing tenants in sustaining their tenancies during 2012 and 2013. The support work included budgeting, money management and the basics of financial skills.

### 8.8 Single Homelessness Fund

Watford is the lead authority for Hertfordshire on the Government’s Single Homelessness Fund. The aim of the fund is to boost front-line services for single homeless people. The sum of £367,000 has been awarded to Hertfordshire as part of this fund. Plans are being devised to set up Hertfordshire projects which will be financed through the Single Homelessness Fund, with a focus on enabling access to private rented accommodation.

## **9. The framework for the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan**

In April 2013 the Government announced a new Gold Standard that will set the bar for local homelessness services. To reach Gold Standard status, local authorities will have to meet ten key challenges. The ten challenges are included in section 6.2. The following table details how each Strategic Priority and task will be consistent with the Government’s challenges.

Based on the information in the Homelessness Review, the framework for the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan will be as follows:

<b>Strategic Priority 1: Prevention of Homelessness</b>
<p><b>The Government’s challenges – relevant to this priority</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adopt a corporate commitment to preventing homelessness which has buy-in across all local authority services.</li> </ul>

- Offer a Housing Options prevention service, including written advice to all clients
- Actively engage in preventing mortgage repossessions including the Mortgage Rescue Scheme.
- Have a homelessness strategy which sets out a proactive approach to preventing homelessness, and is reviewed annually so that it is responsive to emerging needs.

**Homelessness issues and causes to which specific tasks will be assigned:**

- Preventing and tackling homelessness due to Parental Eviction
- Ending of privately rented tenancies
- Single person with an element of vulnerability

**Strategic Priority 2: Making best use of temporary accommodation**

**The Government's challenges – relevant to this priority**

- Adopt a *No Second Night Out* model or an effective local alternative
- Not place any young person aged 16 or 17 in Bed and Breakfast accommodation
- Not place any families in Bed and Breakfast accommodation unless in an emergency, and then for not longer than six weeks.

**Homelessness issues and cause to which specific tasks will be assigned**

- Preventing and tackling homelessness due to Parental eviction
- Ending of privately rented tenancies
- Single people with an element of vulnerability
- Other households in temporary accommodation.

**Strategic Priority 3: Improving access to settled accommodation**

**The Government's challenges – relevant to this priority**

- Have housing pathways agreed or in development with each key partner and client group that includes appropriate accommodation and support.

- Develop a suitable private rented sector offer for all client groups, including advice and support for both clients and landlords.

**Homelessness issues and causes to which specific tasks will be assigned**

- Preventing and tackling homelessness due to Parental eviction
- Ending of privately rented tenancies
- Single homeless people with an element of vulnerability

**Strategic Priority 4: Providing support to manage health and life issues**

**The Government's challenges – relevant to this priority**

- Actively work with voluntary sector and other local partners to address support, education, employment and training needs.

**Homelessness issues and causes to which specific tasks will be assigned**

- Preventing and tackling homelessness due to Parental eviction
- Ending of privately rented tenancies
- Single homeless people with an element of vulnerability

**10. Consultation exercise**

A consultation exercise on the homelessness review and strategy took place in May and June 2013, prior to the presentation to Watford Council's Leadership Team. The following people/organisations were consulted:

- All Elected Members
- Watford Council's Environmental Health Team
- Watford Council's Housing Benefit Team
- Three Rivers District Council
- Hertfordshire County Council's Accommodation Solutions Team
- All registered providers who own and manage affordable housing in Watford, including Watford Community Housing Trust.
- Watford YMCA
- Watford New Hope Trust
- GROW
- Herts Young Homeless
- Watford Citizens Advice Bureau
- Meadowell Medical Centre
- Watford Women's Centre

- All Children’s Centres in Watford.
- Crime Reduction Initiative
- Job Centre Plus

Responses from the consultation exercise have been incorporated into the review and strategy.

In developing the homelessness review and strategy, our aim has been to strike a balance between undertaking new consultation and acknowledging the large amount of activity which is already taking place within the council and our partner agencies to engage service users., the public and local organisations, and then to take account to their needs.

## 11. Glossary

**2011 Census** – A national survey of all people and households in the United Kingdom, last carried out on 27 March 2011.

**Affordable Housing** – Affordable housing is the sum of Social Rent, Intermediate/Affordable Rent and Low Cost Home Ownership. New affordable homes are defined in line with Planning Policy Statement 3 as additional housing units (or bedspaces) provided to specified eligible households whose needs are not met by the market.

**Affordable Rent** – introduced as a new type of rent by the Homes and Communities Agency in February 2011. Affordable Rented housing is let by registered providers of social housing to households who are eligible for social rented housing. Affordable Rent is not subject to the national rent regime but is subject to other rent controls that require a rent of no more than 80 per cent of the local market rent. Revenue from Affordable Rents can be used to fund affordable housing development. Registered providers are given permission to use Affordable Rents for their development programmes by the Homes and Communities Agency. Affordable Rents can be created either by the development of new affordable housing or the conversion of existing affordable housing when it is relet.

**Choice-based lettings** – Choice-based lettings is a method of allocating affordable housing for rent which has mainly been adopted by local authorities in the United Kingdom since 2000. The Choice-based lettings system is usually characterised by the following three features:

- All households who wish to be allocated affordable housing for rent must apply to join a housing register through which their priority for housing will be assessed.
- All properties which are available for letting will be advertised.
- Households on the housing register can express their wish to be allocated a property through “bidding” for it. Of all bidding households, the household with the highest priority is offered the property.

**Communities and Local Government** – The Government department responsible for overseeing affordable housing provision and homelessness reduction.

**Crashpad** – Short term emergency accommodation for young people with a host family.

**Floating Support** – Housing-related support provided in an individual's home for a certain number of hours each week.

**HARI** – The Housing and Regeneration Initiative, a partnership of Watford Borough Council, Three Rivers District Council and registered providers in both local authority areas. The organisations will work together to assist the development of affordable housing and good housing management practices.

**Homes and Communities Agency** – The Government organisation which regulates the activities of registered providers, including their affordable housing development programmes.

**Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)** – this term refers to residential property where “common areas” exist and are shared by more than one household. Common areas may be bathrooms or kitchens, but can also be stairwells and landings. HMOs can be divided into self-contained flats or bedsits, or consist of lodgings. HMOs differ from purpose-built blocks of flats since most will have been converted from a large building originally intended for use by a single household.

**Housing Benefit** – Means-tested financial assistance to meet housing costs for tenants of the social rented sector. Under the Localism Act 2012 Housing Benefit will become part of the new Universal Credit payment.

**Housing Register** – The register of people applying for homes owned and/or managed by registered providers.

**Intentionally homelessness** – Homelessness where a person or household is found to have knowingly caused or contributed to their homeless situation.

**Intermediate rented housing** – Intermediate rented housing is housing allocated at rent levels above those of social rent, but below market rents. Intermediate rents are broadly the equivalent of Affordable Rents which are set at up to 80% of full market rents.

**Local Housing Allowance** – Means-tested financial assistance to meet housing costs for tenants of the private rented sector.

**The Localism Act 2011** – The Localism Act 2011 received Royal Assent in November 2011. The housing-related provisions are:

- Local authorities have the freedom to determine who will qualify to go on their housing register.
- Local authorities will have the flexibility to bring the homelessness duty to an end with an offer of accommodation in the private rented sector without requiring the household's agreement.

- Local authorities have an obligation to publish a tenancy strategy setting out, for their local authority areas, the tenancies which should be granted and the circumstances in which certain tenancies will be granted.
- Local authorities have the power to offer flexible tenancies to new social tenants. A flexible tenancy is a tenancy for a fixed term.

**Low cost home ownership** – Low cost home ownership is the sale of homes at prices below market level. They can combine sale and rent, or can incorporate a low interest equity loan which reduces the cost of monthly repayments.

**Move-on accommodation** – Accommodation to move on to, usually on a more permanent basis than a hostel.

**No Second Night Out** - The No Second Night Out initiative focuses on helping those who find themselves sleeping rough for the first time. No Second Night Out service providers ensure that there is a rapid response to new rough sleepers and will provide an offer that means that they do not have to sleep out for a second night.

**Nomination rights** – where a local authority or housing association has the right to put forward housing applicants to certain affordable housing vacancies.

**Priority Need** – Under Section 189 of the Housing Act 1996, meeting one of the categories of priority need.

**Private Sector Leasing** – An arrangement for a landlord such as a local authority or registered provider to lease properties in the private rented sector e.g. for use as temporary accommodation.

**Registered provider (RP)** – also known as a housing association or registered social landlord (RSL), a landlord of affordable housing who is registered with the Homes and Communities Agency.

**Section 106 agreement** – A Section 106 agreement is a legal agreement (similar to a covenant) which provides a means of ensuring that private housing developers contribute towards the infrastructure that is required to make a development acceptable in planning terms. Contributions may be either financial or in kind and may be used to deliver affordable housing.

**Social rented housing** – Social rented housing is rented housing which is owned and managed by local authorities and registered providers, for which guideline target rents are determined through the national rent regime. A Social Rent is usually 50% to 60% of full market rent.



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## Homelessness Strategy Action Plan 2013-2014

<b>Task number: 1</b>	<b>Action: Herts Young Homeless – continuation and expansion of Schools Education Project. To include the Home Truths scheme and the Solve It Resolve It scheme.</b>
<b>Relevant Strategy Priority</b>	a) Prevention of Homelessness.
<b>Relevant Priority Group</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Households homeless because of Parental Eviction</li> </ul>
<b>Relevance to Government's ten challenges.</b>	ii) To actively work with the voluntary sector and other local partners to address support, education, employment and training needs.
<b>Project leads</b>	Herts Young Homeless
<b>Resources</b>	Homelessness Grant
<b>Timescale</b>	Ongoing.
<b>Description of project</b>	<p>Educational establishments with whom Herts Young Homeless have worked include secondary schools, colleges, youth clubs and youth groups. The Home Truths programme provides education to young people to prepare them for the realities of leaving home and living independently. It informs them of the options, support and advice that is available. In providing this service, the aim is to reduce the occurrence of youth homelessness.</p> <p>Solve It Resolve It is a mediation service which aims to resolve and minimise conflict between young people and their parents or other family members. This aims to help young people to continue living in the family home.</p>
<b>Outputs</b>	<p>Herts Young Homeless are aiming to achieve the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To educate 700 young people in Watford each year through the Home Truths project.</li> <li>• To deliver 24 Solve It Resolve It sessions at Watford educational establishments.</li> </ul> <p>In addition, Herts Young Homeless will deliver the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Quarterly monitoring information</li> <li>▪ Quarterly face-to-face operational meetings between WBC Officers and appropriate representatives for the organisation.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Effective service user engagement</li> <li>▪ Equality data as required under the Equality Act 2010.</li> </ul>
<b>Outcomes</b>	<p>Young people and their families may see a social rented tenancy as their only route to independent living, and homelessness caused by parental eviction as the best method of achieving this or their only housing option in very difficult circumstances. The education programmes provided for secondary school age children by Herts Young Homeless aims to show young people the difficulties involved in taking this route, and also the fact that other housing-related options are available to achieve independence. The overall aim is to reduce homelessness caused by parental eviction. Mediation and conflict resolution also aims to minimise levels of parental eviction by assisting parents and young people to resolve disputes reasonably harmoniously.</p>

<b>Task number: 2</b>	<b>Action: Implementing and monitoring of the HARI Homelessness Protocol</b>
<b>Relevant Strategy Priority</b>	a) Prevention of Homelessness
<b>Relevant Priority Group</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All homeless households</li> </ul>
<b>Relevance to Government's ten challenges.</b>	<p>ii) To actively work with the voluntary sector and other local partners to address support, education, employment and training needs.</p> <p>v) To have housing pathways agreed or in development with each key partner and client group that includes appropriate accommodation and support.</p> <p>viii) To have a Homelessness Strategy which sets out a proactive approach to preventing homelessness, and is reviewed annually so that it is responsive to emerging needs.</p>
<b>Project leads</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Housing Strategy Officer</li> <li>➤ Housing Demand Team</li> <li>➤ Housing Supply Team</li> <li>➤ HARI Co-ordinator</li> <li>➤ Registered providers</li> </ul>
<b>Resources</b>	Within existing resources.
<b>Timescale</b>	On-going

<b>Description of project</b>	<p>HARI is a well established forum for joint working between the two councils and registered providers operating in their areas. The Housing Management sub-group meets quarterly and is the relevant forum for dealing with most homelessness related issues.</p> <p>The primary objective of this agreement is to specify the approach to be taken by all Registered Providers (RPs) within the Watford and Three Rivers Housing and Regeneration Initiative (HARI) in seeking to prevent homelessness. The agreement covers the following themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Better partnership working</li> <li>ii) Sustainable and mixed communities</li> <li>iii) Preventing homelessness</li> <li>iv) Making best use of existing housing stock</li> <li>v) Directing investment</li> <li>vi) Good practice.</li> </ul>
<b>Outputs</b>	<p>Implementation of actions within Themes Two and Three of the Protocol <i>Sustainable and Mixed Communities</i> and <i>Preventing Homelessness</i> and, in particular, ensuring the following are in place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To identify the support needs of new tenants who are identified as high categories of risk;</li> <li>• Joint home visits between Registered Provider officers and Local Authority homelessness officers at breach of the first court order for suspended possession.</li> <li>• Partnership working between Registered Provider and Housing Benefit teams, particularly regarding communication on Discretionary Housing Benefit payments.</li> </ul>
<b>Outcomes</b>	<p>The overall aims of this project is to facilitate effective partnership working between Watford Borough Council, Three Rivers Borough Council and their partner registered providers in preventing and tackling homelessness.</p>

<b>Task number: 3</b>	<b>Action: Understanding and improving methods of preventing illegal eviction in the private rented sector</b>
<b>Relevant Strategy Priority</b>	a) Prevention of Homelessness
<b>Relevant Priority Group</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Households homeless because of the ending of a privately rented tenancy.</li> </ul>
<b>Relevance to Government's ten challenges.</b>	<p>i) To adopt a corporate commitment to prevent homelessness which has buy-in across all local authority services.</p> <p>iii) To offer a housing options and homelessness prevention service, including written advice to all clients.</p>
<b>Project leads</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Housing Strategy Officer</li> <li>➤ Environmental Health Manager</li> </ul>
<b>Resources</b>	Within existing resources. Homelessness Grant when required.
<b>Timescale</b>	<i>Specific date to be given.</i>
<b>Description of project</b>	<p>This project will look in more depth at the issue of illegal eviction in Watford. It will focus on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The numbers of, and reasons for, illegal eviction in the private rented sector</li> <li>• The areas of the borough in which illegal eviction in the private rented sector has occurred most frequently.</li> <li>• The history of tenancies which have led to illegal eviction.</li> <li>• The range of measures which can prevent illegal eviction.</li> <li>• The range of measures which can be taken against landlords who evict illegally.</li> </ul>
<b>Outputs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence base and action plan collated and agreed for implementation.</li> <li>• Range of activities undertaken to tackle the issues identified.</li> </ul>
<b>Outcomes</b>	The aim of this project is to see an overall fall in the numbers of evictions deemed to be illegal in the private rented sector.

<b>Task number: 4</b>	<b>Action: Reviewing our Housing Advice Offer, including an assessment of front of house operations by the Customer Services Centre. The Government's Gold Standard for Homelessness Services will guide this.</b>
<b>Relevant Strategy Priority</b>	a) Prevention of Homelessness
<b>Relevant Priority Group</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All homeless households</li> </ul>
<b>Relevance to Government's ten challenges.</b>	<p>i) To adopt a corporate commitment to prevent homelessness which has buy-in across all local authority services.</p> <p>iii) To offer a housing options and homelessness prevention service, including written advice to all clients.</p>
<b>Project leads</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Housing Strategy Officer</li> <li>➤ Housing Demand Manager</li> <li>➤ Housing Supply Manager</li> <li>➤ Customer Services Centre Manager</li> </ul>
<b>Resources</b>	Within existing resources
<b>Timescale</b>	To be completed by May 2014.
<b>Description of project</b>	The project will involve joint working with between the Housing Demand Team and the Customer Services Team to improve the level of service which potentially homeless households receive at the first point of contact with the Council. The Gold Standard will provide guidance on the levels of service which should be achieved.
<b>Outputs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A suite of baseline performance indicators</li> <li>• A suite of baseline customer satisfaction measures.</li> </ul> <p>A new way of measuring customer satisfaction will be devised. A new form will be designed to gather information from both face-to-face interview and telephone calls.</p>

<b>Outcomes</b>	The aim of the project is to improve the customer experience at the first point of contact and to allow a good range of advice to be given without a referral to the Housing Demand Team being required. An additional aim is to manage expectations of customers by specifying in detail the services which are available.
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<b>Task number: 5</b>	<b>Action: Introducing a programme of Home Visits for households who have applied for assistance under homelessness legislation.</b>
<b>Relevant Strategy Priority</b>	a) Prevention of Homelessness
<b>Relevant Priority Group</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Households homeless because of Parental Eviction</li> <li>• Households homeless because of the ending of a Privately Rented Tenancy</li> </ul>
<b>Relevance to Government's ten challenges.</b>	iii) Offer a housing options and homelessness prevention service, including written advice to clients.
<b>Project leads</b>	Housing Demand Team
<b>Resources</b>	Within existing resources
<b>Timescale</b>	December 2013
<b>Description of project</b>	<p>This project will involve home visits to households after they have made an application for assistance under homelessness legislation. The Housing Officer will explain the following to the household:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The full implications of making a homelessness application.</li> <li>• The temporary accommodation service which is offered</li> <li>• The fact that the local authority's duty may not necessarily be discharged with an offer of a social rented tenancy; a private rented tenancy may be offered in order to discharge the duty.</li> <li>• The other housing options which are available.</li> </ul>
<b>Outputs</b>	A full plan for home visits will be completed by October 2013. Monitoring mechanisms and targets will be set by December 2013.

<b>Outcomes</b>	The aim of this new system is to manage expectations and reduce any preconceptions that gaining a social rented tenancy is an easy process. Households who have made a homelessness application will be better informed on what the process involves and what services and housing options are available. Home visits may also facilitate the option to remain in the family home, if possible.
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<b>Task number: 6</b>	<b>Action: Implementing the Single Homelessness Project:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Communication methods</b></li> <li>▪ <b>Increasing the supply of Shared Housing</b></li> </ul>
<b>Relevant Strategy Priority</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Prevention of Homelessness</li> <li>b) Making best use of temporary accommodation</li> <li>c) Improving access to settled accommodation</li> <li>d) Providing support to manage health and life issues</li> </ul>
<b>Relevant Priority Group</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Single homeless people with an element of vulnerability</li> </ul>
<b>Relevance to Government's ten challenges.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ii) To actively work with voluntary sector and other local partners to address support, education, employment and training needs.</li> <li>iii) To offer a housing options and homelessness prevention service, including written advice to all clients.</li> <li>v) To have housing pathways agreed or in development with each key partner and client group that includes appropriate accommodation and support.</li> <li>vi) To develop a suitable private rented sector offer for all client groups, including advice and support for both clients and landlords.</li> </ul>
<b>Project leads</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Housing Section Head</li> <li>➤ Housing Strategy Officer</li> <li>➤ Single Homelessness Project Steering Group</li> </ul>

<b>Resources</b>	County-wide Department of Communities and Local Government Homelessness Grant. Within existing resources.
<b>Timescale</b>	March 2014
<b>Description of project</b>	Nationally the sum of £20 million has been made available to local authorities by central government to ensure frontline provision prevents homelessness and rough sleeping among single people of any age. Herts Single Homelessness Project has been established by the ten district councils in Hertfordshire to administer the £367,000 grant funding allocation for the county. Watford Borough Council is the lead authority for the project. The grant conditions stipulate that the funding should be used to bolster frontline services across the county through co-ordinated initiatives and should not be divided between the district areas.
<b>Outputs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The specification is completed.</li> <li>• The tendering process is completed.</li> </ul>
<b>Outcomes</b>	Herts Single Homelessness Project will have commissioned services which will meet outcomes identified as key priorities through the local consultation and guidance issued by the Department of Communities and Local Government which administers the grant. There will have been an increase in the number of services offered to single homeless people.

<b>Task number: 7.</b>	<b>Action: Implementing the new Hospital Discharge Protocol and a programme of training for health professionals.</b>
<b>Relevant Strategy Priority</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Prevention of homelessness</li> <li>b) Improving access to settled accommodation</li> <li>c) Providing support to manage health and life issues</li> </ul>
<b>Relevant Priority Group</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Single homeless people with an element of vulnerability.</li> </ul>
<b>Relevance to Government's ten challenges.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ii) To actively work with the voluntary sector and other local partners to address support, education, employment and training needs.</li> <li>v) To have housing pathways agreed or in development with each key partner and client group that includes appropriate accommodation and support.</li> </ul>



<b>Project leads</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Housing Demand Team</li> <li>➤ Prevention of Single Homelessness Group (PoSH).</li> <li>➤ West Herts Hospital Trust.</li> </ul>
<b>Resources</b>	Within existing resources.
<b>Timescale</b>	December 2013
<b>Description of project</b>	<p>This project is an agreement between Watford Council's Housing Team, Watford General Hospital Shrodells Discharge Team, Langley House and other medical establishments to assist people who are unable to leave hospital because they do not have a suitable home to which they can return. The protocol involves the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joint assessments.</li> <li>• Training exercises for both parties.</li> </ul>
<b>Outputs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An agreed protocol with monitoring arrangements.</li> </ul>
<b>Outcomes</b>	The aim of this protocol is to prevent cases of bed blocking where a patient cannot be discharged from hospital because they do not have a suitable home to which they can return, and also to improve communication between Watford Council's Housing Team and Watford General Hospital Shrodells Discharge Team and other medical establishments.

<b>Task number: 8</b>	<b>Action: Investigate the possibilities of employment and training initiatives for homeless people with Job Centre Plus</b>
<b>Relevant Strategy Priority</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Prevention of homelessness</li> <li>b) Making best use of temporary accommodation</li> <li>c) Providing support to manage health and life issues.</li> </ul>
<b>Relevant Priority Group</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Households homeless because of Parental Eviction</li> <li>• Households in temporary accommodation</li> <li>• Single homeless people with an element of vulnerability</li> </ul>
<b>Relevance to Government's</b>	ii) To actively work with voluntary sector and other partners to address support, education,

<b>ten challenges.</b>	employment and training needs.
<b>Project leads</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Housing Strategy Officer</li> <li>➤ Economic Development Officer</li> <li>➤ Job Centre Plus</li> </ul>
<b>Resources</b>	Within existing resources.
<b>Timescale</b>	October 2014
<b>Description of project</b>	<p>This project will aim to provide services related to education and employment to:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• homeless households, especially those in temporary accommodation.</li> <li>• households who are vulnerable to becoming homeless.</li> </ul> <p>A significant feature of households accepted for assistance under homelessness legislation is the low level who contain a household member who is employed. A study of 102 households who were homeless because of parental eviction in 2012 and 2013 shows that 50% did not contain any member who was working. This is compared with an unemployment rate in Watford in July 2013 of 2.4%. It is possible that low aspirations relating to education and employment can lead to young people to follow the homelessness route in order to gain independence and their own home. Advice and support can also be provided to households who have already applied as homeless, especially those living in temporary accommodation while they are awaiting an offer of settled housing.</p>
<b>Outputs</b>	New routes to education or employment advice opportunities, or expansion of existing schemes.
<b>Outcomes</b>	The aim of the project is promote education and employment opportunities to young people who are most vulnerable to becoming homeless. This will be guided particularly by locations in the borough where households who make homeless applications tend to be most concentrated. It will also target residents of temporary accommodation in the borough.

<b>Task number: 9</b>	<b>Action: Herts Young Homeless – expanded Dual Diagnosis Project</b>
<b>Relevant Strategy Priority</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Prevention of Homelessness</li> <li>b) Providing support to manage health and life issues</li> </ul>
<b>Relevant Priority Group</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Single homeless people with an element of vulnerability</li> </ul>
<b>Relevance to Government’s ten challenges.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ii) To actively work with the voluntary sector and other local partners to address support, education, employment and training needs.</li> <li>v) To have housing pathways agreed or in development with each key partner and client group that includes appropriate accommodation and support.</li> </ul>
<b>Project leads</b>	Herts Young Homeless
<b>Resources</b>	Homelessness Grant
<b>Timescale</b>	March 2014.
<b>Description of project</b>	The Herts Young Homeless Dual Diagnosis Project supports people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and have both mental health and substance misuse problems. People are supported to access services that will help them towards mental health recovery and abstinence from substances, as well as supporting them to access or maintain tenancies while they manage complex needs. Watford accounts for a large proportion of the demand for this county-wide service.
<b>Outputs</b>	<p>The funding assigned to this scheme in this action plan will enable the current service to be delivered in Watford to meet identified needs.</p> <p>Herts Young Homeless will deliver the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Quarterly monitoring information</li> <li>▪ Quarterly face-to-face operational meetings between WBC Officers and appropriate representatives for the organisation.</li> <li>▪ Effective service user engagement.</li> <li>▪ Equality data as required under the Equality Act 2010.</li> </ul>
<b>Outcomes</b>	The aim of this project is to reduce homelessness among people with both mental health problems and substance misuse problems, and also to minimise the need for other public sector organisations

	to use resources to support this group e.g. the Police, health organisations.
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<b>Task number: 10</b>	<b>Action: Relaunch of the Prevention of Single Homelessness (PoSH) Group</b>
<b>Relevant Strategy Priority</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Prevention of homelessness</li> <li>b) Making best use of temporary accommodation</li> <li>c) Improving access to settled accommodation</li> <li>d) Providing support to manage health and life issues</li> </ul>
<b>Relevant Priority Group</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Single homeless people with an element of vulnerability</li> </ul>
<b>Relevance to Government's ten challenges.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) To adopt a corporate commitment to prevent homelessness which has buy-in across all local authority services.</li> <li>ii) To actively work with the voluntary sector and other local partners to address support, education, employment and training needs.</li> <li>v) To have housing pathways agreed or in development with each key partner and client group that includes appropriate accommodation and support.</li> </ul>
<b>Project leads</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Housing Strategy Officer</li> <li>➤ The Prevention of Single Homelessness (PoSH) Group</li> </ul>
<b>Resources</b>	Existing resources
<b>Timescale</b>	Ongoing
<b>Description of project</b>	<p>The Prevention of Single Homelessness Group (PoSH) was set up in 2008 to achieve the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To make optimum use of all available resources to tackle homelessness in Watford, identifying opportunities to work together.</li> <li>• To ensure agencies' policies and procedures prevent homelessness wherever possible and do not contribute to homelessness .</li> <li>• To address the wider problems of homeless clients, including health, support, advice, training, employment etc.</li> <li>• To stimulate open discussion, acknowledging the different pressures being experienced by</li> </ul>

	<p>partners.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To concentrate on action, including delivery of Watford Borough Council's Homelessness Strategy and responding to local issues as they arise.</li> <li>• To monitor and report on successes, emerging issues and trends in homelessness.</li> </ul> <p>The membership is from partner organisations including the YMCA, Herts Young Homeless, Watford New Hope Trust, GROW, Job Centre Plus, Watford Community Housing Trust, Hightown Praetorian and Churches Housing Association.</p> <p>It has been decided to relaunch the group to ensure that it responds most effectively to current issues in Watford.</p>
<b>Outputs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revised Terms of Reference</li> <li>• Revised membership</li> <li>• A minimum of four meetings each year.</li> </ul>
<b>Outcomes</b>	PoSH will act as a very effective vehicle for partnership working in Watford.

<b>Task number: 11</b>	<b>Action: Investigating options to expand the portfolio of good standard temporary accommodation</b>
<b>Relevant Strategy Priority</b>	a) Making best use of temporary accommodation.
<b>Relevant Priority Group</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Households in temporary accommodation</li> </ul>
<b>Relevance to Government's ten challenges.</b>	<p>ix) To not place any young person aged 16 or 17 in Bed and Breakfast accommodation.</p> <p>x) To not place families in Bed and Breakfast accommodation unless in an emergency and then for no longer than six weeks.</p>
<b>Project leads</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Housing Supply Team</li> <li>➤ Property</li> </ul>

	➤ Buildings and Projects
<b>Resources</b>	Within existing resources. This will include both capital and revenue funding and leveraging in external funding as appropriate.
<b>Timescale</b>	Financial year 2013-2014.
<b>Description of project</b>	When a household applies for assistance under homelessness legislation, under Section 188 of the Housing Act 1996 they can be offered temporary accommodation. This will allow them to have somewhere to live while they are awaiting the outcome of investigations into their homelessness application and while they are awaiting an offer of settled accommodation. Watford Borough Council is seeking additional good standard temporary accommodation options to avoid the use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation. Bed and Breakfast accommodation is both costly and a constricting temporary housing option.
<b>Outputs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An increase in units available to meet demand which are good quality and more cost effective than at present.</li> <li>• Aiming for a maximum of 20 nightly lets and no Bed and Breakfast placements.</li> </ul>
<b>Outcomes</b>	The use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation will be minimised. Households requiring temporary housing will be offered accommodation is a good standard and allow them to maintain their normal day-to-day activities. A more cost effective solution will be implemented than current arrangements.

<b>Task number: 12</b>	<b>Action: Defining the Private Rented Sector offer for landlords and tenants, including the establishment of the HomeLet scheme and the launch of the Rent Deposit Scheme</b>
<b>Relevant Strategy Priority</b>	a) Improving access to settled accommodation
<b>Relevant Priority Group</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Households homeless because of Parental Eviction</li> <li>• Households homeless because of the ending of a privately rented tenancy.</li> </ul>

<b>Relevance to Government's ten challenges.</b>	vi) To develop a suitable private rented sector offer for all client groups, including advice and support for both clients and landlords.
<b>Project leads</b>	Housing Supply Team
<b>Resources</b>	Homelessness Grant
<b>Timescale</b>	Present to March 2014 – evaluation to take place using targets.
<b>Description of project</b>	<p>Local authorities are now able to discharge their duties to homeless households with the offer of a privately rented property, provided the accommodation meets particular standards. The consent of the homeless household is no longer required in order for this type of offer to be made. In response, Watford Council's Housing Supply Team has been working to provide incentives for private landlords to work in partnership with the local authority to allow nominates to their properties for households in housing need. The HomeLet scheme has been devised which provides the following incentives to private landlords:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incentive payments</li> <li>• A bond to the value of two months</li> <li>• Registration on the National Landlords Association Landlord Associates Scheme</li> <li>• Tenants who have received money advice</li> <li>• Direct payment requests for Housing Benefit</li> <li>• Tenancy visits and a troubleshooting service.</li> </ul>
<b>Outputs</b>	Aiming for 62 new HomeLet placements during 2013-2014 and 18 renewals.
<b>Outcomes</b>	The aim of this project is to increase the availability of good standard privately rented accommodation which is available for nominations of households in housing need.

<b>Task number: 13</b>	<b>Action: Investigate new housing options for single females without dependants</b>
<b>Relevant Strategy Priority</b>	a) Improving access to settled accommodation
<b>Relevant Priority Group</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Single homeless people with an element of vulnerability</li> </ul>

<b>Relevance to Government's ten challenges.</b>	v) To have housing pathways agreed or in development with each key partner and client group that includes appropriate accommodation and support.
<b>Project leads</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Housing Strategy Officer</li> <li>➤ Housing Demand Manager</li> <li>➤ PoSH members</li> </ul>
<b>Resources</b>	Further information to be provided.
<b>Timescale</b>	October 2014
<b>Description of project</b>	Supported housing for single homeless people in Watford tends to be male dominated and partner organisations have identified a need for more female-focused provision. One example of the need is where women have experienced domestic violence and may not feel safe in accommodation shared with a high proportion of men. Victims of domestic violence who <u>have</u> children receive a high level of support in Watford. This includes a women's refuge, support and legal advice from the Women's Centre, support from two independent Domestic Violence Advisers, funds to cover transportation, and two forums which focus on the needs of households with children who suffer from domestic violence. However, single females who experience domestic violence can be a more difficult group to assist, with less of a tendency to leave the perpetrator, less willingness to be accommodated in a women's refuge and more of a propensity to misuse alcohol and drugs. In addition, there is less provision for this group and partner organisations have reported that the number has shown a significant increase. This project will aim to create a bespoke accommodation and support service for single females without dependants who have or are experiencing domestic violence.
<b>Outputs</b>	Project plan to be devised.
<b>Outcomes</b>	The aim of this project is to provide a bespoke housing and support service for single women without dependants who have or are experiencing homelessness. This project will reduce homelessness among this group and promote a planned pathways to settled accommodation and improved wellbeing.



<b>Task number: 14</b>	<b>Action: Street Outreach Work</b>
<b>Relevant Strategy Priority</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Prevention of homelessness</li> <li>b) Improving access to settled accommodation</li> <li>c) Providing support to manage health and life issues</li> </ul>
<b>Relevant Priority Group</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Single people with an element of vulnerability</li> </ul>
<b>Relevance to Government's ten challenges.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ii) To actively work with the voluntary sector and other local partners to address support, education employment and training.</li> <li>iv) To adopt a <i>No Second Night Out</i> model of an effective local alternative.</li> </ul>
<b>Project leads</b>	Watford New Hope Trust
<b>Resources</b>	Homelessness Grant
<b>Timescale</b>	Ongoing
<b>Description of project</b>	<p>Historically, rough sleeping in Watford has been higher than average for the county of Hertfordshire. There are a number of reasons for this, including the presence of a mainline railway station connected to London in the town and the comparatively high number of agencies to help homeless people in the town. The majority of rough sleepers are single men. Since its establishment in 1989 Watford New Hope Trust has taken on a role of assisting this group. Its Outreach Team, based at the New Hope Trust Day Centre, goes out on the streets on a regular basis to support rough sleepers and to provide immediate support to meet their most pressing needs. Rough sleepers are then signposted to other sources of support such as the Day Centre, accommodation options, medical help and benefits advice in Watford and elsewhere. The Reconnections Services assists rough sleepers in returning to their area of origin.</p>
<b>Outputs</b>	<p>Watford New Hope Trust will deliver the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Dedicated street outreach service.</li> <li>▪ Quarterly monitoring information</li> <li>▪ Quarterly face-to-face operational meetings between WBC Officers and appropriate</li> </ul>

	<p>representatives for the organisation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Effective service user engagement.</li> <li>▪ Equality data under the Equality Act 2010.</li> </ul>
<b>Outcomes</b>	The project will continue to provide a high level of support to people with the highest level of housing need. It will also reduce the need for resources from other public organisations such as the Police, Environmental Health and health bodies.

<b>Task number: 15</b>	<b>Action: Lever in funding opportunities</b>
<b>Relevant Strategy Priority</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Prevention of homelessness</li> <li>b) Making best use of temporary accommodation</li> <li>c) Improving access to settled accommodation</li> <li>d) Providing support to manage life and health issues</li> </ul>
<b>Relevant Priority Group</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All homeless households</li> </ul>
<b>Relevance to Government's ten challenges.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) To adopt a corporate commitment to prevent homelessness which has buy-in across all local authority services.</li> <li>ii) To actively work with the voluntary sector and other local partners to address support, education, employment and training needs.</li> </ul>
<b>Project leads</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Housing Strategy Officer</li> <li>➤ PoSH members</li> <li>➤ Voluntary Funding Team</li> </ul>
<b>Resources</b>	Within existing resources.
<b>Timescale</b>	Ongoing
<b>Description of project</b>	The Government periodically ringfences funding for projects which meet particular aims and then invites organisations to bid for money from this funds. In addition, there is a now a greater range of

	funding sources related to resolving issues connected to homelessness e.g. Health and Well-being, National Lottery funding. Homelessness organisations in Watford have reported the need for a more co-ordinated approach to applying for funding for projects.
<b>Outputs</b>	<p>The aim of this project is to create a more co-ordinated system by which homelessness organisations can apply for funding. The assistance which this new system will provide will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Excellent information on the local context, showing the possible impact of any new proposals.</li> <li>• Details of how applications will fit with Council aims and objectives</li> <li>• Details of how applications will fit with and complement existing services and the work of other organisations in the borough.</li> </ul> <p>We will work towards a minimum of two funding bids each year.</p>
<b>Outcomes</b>	Bids will have stronger evidence and be more closely aligned to shared priorities, thus increasing the chances of success and longer-term sustainability.

<b>Task number: 16</b>	<b>Action: Introduce a pilot arrangement for an emergency fund with Watford Credit Union</b>
<b>Relevant Strategy Priority</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Prevention of homelessness</li> <li>b) Improving access to settled accommodation</li> </ul>
<b>Relevant Priority Group</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All homeless households</li> </ul>
<b>Relevance to Government's ten challenges.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ii) To actively work with voluntary sector and other local partners to address support, education, employment and training needs.</li> <li>iii) To offer a housing options and homelessness prevention service, including written advice to all clients.</li> </ul>
<b>Project leads</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Housing Supply Team</li> <li>➤ Watford Credit Union</li> <li>➤ Environmental Health</li> </ul>
<b>Resources</b>	Homelessness Grant
<b>Timescale</b>	Ongoing
<b>Description of project</b>	This project consists of an agreement between Watford Council's Housing Team and the Watford

	Credit Union. It will allow housing applicants who are homeless, threatened with homelessness or in high housing need to access housing related loans without completing the usual qualifying saving period. The loans are anticipated to be up to £1,000 in value. They would cover one-off costs to secure or retain accommodation, or necessary expenses associated with resolving or improving a housing situation. Recycling fund, once repaid, will enable a greater number of applicants to be assisted than the current system of non-repayable grants. This proposal was approved by Cabinet in July 2013.
<b>Outputs</b>	Agreement finalised and criteria for referral launched.
<b>Outcomes</b>	This project will allow households to access small amounts of money which will assist them in preventing their homelessness. These small amounts of money are often difficult to access from conventional sources. The aim is for households to resolve their own homelessness issues e.g. by providing a deposit or rent in advance to access the private rented sector.

<b>Task number: 17</b>	<b>Action: Introduce a Tenancy Fraud Initiative. Produce a protocol to assist households who are evicted from a home which has been let due to Tenancy Fraud</b>
<b>Relevant Strategy Priority</b>	a) Improving access to settled accommodation.
<b>Relevant Priority Group</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All homeless households</li> </ul>
<b>Relevance to Government's ten challenges.</b>	i) To adopt a corporate commitment to prevent homelessness which has buy-in across all local authority services.
<b>Project leads</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ HARI-appointed Tenancy Fraud Officer</li> <li>➤ HARI (Housing and Regeneration Initiative)</li> <li>➤ Housing Strategy Officer (to monitor)</li> </ul>
<b>Resources</b>	Local Government Association Grant
<b>Timescale</b>	Tenancy Fraud Investigator post to be funded July 2013-June 2014.

<b>Description of project</b>	<p>In late 2012 the Local Government Association invited the local HARI Group (Housing and Regeneration Initiative) in Watford and Three Rivers to bid for a fund which had been created to set up tenancy fraud projects. The HARI Group submitted a bid for the funding, with Hightown Praetorian and Churches Housing Association and Watford Community Housing Trust acting as the lead register provider partners. A proposal for a Tenancy Fraud Investigator post was compiled. On 8 February 2013 HARI was advised by the Local Government Association that a total of £27,000 would be awarded for the use of employing a Tenancy Fraud Investigator in Watford and Three Rivers on a twelve month contract. Any outstanding costs would be met by HARI's funds. The Tenancy Fraud Investigator took up their post on 1 July 2013 and will be working in both local authority areas. Activities will include carrying out tenancy checks, creating data-sharing arrangements, overseeing legal action to recover possession of illegally-occupied properties, and raising awareness of the issue of tenancy fraud. Initial tasks will include developing policies, procedures and referrals mechanisms relating to tenancy fraud.</p>
<b>Outputs</b>	<p>A protocol for dealing with tenancy fraud cases will be agreed and implemented where there is a risk of homelessness.</p>
<b>Outcomes</b>	<p>The scheme will assist in preventing and tackling homelessness in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Freeing-up social rented accommodation which has been occupied illegally, thereby providing accommodation for households in housing need.</li> <li>• Providing support and advice to households who have been occupying social rented homes illegally and assisting them to find accommodation options which they can occupy on a legitimate basis.</li> </ul>

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# **Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan 2013-2018**

Watford Borough Council

September 2013

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## Introduction

For the purposes of the Homelessness Act 2002, “homelessness strategy” means a strategy formulated by a local housing authority for

- (a) preventing homelessness in their district;
- (b) securing that sufficient accommodation is and will be available for people in their district who are or may become homeless;
- (c) securing the satisfactory provision of support for people in their district:
  - (i) who are or who may become homeless;
  - (ii) who have been homeless and need support to prevent them becoming homeless again.

A homelessness strategy may include specific objectives to be pursued, and specific action planned to be taken, in the course of the exercise of:

- (a) the functions of the authority as a local housing authority;
- (b) the functions of the social services authority for the district.

A homelessness strategy may also include provision relating to specific action which the authority expects to be taken:

- (a) by any public authority with functions mentioned which are capable of contributing to the achievement of any of the objectives mentioned above.
- (b) by any voluntary organisation or other person whose activities are capable of contributing to the achievement of any of the objectives mentioned above.

The number of households applying to Watford Council for assistance under homelessness legislation and the number of households being accepted for assistance under homelessness legislation have increased significantly since the last homelessness review and strategy was produced in 2008. This is particularly the case during the two year period between 2011 and 2013. Homelessness is not just a housing-related problem; it usually affects the most vulnerable members of the community, and sometimes incurs a high cost of other public sector areas such as health, education and welfare benefits.

The Homelessness Review and Strategy look at homelessness in a very broad way to take account not only of people without accommodation but also those at risk of losing their home, whether it is shared with others, a rented property or a home which they own.

## A Diagnosis to define the nature of the challenge

Homelessness is the opposite of a planned route to settled accommodation. It poses the following problems for households, local authority authorities and other public sector agencies:

- Prior to making a homelessness application a household can be living in poor housing conditions, ranging from overcrowded homes and poor quality housing to the worst manifestation of homelessness which consists of sleeping outdoors.
- Homelessness incurs substantial costs to local authorities in accommodating households in temporary housing while they await the outcome of their homelessness application or an offer of settled accommodation.
- Its sudden nature can dislocate households from support networks, often leading to increased levels of stress and poor health.
- It can prevent households from focusing upon education and employment opportunities while they are in temporary accommodation. Homeless households may give up their jobs prior to moving into temporary accommodation because they have had to move further away from their place of work.
- High levels of homelessness can concentrate allocations of social housing disproportionately highly to homeless households, while households who attempt to access social housing as part of a planned move to settled accommodation have to wait longer to be allocated accommodation.
- Homelessness can impact on the stability of communities, particularly in areas where homelessness is very visible and there is high turnover of housing and population.

Our research has shown the levels of stress caused by housing conditions which lead to homelessness, as illustrated in eviction letters. These letters describe arguments, severe relationship breakdowns, cramped living conditions, high levels of stress and deteriorating levels of personal health.

## The Guiding Principles

The Guiding Principle is an overall approach chosen to cope with or overcome the obstacles identified in the diagnosis. The policy adopted to guide the homelessness strategy will take the following three approaches:

- To **prevent homelessness** occurring by assisting households in remaining in their current settled home, or by encouraging them to follow planned pathways to a settled home.
- Where homelessness cannot be prevented, to provide **sufficient support** to prevent homelessness occurring in the future, and to improve aspects of the lives of homeless households including health, access to education and employment opportunities.
- To **work in partnership** with organisations in and around Watford to prevent and tackle homelessness

- To **manage demand** for local services and the supply of affordable housing.

## **A set of Coherent Actions**

The Homelessness Strategy Action Plan will contain a set of coherent actions that are designed to carry out the guiding principles. These steps will be co-ordinated with one another to work together in accomplishing the guiding principles. The actions will be grouped into these four strategic priorities:

- a) Prevention of homelessness
- b) Making best use of temporary accommodation.
- c) Improving access to settled accommodation.
- d) Providing support to manage health and life issues.

## **Achievements from the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan 2008-2013**

Examples of achievements under the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan 2008-2013 are:

### **Prevention of Homelessness**

- An audit of services was completed so that partners would have an improved understanding of the full range of relevant services available across the borough.
- A severe weather plan has been completed and has been used between 2009 and 2013.
- Increased outreach work by Watford New Hope Trust has been funded.
- A local ex-offenders project has been piloted for six residents, providing an important opportunity to inform future provision.
- Joint working with Herts Young Homeless Schools Prevention Project. This has delivered sessions aimed at homelessness prevention in Watford and Three Rivers.
- An agreement has been reached with Children, Schools and Families to improve the management of housing care leavers.

- A money advice worker, supported by a small pot of funding, has been instrumental in avoiding repossession for homeowners in mortgage arrears and for a small number in arranging Mortgage Rescue.

### **Monitoring the supply and use of temporary accommodation**

- Arrangements were put in place to monitor:
  - ~ households in temporary accommodation and the average length of stay
  - ~ applicants and lettings via Choice Based lettings
  - ~ new affordable housing
  - ~ homelessness applications and decisions
  - ~ homelessness prevention activity.

### **Access to settled accommodation**

- At total of 716 new affordable homes were completed in Watford between April 2008 and March 2013.
- A total of 208 existing homes were let to households in housing need through the Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme.

### **Provide support to manage health and life issues**

- Counselling was made available via Herts Young Homeless and YMCA counsellors.
- A Lifeskills, employment and training event was held with Prevention of Single Homelessness (PoSH) partners.
- Structured workshops for clients have been put in place at Watford New Hope Trust.

## **The Homelessness Review 2013-2018**

In order to inform the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan 2013-2018, the Homelessness Review contains the following information:

- a) Homelessness – links to other policies and strategies
  - i) The Watford Borough Council Corporate Plan 2013-2017
  - ii) One Watford: Watford Sustainable Community Strategy
  - iii) The Watford Council Nominations Policy

- iv) The Watford Council Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy
- v) The Watford Council Housing Strategy
- vi) The Housing and Regeneration Initiative (HARI) Homelessness Prevention Agreement

b) The Watford Scene:

- i) A portrait of Watford
- ii) Deprivation in Watford
- iii) Changes to welfare benefit levels – impacts in Watford.
- iv) Housing costs in Watford
- v) Incomes in Watford
- vi) The Housing Register in Watford
- vii) Lettings of affordable housing for rent
- viii) Increasing the supply of new homes for households in housing need

c) Homelessness in Watford

- i) The local authority role
- ii) The Voluntary Sector role
- iii) The role of registered providers

d) Contexts for the Homelessness Review and Strategy

- i) The changing context since 2008
- ii) The contexts for the Homelessness Review and Strategy 2013-2018

e) Resources

- i) Council staffing
- ii) Homelessness Grant
- iii) Discretionary Housing Payments
- iv) The Hertfordshire Welfare Assistance Scheme
- v) Housing-related support

- vi) HARI (Housing and Regeneration Initiative) resources
- vii) Single Homelessness Fund

### **Priorities:**

- **Red Category – high priority**
- **Amber Category – medium priority**
- **Green Category – low priority**

With the multiplicity of changes which are affecting levels of homelessness, the Watford Council homelessness review and strategy will be reassessed on an annual basis to ensure that it is responsive to changes which will impact on homelessness.

Because of the discrete level of resources for preventing and tackling homelessness, the homelessness strategy and action plan will focus upon the most urgent and widespread homelessness causes and issues. The principles upon which high priority for resources and action will be chosen are:

- High numbers of households experiencing particular types of homelessness in Watford.
- Identified gaps in provision for particular groups.
- Identified ability of certain projects to have a high impact in preventing or tackling homelessness.
- Capacity of project leads to make progress

### **The Red Category - high priority**

These homelessness causes and issues will all be included in the homelessness strategy action plan, and specific tasks will be assigned to them. The homelessness causes and issues which will be included in the Red Category in 2013 are:

- a) Preventing and tackling homelessness due to Parental eviction
- b) Ending of tenancies in the private rented sector
- c) Households in temporary accommodation
- d) Single person households with an element of vulnerability.

Welfare Reform is a cross-cutting issue which affects all of the groups in the Red category. The impact of the Welfare Reform Act on the above priority groups will be monitored. This will inform the setting of priorities for 2014/2015.

### **The Amber Category – medium priority**

These homelessness causes and issues will not, at present, be included in the homelessness strategy action plan, unless partners are already progressing

initiatives which link to them. However, because of changes to legislation and/or demographic changes, “amber issues” may rise in prominence within the levels of homelessness in Watford. Therefore, they will be scrutinised at the first annual review and decisions will be made as to whether they may require specific tasks assigned to them in the updated homelessness strategy action plan. Work may already be carried out to assist households in the Amber Category by stakeholder organisations. The homelessness causes and issues which will be included in the Amber category in 2013 are:

- a) Eviction from social rented housing due to changes introduced in the Welfare Reform Act 2012.
- b) Domestic Violence
- c) In-migration from residents of central and eastern European countries
- d) In-migration from households from London.
- e) Overcrowded households.

### **The Green Category – low priority**

These homelessness causes and issues will not feature in the homelessness strategy action plan at present unless partners are already progressing initiatives which are linked to them. However, they may also be included as part of the annual review if this is considered advisable. The homelessness causes and issues which will be included in the Green category in 2013 are:

- a) Mortgage Arrears
- b) Non-violent relationship breakdown
- c) Ex-offenders leaving prison.
- d) “New” client groups

The tasks in the homelessness strategy action plan which are relevant to each of the four Red Category priority areas are:

<b>Preventing and tackling homelessness due to Parental Eviction</b>
<p><u>Tasks:</u></p> <p>Task 1 Herts Young Homelessness Schools Project</p> <p>Task 2 Implementation of the HARI Homelessness Protocol</p> <p>Task 4 Review of the Housing Advice Offer</p> <p>Task 5 Home Visits programme</p> <p>Task 8 Training and employment opportunities with Job Centre Plus</p> <p>Task 12 Defining a new Private Rented Sector Offer</p> <p>Task 16 Introduce an Emergency Fund with Watford Credit Union (loans)</p>

## **Ending of privately rented tenancies and creating an offer to Private Landlords**

### Tasks:

- Task 2 Implementation of the HARI Protocol
- Task 3 Prevention of Illegal Eviction
- Task 4 Review of the Housing Advice Offer
- Task 5 Home Visits Programme
- Task 12 Defining a new Private Rented Sector Offer
- Task 16 Pilot Emergency Fund with Watford Credit Union (loans).

## **Households in temporary accommodation**

### Tasks:

- Task 2 Implementation of the HARI Protocol
- Task 8 Training and employment opportunities with Job Centre Plus
- Task 11 Expand portfolio of good standard temporary accommodation options.
- Task 16 Pilot Emergency Fund with Watford Credit Union (loans).

## **Single homeless persons with an element of vulnerability**

### Tasks

- Task 1 Implementation of the HARI Protocol
- Task 4 Review of the Housing Advice Offer
- Task 6 Single Homelessness Project implementation
- Task 7 Hospital Discharge Protocol
- Task 8 Training and employment opportunities with Job Centre Plus
- Task 9 Herts Young Homeless Dual Diagnosis Project
- Task 10 Re-launch of the Prevention of Single Homelessness Group (PoSH)
- Task 13 New housing options for single females without dependants
- Task 14 Watford New Hope Trust – Street Outreach work.
- Task 16 Pilot Emergency Fund with Watford Credit Union (loans).



## Putting the findings of the review into action

By analysing the data in the Homelessness Review and the results of the stakeholder consultation exercise, we have produced action plan tasks in response to the findings:

Key findings from the Homelessness Review	
The Watford Context	Possible impact upon levels of homelessness
Overall	<p>Watford is a highly dynamic borough which has seen significant housing-related changes between 2001 and 2011. This includes demographic, economic and tenure-related changes. The changes can lead to increased competition for the borough's housing stock in terms of both purchasing or renting a home in which to live or purchasing a home as an investment. Homelessness in Watford is dominated by an increase in households whose economic and personal circumstances preventing them from competing successfully in acquiring a home in the borough.</p> <p><u>Relevant Tasks in the action plan</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>~ Task 2</li> <li>~ Task 3</li> <li>~ Task 6</li> <li>~ Task 8</li> <li>~ Task 10</li> </ul>
Deprivation in Watford	<p>There is evidence that households living in deprived neighbourhoods are more likely to become homeless for the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Income deprivation, Employment deprivation, Education deprivation, Barriers to housing and other services (housing affordability)</b> – households are less likely to have the economic means to acquire their own home.</li> <li>• <b>Crime deprivation and Living Environment deprivation</b> – It may no longer be safe for a household to continue living in their current home or neighbourhood.</li> <li>• <b>Health and disability deprivation</b> – It may no longer be reasonable for a household to continue living in their current home because of health problems or a disability. A person may have a mental health issue which increases their vulnerability to becoming homeless.</li> </ul> <p><u>Relevant Tasks in the action plan</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>~ Task 7</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>~ Task 8</li> <li>~ Task 9</li> <li>~ Task 13</li> <li>~ Task 14</li> <li>~ Task 15</li> <li>~ Task 17</li> </ul>
Housing costs in Watford	<p>Watford is a popular place to live and there is high demand for all types of housing in the borough. Consequently a large proportion of households are unable to afford market-priced housing in either the owner-occupied or privately rented sector. Housing which is priced at levels below market rates need to be available to meet the housing needs of this group.</p> <p><u>Relevant Tasks in the action plan</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>~ Task 12</li> <li>~ Task 16</li> </ul>
Incomes in Watford	<p>Watford has a successful economy which can offer highly paid employment to suitably qualified individuals. However, a considerable number of residents working in sectors essential to the local economy, e.g. service industries, do not earn a sufficient income to acquire market priced housing.</p> <p><u>Relevant Tasks in the action plan</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>~ Task 8</li> <li>~ Task 12</li> <li>~ Task 16</li> </ul>
The Housing Register and the supply of Affordable Homes	<p>Information in this section shows that demand for affordable housing greatly exceeds supply. Households who are unable to wait to bid successfully for accommodation through the housing register and who have not explored other housing options may resort to applying for accommodation through homelessness legislation.</p> <p><u>Relevant Tasks in the action plan</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>~ Task 12</li> <li>~ Task 17</li> </ul>

Key Findings from the Stakeholder consultation exercise.	Relevant tasks in the action plan
<p><b>Prevention of homelessness at an early stage is crucial</b></p> <p><u>Strategic Priorities:-</u></p> <p>a) <i>Prevention of homelessness</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Task 1</li> <li>Task 2</li> <li>Task 3</li> <li>Task 4</li> <li>Task 5</li> <li>Task 6</li> </ul>

	<p>Task 7 Task 8 Task 9 Task 10 Task 14 Task 15 Task 16</p>
<p><b>There is an insufficient supply of affordable housing in Watford</b></p> <p><u>Strategic Priorities</u> c) Improving access to settled accommodation</p>	<p>Task 6 Task 12 Task 13 Task 17</p>
<p><b>Rough sleeping continues to be a problem</b></p> <p><u>Strategic Priorities</u> c) Improving access to settled accommodation d) Providing support to manage life and health issues</p>	<p>Task 6 Task 14 Task 15</p>
<p><b>Private sector housing is a key resource for meeting housing need. Further work is required to improve access to privately rented housing.</b></p> <p><u>Strategic Priorities</u> b) Making best use of temporary accommodation c) Improving access to settled accommodation</p>	<p>Task 3. Task 6 Task 11 Task 14</p>
<p><b>Partnership working and cross-boundary working are essential to ensure joined-up approaches and to maximise available resources.</b></p> <p><u>Strategic Priorities</u> b) Making best use of temporary accommodation c) Improving access to settled accommodation d) Providing support to manage life and health issues</p>	<p>Task 2 Task 4 Task 6 Task 7 Task 8 Task 10 Task 16 Task 17</p>
<p><b>Targeted approaches are needed for the most common types of homelessness e.g. parental eviction, ending of privately rented tenancies.</b></p> <p><u>Strategic Priorities</u> a) Prevention of homelessness c) Improving access to settled accommodation d) Providing support to manage life and health issues</p>	<p>Task 1. Task 3. Task 5 Task 6 Task 7 Task 8 Task 9 Task 10 Task 13 Task 14</p>
<p><b>Watford is a hub of services for single homeless people. This group requires a particular approach for preventing and tackling homelessness.</b></p> <p><u>Strategic Priorities</u></p>	<p>Task 2 Task 4. Task 6. Task 7</p>

<i>a) Prevention of homelessness</i>	Task 8
<i>b) Making best use of temporary accommodation</i>	Task 9
<i>c) Improving access to settled accommodation</i>	Task 10
<i>d) Providing support to manage life and health issues.</i>	Task 13
	Task 14
	Task 16

# **WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL HOMELESSNESS REVIEW AND STRATEGY: ANALYSIS OF THE EFFECTS ON FURTHERING EQUALITY AIMS**

## **1. Introduction**

This report presents the findings of an analysis of the potential impacts of furthering Equality Aims in the Watford Homelessness Review and Strategy. The analysis aims to ensure that the review and strategy take into account the needs and aspirations of a wide range of groups and does not lead to unlawful discrimination upon any individual or group.

***It should be noted that the remit of the Homelessness Review and Strategy does not encompass the full range of services available to people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness in Watford. This remit consists of identifying “gaps” in provision and assessing the impact of new or expanded services in furthering equality aims. Outside the scope of the strategy, and therefore not covered by this Equality Analysis, are aspects such as the day to day running of the Housing Service, implementation of homelessness legislation, and projects set up under previous homelessness strategies.***

## **2. Report methodology**

The methodology to be used in the production of the Homelessness Review and Strategy Equality Impact Analysis is based on guidance published by Watford Borough Council. In line with this guidance, this report will assess the positive and negative impact of the proposals included within the Homelessness Review and Strategy in respect of the “protected characteristics” set out in the Equality Act 2010. These are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion and belief
- Sex (gender)
- Sexual orientation
- Marriage and civil partnership

The assessment considers the impact of the Homelessness Review and Strategy in order to:

- Identify the needs of equality groups
- Identify the positive impacts of the proposed strategy
- Identify the adverse impacts of the proposed strategy
- Identify proportionate and reasonable mitigation measures that need to be incorporated into the strategy to reduce or eradicate significant adverse impacts.

This will be established by:

- Awareness of the relevant national, regional and local legislation and policy with regard to equality issues.
- Consultation with a wide range of homelessness services who are stakeholders in the development and allocation of affordable housing for rent in Watford.

Because of the discrete level of resources for preventing and tackling homelessness, the homelessness strategy and action plan will focus upon only the most urgent and widespread homelessness causes and issues. The principles upon which high priority for resources and action have been chosen are:

- High numbers of households experiencing particular types of homelessness in Watford.
- Identified gaps in provision for particular groups.
- Identified ability of certain projects to have a high impact in preventing or tackling homelessness.
- Capacity of project leads to make progress.

The homelessness strategy action plan will be reviewed and updated annually. Each year high priority homelessness causes and issues will be included in the action plan and specific tasks will be assigned to them. The homelessness causes and issues which will be included in the action plan in 2013/2014, and which will be the subject of this analysis, will be:-

- a) Households homeless because of parental eviction.
- b) Households homeless because of the ending of a privately rented tenancy.
- c) Households in temporary accommodation.
- d) Single persons with an element of vulnerability.

Impacts have been compiled into tables in section 6 of the report, as per Watford Borough Council's guidelines, with impacts noted per group and classified as positive, neutral or negative. There is then a description of the reason for that classification and details of the proposed mitigation of the impact, if necessary.

### 3. Local and National policies

A variety of national legislation underpins the requirement and need to carry out an equality impact analysis for the proposed Watford Homelessness Review and Strategy. This legislation highlights how equality is increasingly recognised as a fundamental part of the policy-making process, while also requiring organisations to adopt a more proactive approach to promoting equality of opportunity across a variety of projects including those to the built environment.

The Equality Act brings together all the existing strands of equality and discrimination legislation and provides a much clearer picture of existing law, extending it to cover some anomalies in existing discrimination law, and creating a stronger set of obligations on public bodies to promote equality.

National legislation underpins Watford Borough Council's local policy which is set out in the Single Equality Scheme 2010-2013. The primary aspiration of this policy is to create and maintain a borough in which each person has an equal entitlement and access to quality services and employment opportunities, irrespective of their race, religion or belief, disability, age, gender, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, family circumstances, marital status or financial status. The policy sets out its commitment to:

- Promote the principles and practices of equality throughout the council and the borough, as well as with appropriate multi-agency partnerships.
- Implement clear internal policies and procedures to address inequality and ensure that all employees and service users are not discriminated against on the basis of race, gender, disability, age, religion and belief, gender reassignment or sexual orientation.
- Challenge when unfair discrimination and harassment is seen.
- Promote good relations between people of different races.
- Promote equality of opportunity for disabled people, and between men and women.
- Promote equality of opportunity for people of all ages, sexual orientation, religions or belief.
- Undertake effective and meaningful consultation and encourage active community participation and involvement in decisions.
- Ensure that recruitment procedures provide equality of access for all staff and local communities.
- Assess, monitor and evaluate the implementation of access for all policies through Equality Impact Assessments, making appropriate adjustments where necessary.

Consultation and this Equalities Impact Assessment are required stages of the process to ensure Watford Borough Council meets its duties under The Equality Act 2010.

## 4. Project background and description

### Main purpose of the strategy

The Homelessness Review and Strategy sets out the Council's plans for preventing and tackling homelessness. It includes an action plan giving details of how we will work with our partners to prevent homelessness and, in cases where this is not possible, ensure the best possible outcomes for homeless people. The action plan will be reviewed and updated on an annual basis.

The main stakeholders of the policy are:

- People seeking housing or related advice
- People threatened with homelessness or who are actually homeless.
- Staff within the Council's Housing Service, Environment Services and Planning departments.
- Partner organisations and agencies.

It is Watford Borough Council's responsibility to develop and publish a homelessness strategy. Various partner agencies have agreed to share responsibility for implementing the action plan.

### The definition of Homelessness

Under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 homelessness is defined as follows:  
*"A person is defined as homeless if he has no accommodation suitable for his occupation in the United Kingdom or elsewhere which he is entitled to occupy by virtue of an interest in it or by virtue of an order of a Court. A person is also homeless if he has accommodation but cannot secure entry to it, or it is not reasonable for him to occupy. A person is threatened with homelessness if it is likely that he will become homeless within 28 days.*

### The duty of local authorities to produce a Homelessness Review and Strategy

Under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 and the Homelessness Act 2002 every local authority has a duty to assist persons and households who are homeless. Under the Homelessness Act 2002 all local housing authorities must have in place a homelessness strategy which is based on all forms of homelessness in their district. It must be renewed at least every five years. The strategy must set out the local authority's plans for the prevention of homelessness and for securing that sufficient accommodation and support are or will be available for people who became homeless or are at risk of doing so. (*Homelessness Code of Guidance 2006*).

### What is a Homelessness Review?

Under the Homelessness Act 2002, Homelessness Reviews are described as follows:

*(1) For the purposes of the Act, "homelessness review" means a review by a local housing authority of:-*

- (a) The levels, and likely future levels, of homelessness in their district.*
- (b) The activities which are carried out for any purpose linked to any this purpose, or which contribute to their achievement; and*



- (c) *The resources available to the authority, the social services authority for their district, other public authorities, voluntary organisations and other persons for such activities.*

(2) *Those purpose are for:*

- (a) *preventing homelessness in the district of their authority*
- (b) *securing that accommodation is or will be available or people in the district who are or may become homeless.*
- (c) *providing support for people in the district:*
  - (i) *who are or may become homeless; or*
  - (ii) *who have been homeless and need support to prevent them becoming homeless again.”*

#### What is a Homelessness Strategy?

*For the purposes of the Homelessness Act 2002, “homelessness strategy” means a strategy formulated by a local housing authority for*

- (a) *preventing homelessness in their district;*
- (b) *securing that sufficient accommodation is and will be available for people in their district who are or may become homeless;*
- (c) *securing the satisfactory provision of support for people in their district:*
  - (i) *who are or who may become homeless;*
  - (ii) *who have been homeless and need support to prevent them becoming homeless again.*

*A homelessness strategy may include specific objectives to be pursued, and specific action planned to be taken, in the course of the exercise of:*

- (a) *the functions of the authority as a local housing authority;*
- (b) *the functions of the social services authority for the district.*

*A homelessness strategy may also include provision relating to specific action which the authority expects to be taken:*

- (a) *by any public authority with functions mentioned which are capable of contributing to the achievement of any of the objectives mentioned above.*
- (b) *by any voluntary organisation or other person whose activities are capable of contributing to the achievement of any of the objectives mentioned above.*

#### Written procedures to enable the delivery of this strategy

Homelessness legislation and the Council’s nominations policy are relevant to the implementation of the strategy. Partner organisations will have their own policies and procedures, which will also have an impact e.g. assessment policies for hostel places.

#### Areas of activity which are governed by discretionary powers

The Council’s homelessness duties, covering people whom the Council has a duty to rehouse, are covered by legislation. However, the homelessness strategy action plan includes a number of projects and service areas outside of this statutory duty where an element of discretion will be exercised. This

includes partnership projects where the Council has varying amounts of influence over the criteria set by other organisations. It is usual practice for the Housing Service to request regular monitoring information to ensure that any projects we have commissioned are on target and accessible to different groups within the community.

#### How the Strategy is associated with other Council policies and strategies

The Homelessness Review and Strategy are linked to the following existing or forthcoming Council-related policies and strategies:

- The Watford Borough Council Corporate Plan 2013-2017
- One Watford: Watford Sustainable Community Strategy
- The Watford Council Nominations Policy
- The Watford Council Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy
- The Watford Council Housing Strategy
- The Watford Tenancy Strategy 2012-2015

#### **Contexts: national and local**

Watford is a local authority area in which there is considerable demand for both market and social housing. Because a large number of households are unable to afford market housing, the demand for affordable housing, either rented or low cost home ownership, is considerable.

The Watford Homelessness Review and Strategy has been introduced against a background of major change in terms of:-

The Localism Act 2011 – The main changes introduced by this Act are:

- Local authorities will have the freedom to determine who will go on their housing register.
- Local authorities will have the flexibility to bring the homelessness duty to an end with an offer of privately rented accommodation. They will not require the household's consent for this.
- Registered providers will have the power to offer flexible tenancies to new social housing tenants. A flexible tenancy is a tenancy for a fixed term. The Localism Act states that it should not be for less than five years.

The Welfare Reform Act 2012 – this legislation introduces some major changes to the way in which benefits are paid and the level at which they are paid. The changes which have most relevance to the Watford Tenancy Strategy are:

- *Housing-related benefit cuts for under-occupation* – from April 2013 households who are benefit dependent and who are assessed as under-occupying their homes will have their housing-related benefit cut by a percentage rate set at 14% for those with one unused bedroom and 25% for those with two unused bedrooms.

- *Benefit caps* – From April 2013 a total cap will be introduced on the amount of benefits to which any individual or couple is entitled to. This may lead to a shortfall in the housing-related benefit available to meet the cost of rents.

#### Working with private landlords

- The Localism Act now allows local housing authorities to discharge their duty under homelessness legislation with an offer of privately rented accommodation

#### Single homeless people in Watford

- Watford remains a hub for services for single people in housing need. The number of single homeless people is increasing, due partly to restrictions to Local Housing Allowance for single people aged under 35. Partners report an increase in the number of homeless single women, and an increase in the number of homeless single people aged between 40 and 60.

#### In-migration to Watford

- Watford saw an 11.3% increase in its population between 2001 and 2011. The population is likely to continue to increase due to in-migration, potentially from London and from European Union countries.

#### Overcrowding

- The Census 2011 identified that there had been a trend of increased overcrowding in Watford between 2001 and 2011. This takes three main forms: one family living in overcrowded housing; a “hidden household” within a main household which is seeking its own home; and single people living within one dwelling.

#### “New” client groups emerging

- This may include young people leaving university with debt who are unable to afford housing costs in Watford.

## **5. Consultation Methods**

#### Stakeholder consultation exercises

Two special stakeholder events on the homelessness review and strategy took place on 21 March and 4 July 2013. The homelessness review and strategy has been circulated to the following individuals and organisations:

- All Watford Borough Council’s Elected Members
- Watford Borough Council Environmental Health Team
- Watford Borough Council Housing Benefits Team
- Three Rivers Council
- Hertfordshire County Council – Accommodation Solutions Team
- Watford Community Housing Trust

- Hightown Praetorian and Churches Housing Association
- Aldywck Housing Association
- Thrive Homes
- Sanctuary Housing
- Home Group
- Origin Housing Association
- St Mungo's
- Watford Citizens Advice Bureau
- Watford Job Centre Plus
- Watford New Hope Trust
- Watford YMCA
- Watford GROW
- Herts Young Homeless
- Watford's Women's Centre
- Watford's Children's Centre

The Housing Team has responded to all recommendations made by stakeholder organisations in the consultation exercise.

#### Monitoring data and research

The Housing Team has compiled information on the protected characteristic groups from the following sources in order to assist the analysis:

- Housing Register figures
- Monitoring figures on households seen by the Prevention and Advice Team.
- P1E form statistics on homelessness decisions, acceptances and reasons for homelessness.
- Monitoring exercises on households in temporary accommodation.
- Monitoring figures on households using the Nightshelter and other emergency accommodation services.
- Monitoring figures on female homelessness
- A research project on households made homeless by Parental Eviction.
- A research project on households made homeless by the ending of a privately rented tenancy.
- A meeting with the Residents Focus Group at the YMCA.

## **6. The Impact Analysis**

The assessment is being carried out on the proposed Watford Homelessness Review and Strategy. The review and strategy incorporates the aim of providing a service by which households who are actually or potentially homeless are offered appropriate assistance. The review and strategy will enable Watford Borough Council to comply with its statutory obligations under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 and the Homelessness Act 2002.

The Watford Homelessness Review and Strategy will have an impact on the following equality groups: age (younger and older), disability, pregnancy and

maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, and marriage and civil partnership. It will not have any identified impact on the following equality groups: sexual orientation and gender reassignment.

The impact analysis acknowledges how the impacts of homelessness might be negative upon protected characteristic groups. It then states how the recommendations of the Homelessness Review and Strategy and the implementation of the action plan can make the impacts positive.

<b>AGE</b>																										
<b>PRIORITY GROUP WITHIN THE HOMELESSNESS REVIEW AND STRATEGY</b>	<b>HOW THE IMPACT OF HOMELESSNESS, RELATED LEGISLATION AND THE HOMELESSNESS SERVICE MIGHT BE NEGATIVE</b>	<b>MEASURES INCLUDED IN THE HOMELESSNESS REVIEW AND STRATEGY NECESSARY TO FACILITATE POSITIVE IMPACTS.</b>																								
General information	<p><u>Homeless applicants accepted for assistance 2012-2013 – heads of households</u></p> <table> <tr><td>Aged 16-24 years old</td><td>39.6%</td></tr> <tr><td>Aged 25-44 years old</td><td>49.4%</td></tr> <tr><td>Aged 45-59 years old</td><td>9.7%</td></tr> <tr><td>Aged 60-64 years old</td><td>-</td></tr> <tr><td>Aged 65-74 years old</td><td>1.3%</td></tr> <tr><td>Aged 75+ years old</td><td>-</td></tr> </table> <p><u>Population of Watford aged 16 and over, Census 2011</u></p> <table> <tr><td>Aged 16-24 years old</td><td>13.8%</td></tr> <tr><td>Aged 25-44 years old</td><td>42.6%</td></tr> <tr><td>Aged 45-59 years old</td><td>22.5%</td></tr> <tr><td>Aged 60-64 years old</td><td>5.6%</td></tr> <tr><td>Aged 65-74 years old</td><td>8.0%</td></tr> <tr><td>Aged 75+ years old</td><td>7.5%</td></tr> </table>	Aged 16-24 years old	39.6%	Aged 25-44 years old	49.4%	Aged 45-59 years old	9.7%	Aged 60-64 years old	-	Aged 65-74 years old	1.3%	Aged 75+ years old	-	Aged 16-24 years old	13.8%	Aged 25-44 years old	42.6%	Aged 45-59 years old	22.5%	Aged 60-64 years old	5.6%	Aged 65-74 years old	8.0%	Aged 75+ years old	7.5%	<p>Younger people are definitely more highly represented in the persons and households accepted for assistance under homelessness legislation.</p> <p>Older people are very under-represented among the homelessness population. Therefore older people will not be the focus of specific measures within the homelessness review and strategy. Measures to provide housing and services for older people will be included in the main housing strategy.</p>
Aged 16-24 years old	39.6%																									
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Households homeless because of parental eviction.	<p>Young people feature disproportionately highly among households who are homeless. The biggest reason for homelessness in Watford is young people being asked to leave the family home by their parents.</p> <p>A research project into 102 households accepted as homeless because of parent eviction between January 2011 and December 2012 found the age distribution to be as follows:</p> <table> <tr><td>16-19 years old</td><td>21.7%</td></tr> <tr><td>20-24 years old</td><td>37.0%</td></tr> <tr><td>25-29 years old</td><td>26.1%</td></tr> <tr><td>30-34 years old</td><td>5.8%</td></tr> <tr><td>35-39 years old</td><td>5.1%</td></tr> <tr><td>40-44 years old</td><td>2.9%</td></tr> <tr><td>Age not known</td><td>1.4%</td></tr> </table>	16-19 years old	21.7%	20-24 years old	37.0%	25-29 years old	26.1%	30-34 years old	5.8%	35-39 years old	5.1%	40-44 years old	2.9%	Age not known	1.4%	<p>Measures which aim to facilitate positive impact upon young people are:</p> <p>Task 1: Herts Young Homeless Schools Project.  Task 2: Implementation of the HARI protocol  Task 4: Review of the Housing Advice Offer  Task 5: Home visits programme  Task 8: Training and employment opportunities with Job Centre Plus  Task 12: Defining a new Private Rented Sector Offer  Task 16: Introduce an Emergency Fund with Watford Credit Union.</p>										
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Age not known	1.4%																									

<p>Households homeless because of the ending of a privately rented tenancy</p>	<p>Younger people also feature disproportionately highly among households who have become homeless because of the ending of a privately rented tenancy.</p> <p>A research project into 31 households accepted for assistance because of the ending of a privately rented tenancy between 2010 and 2010 found the age distribution to be as follows:</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>16-17 years old</td> <td>-</td> </tr> <tr> <td>18-19 years old</td> <td>2.2%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>20-24 years old</td> <td>13.0%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>25-29 years old</td> <td>13.0%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>30-34 years old</td> <td>28.3%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>35-39 years old</td> <td>15.2%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>40-44 years old</td> <td>21.7%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>45-49 years old</td> <td>-</td> </tr> <tr> <td>50-54 years old</td> <td>6.5%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>55+ years old</td> <td>-</td> </tr> </table>	16-17 years old	-	18-19 years old	2.2%	20-24 years old	13.0%	25-29 years old	13.0%	30-34 years old	28.3%	35-39 years old	15.2%	40-44 years old	21.7%	45-49 years old	-	50-54 years old	6.5%	55+ years old	-	<p>Measures which aim to facilitate a positive impact upon young people are:</p> <p>Task 2: Implementation of the HARI Protocol.  Task 3: Prevention of illegal eviction  Task 4: Review of the Housing Advice Offer  Task 5: Home Visits Programme  Task 12: Defining a new Private Rented Sector Offer.  Task 16: Pilot Emergency Fund with Watford Credit Union.</p>
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55+ years old	-																					
<p>Households in temporary accommodation</p>	<p>As young people are very highly represented among the homeless population, they are also highly represented among residents of temporary accommodation for homeless families.</p>	<p>Measures which aim to facilitate positive impacts upon young people are:</p> <p>Task 2: Implementation of the HARI protocol  Task 8: Training and employment opportunities with Job Centre Plus.  Task 11: Expand portfolio of good standard temporary accommodation options.  Task 16: Pilot Emergency Fund with Watford Credit Union.</p>																				
<p>Single persons with an element of vulnerability</p>	<p>A lot of younger people may have a high degree of vulnerability, especially young people with learning disabilities, young people with physical disabilities and young people who have been in local authority care. They may have been asked to leave home by their parents. Often do not have priority need.</p> <p>Single people can be affected by the Local Housing Allowance rate restrictions in the private rented sector – the amount of LHA capped at single room rate.</p>	<p>Measures which aim to facilitate positive impacts upon young people are:</p> <p>Task 1: Implementation of the HARI Protocol.  Task 4: Review of the Housing Advice Offer.  Task 6: Single Homelessness Project implementation.  Task 7: Hospital Discharge Protocol.  Task 8: Training and employment opportunities with Job Centre Plus.  Task 9: Herts Young Homeless Dual Diagnosis Project.  Task 10: Re-launch of the Prevention of Single Homelessness Group (PoSH).  Task 13: New housing options for single females without</p>																				

		dependants. Task 14: Watford New Hope Trust – Street Outreach Work Task 16: Pilot Emergency Fund with Watford Credit Union.
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<b>DISABILITY</b>		
<b>PRIORITY GROUP WITHIN THE HOMELESSNESS REVIEW AND STRATEGY</b>	<b>HOW THE IMPACT OF HOMELESSNESS, RELATED LEGISLATION AND THE HOMELESSNESS SERVICE MIGHT BE NEGATIVE</b>	<b>MEASURES INCLUDED IN THE HOMELESSNESS REVIEW AND STRATEGY NECESSARY TO FACILITATE POSITIVE IMPACTS.</b>
General information	<p>According to the Census 2011:</p> <p>~ In April 2011 7.6% of the population of Watford (6,831 persons) had a disability which limited their day to day activities a little.</p> <p>~ In April 2011 6.0% of the population of Watford (5,469 persons) had a disability which limited their day to day activities at lot.</p> <p>Between April 2008 and March 2013 the following totals of disabled people were deemed to have priority need and were accepted for assistance under homelessness legislation:</p> <p>Physical disability = 26 persons Mental disability = 17 persons</p>	
Households homeless because of parental eviction.	Households in these priority groups usually have children. These households can contain members who are suffering from a physical or mental disability, adults or children.	Measures which aim to facilitate a positive impact upon disabled people:
Households homeless because of the ending of a privately rented tenancy.		Task 12: Defining a new Private Rented Sector. This task will aim to procure a broader range of privately rented accommodation for households in housing need, including accommodation which is suitable for households with a form of disability..
Households in temporary accommodation.	Disabled people with physical disabilities often require housing which is specially adapted for their needs.	<p>Measures which aim to facilitate a positive impact upon disabled people:</p> <p>Task 11: Expand portfolio of good standard temporary accommodation. This task will aim to procure a broader range of temporary accommodation for households in housing need, including accommodation which</p>

		is suitable for households with a form of disability.
Single persons with an element of vulnerability.	<p>A high proportion of homeless households consists of single person households.</p> <p>People with mental health issues may find it more difficult to find new accommodation if their tenancy ends</p> <p>People with a physical disability may experience difficulty in funding accommodation which is suitable for their needs.</p> <p>Disabled people in housing need may be less able to gain employment which enables them to fully cover the cost of Affordable Rents. Flexible and part-time working is often the most appropriate form of employment for this customer group.</p>	<p>Measures which aim to facilitate a positive impact upon disabled people are:</p> <p>Task 6: Single Homelessness Project implementation in order to provide good quality accessible accommodation.</p> <p>Task 7: Hospital Discharge Protocol.</p> <p>Task 8: Training and employment opportunities with Job Centre Plus.</p> <p>Task 9: Herts Young Homeless Dual Diagnosis Project.</p> <p>Task 14: Watford New Hope Trust – Street Outreach Work</p>

<b>PREGNANCY AND MATERNITY</b>		
<b>PRIORITY GROUP WITHIN THE HOMELESSNESS REVIEW AND STRATEGY</b>	<b>HOW THE IMPACT OF HOMELESSNESS, RELATED LEGISLATION AND THE HOMELESSNESS SERVICE MIGHT BE NEGATIVE</b>	<b>MEASURES INCLUDED IN THE HOMELESSNESS REVIEW AND STRATEGY NECESSARY TO FACILITATE POSITIVE IMPACTS.</b>
Households homeless because of parental eviction.	<p>A high proportion of households in these priority groups are households which contain a pregnant member and/or have children.</p> <p>There is high demand for an increased supply of larger family-sized homes in Watford. The Census 2011 has shown that there has been a significant rise in the number of children aged up to the age of four years between 2001 and 2011.</p>	<p>Measures which aim to facilitate a positive impact upon households affected by pregnancy and maternity are:</p> <p>Task 1: Implementation of the HARI Protocol. This includes actions by registered providers.</p> <p>Task 11: Expand portfolio of good standard temporary accommodation options.</p> <p>Task 12: Define a new Private Rented Sector Offer.</p>
Households homeless because of the ending of a privately rented tenancy.		
Households in temporary accommodation.		
Single persons with an element of vulnerability.	No assessed implications.	



<b>RACE</b>																																
<b>PRIORITY GROUP WITHIN THE HOMELESSNESS REVIEW AND STRATEGY</b>	<b>HOW THE IMPACT OF HOMELESSNESS, RELATED LEGISLATION AND THE HOMELESSNESS SERVICE MIGHT BE NEGATIVE</b>	<b>MEASURES INCLUDED IN THE HOMELESSNESS REVIEW AND STRATEGY NECESSARY TO FACILITATE THE POSITIVE IMPACTS.</b>																														
General Information	<p>People from minority ethnic groups are more widely represented in the homelessness population than the Watford population as a whole.</p> <p><u>Homeless applicants 2012-2013</u></p> <table> <tr><td>White British</td><td>54.5%</td></tr> <tr><td>White Irish</td><td>1.9%</td></tr> <tr><td>White Other</td><td>9.1%</td></tr> <tr><td>Black African-Caribbean</td><td>18.8%</td></tr> <tr><td>Asian</td><td>9.7%</td></tr> <tr><td>Mixed Race</td><td>4.5%</td></tr> <tr><td>Other</td><td>0.7%</td></tr> <tr><td>Not stated</td><td>0.7%</td></tr> </table> <p><u>Population of Watford, Census 2011</u></p> <table> <tr><td>White British</td><td>73.3%</td></tr> <tr><td>White Irish</td><td>2.5%</td></tr> <tr><td>White Other</td><td>5.5%</td></tr> <tr><td>Black African-Caribbean</td><td>6.4%</td></tr> <tr><td>Asian</td><td>8.4%</td></tr> <tr><td>Mixed Race</td><td>3.4%</td></tr> <tr><td>Other</td><td>0.6%</td></tr> </table>	White British	54.5%	White Irish	1.9%	White Other	9.1%	Black African-Caribbean	18.8%	Asian	9.7%	Mixed Race	4.5%	Other	0.7%	Not stated	0.7%	White British	73.3%	White Irish	2.5%	White Other	5.5%	Black African-Caribbean	6.4%	Asian	8.4%	Mixed Race	3.4%	Other	0.6%	<p>Further research needs to be carried out to assess and analyse the breakdown of household types within each ethnic group. Among homeless households accepted for assistance there is notable over-representation among the following groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Black African-Caribbean</li> <li>• White Other</li> </ul>
White British	54.5%																															
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Households homeless because of parental eviction.	<p>It is usual practice for some households from particular ethnic groups to have larger families. These larger families usually require homes with three or four bedrooms</p>	<p>Measures which aim to facilitate a positive impact upon all ethnic groups are:</p> <p>Task 12: Define a new Private Rented Sector Offer. This will involve attempts to procure larger homes.</p>																														
Households homeless because of the ending of a privately rented tenancy.																																
Households in temporary accommodation.	<p>It is usual practice for some households from particular ethnic groups to have larger families. These larger families usually require homes with three or four bedrooms.</p>	<p>Measures which aim to facilitate a positive impact upon all ethnic groups are:</p> <p>Task 11: Expand portfolio of good standard temporary accommodation options.</p>																														
Single persons with an element of vulnerability.	<p>At present there is no specific information on how the impact of homelessness, related legislation and the homelessness service might be negative upon single persons from any particular ethnic groups who have an element of vulnerability.</p>	<p>Measures which aim to facilitate a positive impact upon all ethnic groups are:</p> <p>Task 4: Review of the Housing Advice Offer.</p>																														

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<b>RELIGION AND BELIEF</b>																				
<b>PRIORITY GROUP WITHIN THE HOMELESSNESS REVIEW AND STRATEGY</b>	<b>HOW THE IMPACT OF HOMELESSNESS, RELATED LEGISLATION AND THE HOMELESSNESS SERVICE MIGHT BE NEGATIVE</b>	<b>MEASURES INCLUDED IN THE HOMELESSNESS REVIEW AND STRATEGY NECESSARY TO FACILITATE POSITIVE IMPACTS.</b>																		
General information	<p>According to the Census 2011, the percentages of the population in each religious group was as follows:</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Christian</td> <td>54.1%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Buddhist</td> <td>0.7%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Hindu</td> <td>4.8%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Jewish</td> <td>1.1%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Muslim</td> <td>9.9%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sikh</td> <td>0.6%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other</td> <td>0.5%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>None</td> <td>21.4%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Not stated</td> <td>6.7%</td> </tr> </table>	Christian	54.1%	Buddhist	0.7%	Hindu	4.8%	Jewish	1.1%	Muslim	9.9%	Sikh	0.6%	Other	0.5%	None	21.4%	Not stated	6.7%	When people apply for assistance as homeless they are not asked to state their religious belief. For this reason we are not able to make a detailed judgement about impact of the homelessness strategy on different religious groups.
Christian	54.1%																			
Buddhist	0.7%																			
Hindu	4.8%																			
Jewish	1.1%																			
Muslim	9.9%																			
Sikh	0.6%																			
Other	0.5%																			
None	21.4%																			
Not stated	6.7%																			
Households homeless because of parental eviction.	<p>From the Census information, it is reasonable to conclude that improvements to services and ensuring that they are made accessible to the whole community will bring benefits to a wide range of faith groups in Watford.</p> <p>It is sometimes practice for households from particular religious groups to have larger families. These larger families usually require homes with three or four bedrooms which are in very high demand.</p> <p>Some religious groups are not able to pay interest on loans which might be available for expenses such as rent deposits or rent in advance.</p>	Measures which aim to facilitate a positive impact upon members of different religious groups are:																		
Households homeless because of the ending of a privately rented tenancy.		Task 4: Review of the Housing Advice Offer.																		
Households in temporary accommodation.		<p>Task 11: Expand portfolio of good standard temporary accommodation options.</p> <p>Task 12: Defining a new Private Rented Sector Offer.</p> <p>A measure has not yet been devised for this issue.</p>																		
Single persons with an element of vulnerability	At present there is no specific information on how the impact of homelessness, related legislation and the homelessness service might be negative upon single persons from any particular religious groups who have an element of vulnerability.	<p>Measures which aim to facilitate a positive impact upon members of religious groups are:</p> <p>Task 4: Review of the Housing Advice Offer.</p>																		

<b>SEX (GENDER)</b>																												
<b>PRIORITY GROUP WITHIN THE HOMELESSNESS REVIEW AND STRATEGY</b>	<b>HOW THE IMPACT OF HOMELESSNESS, RELATED LEGISLATION AND THE HOMELESSNESS SERVICE MIGHT BE NEGATIVE</b>	<b>MEASURES INCLUDED IN THE TENANCY STRATEGY NECESSARY TO FACILITATE POSITIVE IMPACTS</b>																										
Households homeless because of parental eviction	<p><u>Composition of the applicant household</u> (research exercise on 102 households accepted for assistance as homeless because of parental eviction, January 2011 – December 2012)</p> <table> <tr><td>Single male</td><td>2.9%</td></tr> <tr><td>Single female + pregnant</td><td>20.6%</td></tr> <tr><td>Single female + 1 child</td><td>37.3%</td></tr> <tr><td>Single female + 2 children</td><td>2.9%</td></tr> <tr><td>Single female + 3 children</td><td>1.0%</td></tr> <tr><td>Couple + pregnant</td><td>7.8%</td></tr> <tr><td>Couple + 1 child</td><td>23.5%</td></tr> <tr><td>Couple + pregnant + 1 child</td><td>2.0%</td></tr> <tr><td>Couple + 2 children</td><td>1.0%</td></tr> <tr><td>Couple + 3 children</td><td>1.0%</td></tr> </table> <p><u>Heads of applicant households</u> (research exercise on 102 households accepted for assistance as homeless because of parental eviction, January 2011 – December 2012)</p> <table> <tr><td>Single males</td><td>2.9%</td></tr> <tr><td>Single female</td><td>61.8%</td></tr> <tr><td>Couple</td><td>35.3%</td></tr> </table>	Single male	2.9%	Single female + pregnant	20.6%	Single female + 1 child	37.3%	Single female + 2 children	2.9%	Single female + 3 children	1.0%	Couple + pregnant	7.8%	Couple + 1 child	23.5%	Couple + pregnant + 1 child	2.0%	Couple + 2 children	1.0%	Couple + 3 children	1.0%	Single males	2.9%	Single female	61.8%	Couple	35.3%	<p>Females are disproportionately highly represented as heads of households who have been made homeless because of parental eviction. Therefore they will be the focus of measures to prevent and tackle homelessness among households who have become homeless because of parental eviction.</p> <p>Measures which aim to facilitate a positive impact among Females are:</p> <p>Task 1: Herts Young Homelessness Schools Project  Task 2: Implementation of the HARI Homelessness Protocol  Task 4: Review of the Housing Advice Offer  Task 5: Home Visits programme  Task 8: Training and employment opportunities with Job Centre Plus.  Task 12: Defining a new Private Rented Sector offer.  Task 16: Pilot Emergency Fund with Watford Credit Union.</p>
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Households homeless because of the ending of a privately rented tenancy.	<p><u>Composition of the applicant household</u> (research exercise on 31 households accepted for assistance as homeless because of the ending of a privately rented tenancy, 2010-2012).</p> <table> <tr><td>Single male</td><td>3.2%</td></tr> <tr><td>Single female + pregnant</td><td>3.2%</td></tr> <tr><td>Single female + 1 child</td><td>32.3%</td></tr> <tr><td>Single female + 2 children</td><td>2.9%</td></tr> <tr><td>Couple + 1 child</td><td>19.4%</td></tr> <tr><td>Couple + 2 children</td><td>9.7%</td></tr> <tr><td>Couple + 3 children</td><td>6.5%</td></tr> <tr><td>Couple + 4 children</td><td>6.5%</td></tr> <tr><td>Couple + 1 adult child + 1 child</td><td>3.2%</td></tr> <tr><td>Couple + 1 adult child + 2 children</td><td>3.2%</td></tr> </table> <p><u>Heads of applicant households</u> (research exercise on 31 households accepted for assistance</p>	Single male	3.2%	Single female + pregnant	3.2%	Single female + 1 child	32.3%	Single female + 2 children	2.9%	Couple + 1 child	19.4%	Couple + 2 children	9.7%	Couple + 3 children	6.5%	Couple + 4 children	6.5%	Couple + 1 adult child + 1 child	3.2%	Couple + 1 adult child + 2 children	3.2%	<p>Females are highly represented as heads of households who have been made homeless because of the ending of a private rented tenancy. Therefore, they will be the focus of measures to prevent and tackle homelessness among households who have become homeless because of the ending of a privately rented tenancy.</p> <p>Measures which aim to facilitate a positive impact among Females are:</p> <p>Task 2: Implementation of the HARI Homelessness Protocol  Task 3: Prevention of illegal eviction  Task 4: Review of the Housing Advice Offer  Task 5: Home Visits programme</p>						
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	<p><i>as homeless because of the ending of a privately rented tenancy, 2010-2012).</i></p> <p>Single male                      3.2%  Single female                    48.4%  Couple                                48.4%</p>	<p>Task 12: Defining a new Private Rented Sector offer.  Task 16: Pilot Emergency Fund with Watford Credit Union.</p>
Households in temporary accommodation	<p>Because of their high representation among heads of households accepted for assistance under homelessness legislation, Females are more highly represented among residents of temporary accommodation.</p>	<p>Measures which aim to facilitate a positive impact upon Females are:</p> <p>Task 2: Implementation of the HARI Homelessness Protocol  Task 8: Training and employment opportunities with Job Centre Plus.  Task 11: Expand portfolio of good standard temporary accommodation options.  Task 16: Pilot Emergency Fund with Watford Credit Union.</p>
Single persons with an element of vulnerability.	<p>Males are disproportionately highly represented among homeless single person households. This is reflected from statistics from stakeholder organisations such as the YMCA, GROW and Watford New Hope Trust.</p> <p>There is a disproportionately high level of demand for one bedroom accommodation from single males without dependants. This includes both those males who have not yet entered a relationship, or those who have been in a relationship which has now ended (it is common practice for children to remain living with their mother when a relationship ends).</p> <p>If Affordable Rents – in terms of new build and conversion – are concentrated in smaller accommodation, males are more likely to be affected.</p> <p>There is also evidence that Single Women without dependants do not have access to sufficient sources of help if they become homeless.</p>	<p>Measures which aim to facilitate a positive impact upon Males are:</p> <p>Task 2: Implementation of the HARI Homelessness Protocol  Task 4: Review of the Housing Advice Offer  Task 6: Single Homelessness Project implementation.  Task 7: Hospital Discharge Protocol.  Task 8: Training and employment opportunities with Job Centre Plus.  Task 9: Herts Young Homeless Dual Diagnosis Project.  Task 10: Re-launch of the Prevention of Single Homelessness Group (PoSH).  Task 13: New housing options for single females without dependants.  Task 14: Watford New Hope Trust – Street Outreach Work  Task 16: Pilot Emergency Fund with Watford Credit Union.</p> <p>Measures which aim to facilitate a positive impact upon Females are:</p> <p>Task 13: New housing options for single females without dependants.</p>

<b>MARRIAGE AND CIVIL PARTNERSHIP</b>								
<b>PRIORITY GROUP WITHIN THE HOMELESSNESS REVIEW AND STRATEGY</b>	<b>HOW THE IMPACT OF HOMELESSNESS, RELATED LEGISLATION AND THE HOMELESSNESS SERVICE MIGHT BE NEGATIVE</b>	<b>MEASURES INCLUDED IN THE HOMELESSNESS REVIEW AND STRATEGY NECESSARY TO FACILITATE THE POSITIVE IMPACTS.</b>						
Households homeless because of parental eviction.	<p><b>Heads of applicant households</b> (<i>research exercise on 102 households accepted for assistance as homeless because of parental eviction, January 2011 – December 2012</i>)</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Single male</td> <td>2.9%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Single female</td> <td>61.8%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Couple</td> <td>35.3%</td> </tr> </table>	Single male	2.9%	Single female	61.8%	Couple	35.3%	<p>Measures which aim to facilitate a positive impact upon households affected by Marriage or Civil Partnership are:</p> <p>Task 12: Defining a new Private Rented Sector offer.</p>
Single male	2.9%							
Single female	61.8%							
Couple	35.3%							
Households homeless because of the ending of a privately rented tenancy.	<p><b>Heads of applicant households</b> (<i>research exercise on 31 households accepted for assistance as homeless because of the ending of a privately rented tenancy, 2010-2012</i>).</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Single male</td> <td>3.2%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Single female</td> <td>48.4%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Couple</td> <td>48.4%</td> </tr> </table>	Single male	3.2%	Single female	48.4%	Couple	48.4%	<p>Measures which aim to facilitate a positive impact upon households affected by Marriage or Civic Partnership are:</p> <p>Task 3: Prevention of illegal eviction Task 12: Defining a new Private Rented Sector offer.</p>
Single male	3.2%							
Single female	48.4%							
Couple	48.4%							
Households in temporary accommodation	No assessed implications							
Single persons with an element of vulnerability.	No assessed implications.							

<b>SEXUAL ORIENTATION</b>		
<b>PRIORITY GROUP WITHIN THE HOMELESSNESS REVIEW AND STRATEGY</b>	<b>HOW THE IMPACT OF HOMELESSNESS, RELATED LEGISLATION AND THE HOMELESSNESS SERVICE MIGHT BE NEGATIVE</b>	<b>MEASURES INCLUDED IN THE HOMELESSNESS REVIEW AND STRATEGY NECESSARY TO FACILITATE THE POSITIVE IMPACTS.</b>
	Information on this Protected Characteristic among homeless households is not yet collected	
Households homeless because of parental eviction.	No assessed implications	

Households homeless because of the ending of a privately rented tenancy.	No assessed implications	
Households in temporary accommodation.	No assessed implications	
Single persons with an element of vulnerability.	There is anecdotal evidence that some single young people may be asked to leave the family home because of this issue.	Measures which aim to facilitate a positive impact upon persons whose housing circumstances are affected by Sexual Orientation are:  Task 4: Review of the Housing Advice Offer Task 6: Single Homelessness Project implementation. Task 14: Watford New Hope Trust – Street Outreach Work

#### **GENDER REASSIGNMENT**

<b>PRIORITY GROUP WITHIN THE HOMELESSNESS REVIEW AND STRATEGY</b>	<b>HOW THE IMPACT OF HOMELESSNESS, RELATED LEGISLATION AND THE HOMELESSNESS SERVICE MIGHT BE NEGATIVE</b>	<b>MEASURES INCLUDED IN THE HOMELESSNESS REVIEW AND STRATEGY NECESSARY TO FACILITATE THE POSITIVE IMPACTS.</b>
General information	Information on this Protected Characteristic among homeless households is not yet collected	
Households homeless because of parental eviction.	No assessed implications	
Households homeless because of the ending of a privately rented tenancy.	No assessed implications	
Households in temporary accommodation.	No assessed implications	
Single persons with an element of vulnerability.	No assessed implications.	

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## **7. Conclusion**

Based on local evidence of housing need, Watford Council's Homelessness Review and Strategy aims to strike an appropriate balance between overall housing needs and statutory objectives, and the needs and aspirations of those in the protected characteristics groups under the Equality Act 2010.

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**Report to:** Cabinet  
**Date of meeting:** 7<sup>th</sup> October 13  
**Report of:** Head of Corporate Strategy and Client Services  
**Title:** Abandoned Shopping Trolley Collections

*The Mayor has agreed that this report can be taken as a late item. The reason for urgency is that the Council needs to implement the charge at the earliest opportunity following the consultation process outlined in the report.*

## 1.0 SUMMARY

1.1 Through usual Street Cleansing operations shopping trolleys are regularly found across the Borough which have been abandoned by their users. In order to preserve the cleanliness of Watford these trolleys are collected by the relevant Street Cleansing team.

Schedule 4 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 entitles Local Authorities to make a charge to the owners of those trolleys for the collection and return of abandoned shopping trolleys. In order to be able to exercise the powers granted under schedule 4 the Council must first resolve to apply the schedule to its area under section 99 of the Act.

1.2 As the Council's street cleansing service is now operated on it's behalf by Veolia this report is also seeking Cabinets agreement for Veolia to operate the powers under schedule 4 including collecting the applicable charges (detailed in section 3.6 of this report) from the relevant trolley owner on the council's behalf.

## 2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 Cabinet resolves that Schedule 4 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 will apply to the Borough of Watford and notes that Schedule 4 will be effective in the Borough on 8 January 2014.

2.2 That Veolia Environmental Services Ltd implement and operate the provisions of Schedule 4 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 on behalf of Watford Borough Council.

### **Contact Officer:**

For further information on this report please contact: Jamie Sells, Client Manager, Waste and Recycling  
telephone extension: 8496 email: [jamie.sells@watford.gov.uk](mailto:jamie.sells@watford.gov.uk)

**Report approved by:** Lesley Palumbo, Head of Corporate Strategy and Client Services

### 3.0 DETAILED PROPOSAL

3.1 Schedule 4 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 allows councils to charge for the collection and return of abandoned shopping trolleys to their owners. However this schedule is only operative in a council's area if the council resolve to apply it under section 99 of the same Act.

3.2 If a council is minded to apply the schedule it must first consult with those persons who would be affected by the application of Schedule 4 namely any businesses that use shopping trolleys, and any landowners that might also be affected.

3.3 In order to comply with consultation requirements a letter setting out the Councils position has been sent to all premises to both the Store Managers and Company Secretaries who facilitate the use of their own shopping trolleys within the Borough (Appendix1). The letter has also been sent to rail operators as key owners of private land in the Borough whereby abandoned trolleys are found or reported.

The Council has only had one formal response to those consultation letters sent out from Marks & Spencers, Watford, regarding the application of a delivery charge for abandoned the abandoned trolleys

3.4 Should Cabinet agree to apply Schedule 4 to the Borough it will need to be advertised at least one newspaper circulating within the Borough. In addition the operation of the Schedule cannot come into force until at least 3 months from the date the resolution is passed. In this case it will be 8 January 2014.

3.5 Proposed charges for the seizure of abandoned trolleys are detailed below and would also be subject to VAT

- 3.6
- 1) Trolley seized and removed from:
    - i) Highway or Open Space      £31.00
    - ii) Water body or aquatic margins      £42.00
    - iii) Private land      £48.00 (includes Notice to landowner/occupier)
  - 2) Storage      £6.20 (up to the disposal date maximum 42days storage)
  - 3) Disposal      £1.80 (taking account of current materials prices and handling/carriage costs).

In addition to the above and subject to service commitments, it is proposed that owners wishing to have their trolleys delivered to their local premises may do so at an additional charge, including VAT, as may be agreed with the Veolia.

## 4.0 IMPLICATIONS

### 4.1 Financial

The Contract with Veolia Environmental Services details that a charge can be made for the collection of shopping trolleys found abandoned within the Borough. This charge is designed to both encourage premises to deter the event and absorb associated costs for this service. Should a decision be made not to apply Schedule 4 associated costs will not be seen.

- 4.1.1 The Head of the Shared Finance Service comments that there is already a budget for Income from Trolley Collection. Any additional income will be taken into account when the budget is set for the 2014/15 financial year.

### 4.2 Legal Issues

- 4.2.1 The Head of Democracy and Governance comments that the legal implications are contained within the body of the report. If Cabinet does not resolve to apply Schedule 4, trolleys will continue to be collected but no charge can be levied and Veolia may look to the Council for any additional costs for this service.

### 4.3 Equalities

There are no associated Equalities issues related to this report

### 4.4 Potential Risks

Potential Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Overall score
Trolley owners object to pay for collection	2	2	4

### 4.5 Staffing

- 4.5.1 There are no staffing issues relating to this report

### 4.6 Accommodation

- 4.6.1 There are no accommodation issues relating to this report

### 4.7 Community Safety

- 4.7.1 The application of Schedule 4 of the EPA Act 1990 will see that Watford's Street Scene continues to be kept at the best standard with associated costs being met.

### 4.8 Sustainability

- 4.8.1 The application of Schedule 4 of the EPA Act 1990 will provide a sustainable and long term solution to the collection of abandoned trolleys

## Appendices

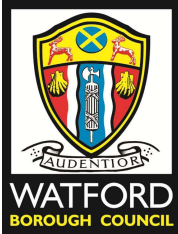
Appendix 1 – Consultation letter sent to all premises within the Borough which have shopping trolleys as part of their operations

Background Papers

No papers were used in the preparation of this report

File Reference

None



Wiggenhall Depot • Wiggenhall Road  
Watford • Hertfordshire • WD18 OFB  
Tel 01923 226400 Fax 01923 278100  
Website [www.watford.gov.uk](http://www.watford.gov.uk)  
Head of Service – Alan Gough

enquiries to Jamie Sells  
phone no 01923 278496  
our reference sch4/EPA/con4  
your reference  
date 04 October 2013

Dear Company Secretary

**Re: Consultation and Review - Abandoned shopping and luggage trolleys, Schedule 4 Environmental Protection Act 1990, as amended.**

Watford Borough Council has recently outsourced its Waste and Recycling, Street Cleansing and Parks and Open Spaces services and their joint administrative functions to its partner, Veolia Environmental Services (UK) Ltd., who will continue to deliver and administer those services locally from Wiggenhall Depot.

The Council now wishes to consult and review its previous operation of Schedule 4 with a view to making a further resolution to apply Schedule 4 of the EPA 1990 as amended under its new service arrangements.

As before, the implementation of Schedule 4 will allow the Council, via its authorised partner, to seize any retail or luggage trolley abandoned on the highway or other open public place without Notice, or from other private land after serving Notice on the land owner, provided that the land concerned does not form part of the trolley owner's land designated for trolley use or storage.

Where the owner of a seized abandoned trolley is readily identifiable Schedule 4 requires that its owner be given Notice of its seizure within 14 days of that action, setting out where the trolley can be collected from and the fees and charges payable to cover the cost of its seizure and storage. After a minimum of 6 weeks from seizure any uncollected trolley may be legally disposed of as seen fit by the Council and its authorised partner who under the provisions of the Act may then recover from the trolley owner all incurred seizure, storage and disposal costs, as reasonably reflect the actual cost of operating Schedule 4, as a debt due.

The new resolution charges that would apply for the seizure, storage and disposal of each abandoned trolley, inclusive of VAT, are currently proposed as follows:

1) Trolley seized and removed from:

- i) Highway or open space £31.00
- ii) Water bodies and margins £42.00
- iii) Private land £48.00 (includes Notice to landowner/occupier)



- 2) Storage £6.20 up to the notice expiry period and then an additional £4.80/week or part week for any requested storage extension agreed thereafter
- 3) Disposal £1.80 (taking account of current materials prices and handling/carriage costs).

Where the trolley owner fails to pay any debt due on first demand then the owner may be liable to further debt recovery charges as may be incurred and claimed by the Council and/or its partner.

In addition to the above and subject to service commitments, it is also proposed that owners wishing to have their trolleys delivered back to their local premises may do so at an additional charge as may be agreed with the Council's partner.

Schedule 4 also permits separate partnership arrangements between the Council and individual trolley owners for the collection and return of abandoned trolleys. Where individual partnerships are developed with the Council, either directly or as consented via its authorised partner, then the ability to recover charges directly under the provisions of Schedule 4 will no longer apply to those specific partnerships.

You are therefore invited to comment on the above proposed application of Schedule 4, with Veolia Environmental Services (UK) Ltd acting as its authorised service delivery and administrative partner. These may include any views you may have on developing partnership arrangements.

Please ensure that any comments you may have are received by no later than 4 p.m. on 6 September 2013 to help inform officers and Cabinet at its meeting on 7 October 2013. All consultation responses should be sent to the address given below:

Mr Jamie Sells  
Client Manager Waste and Recycling  
Corporate Strategy and Client Services  
Watford Borough Council  
Town Hall  
Watford  
Herts  
WD17 3EX

Or by email to: [jamie.sells@watford.gov.uk](mailto:jamie.sells@watford.gov.uk) with the subject title 'EPA Schedule 4 consultation response'.

Until the effective resolution date all abandoned trolleys may be collected by their owners free of all seizure, storage and disposal charges, allowing the Council and Veolia to monitor the effect of that relaxation and to foster open dialogue with the potential for partnership development during the consultation period.

A consultation letter will also be issued to your store management operating within the Borough of Watford.

Yours sincerely



Alan Gough  
**Head of Community & Customer Services**  
Watford Borough Council