



CABINET

Monday, 7th September, 2015

7.00 pm

Town Hall Watford

Publication date: 27 August 2015

CONTACT

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CABINET MEMBERSHIP

Mayor	D Thornhill	(Chair)
Councillor	D Scudder	(Deputy Mayor)
Councillors	S Johnson, I Sharpe, P Taylor 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**

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 July 2015 to be submitted and signed.

Copies of the minutes of this meeting are usually available seven working days following the meeting.

(All minutes are available on the Council's [website](#).)

- 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. A REVIEW OF THE CEMETERY SERVICE IN WATFORD** (Pages 5 - 112)

A report of the Environmental Services Client Manager (Parks and Streets)

A petition in the following terms has also been received:

“Petition calling for weekend burials in Watford Cemeteries

We the undersigned call upon Watford Council make it possible for burials to occur in Watford cemeteries on weekends and bank holidays. This is to ensure that the service meets the needs of all residents of Watford and in a distressful time is not made worse by a delay in burials. We further call on the council to ensure that there is suitable cemetery provision as a matter of urgency as space within the existing cemetery is running out.”

At the time of publication of the agenda, the petition contained over 2000 signatures. This includes the requisite 30 signatures from Watford residents.

6. VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR COMMISSIONING FRAMEWORK 2016-2019 (Pages 113 - 130)

A report of the Head of Corporate Strategy and Client Services

This report asks Cabinet to confirm

- 1) the commissioning priorities from 2016 and
- 2) key areas of focus within the stated priorities.

7. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (Pages 131 - 206)

A report of the Head of Regeneration and Development

This report includes a review of the performance of the Strategy (2010-2015), the new Economic Development Strategy 2015-2020 and a supporting Action Plan to 2018.

*PART A

Report to: Cabinet

Date of meeting: 7 September 2015

Report of: Environmental Services Client Manager (Parks and Streets)

Title: A Review of the Cemetery Service in Watford

1.0 **SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report sets out the initial findings of a review of Watford's cemetery service and presents recommendations for taking these forward.
- 1.2 The review was established to build a detailed understanding of the present service, to highlight current challenges and issues and to provide direction on potential changes that would deliver an improved service for Watford residents. A resource from the Institute of Crematorium and Cemetery Management (ICCM) has supported the review to provide external challenge and expertise, including recommendations on industry best practice. The ICCM report is attached (see Appendix I).
- 1.3 In addition, engagement was undertaken with a range of stakeholders to provide an opportunity for the community to provide feedback on the current service and to share their views on future provision (see Appendix II).
- 1.4 The broad scope of the review and the complexity of the range of issues raised means that, at this stage, further work is required to develop a comprehensive Cemetery Strategy and action plan that will address all areas identified. Therefore, this report is seeking approval to progress the review to the next stage (a detailed strategy and action planning).
- 1.5 However, the report is also looking to agree specific recommendations relating to four priority areas highlighted in both the ICCM report and through the engagement undertaken with stakeholders. These areas are covered in detail in this report and are as follows:
- The provision of a weekend and bank holiday burials service for those communities where there is a religious / cultural requirement to bury the deceased as soon as possible
 - The need to address the limited availability of space remaining within Watford (North Watford Cemetery in particular) for burials
 - The requirement to change the regulations relating to memorials
 - The need to review staffing cover and office opening hours and undertake further consultation on these areas

2.0 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Cabinet is recommended to:

- 2.1 Note the contents of the ICCM Cemetery Report (Appendix I) and the range of issues raised during engagement with local stakeholders (Appendix II) and that the majority of these will be taken forward in a Cemetery Strategy and detailed action plan but with the issues identified in 2.2, 2.3, 2.4 and 2.5 below to be acted on immediately.
- 2.2 Note the review findings in relation to introducing a weekend and bank holiday (to be defined) burial service for those residents and community groups who require burials to be carried out as soon as possible after death for religious or cultural reasons and agree to pursue the option of working with the Garden of Peace charity to provide this service. See 3.3.1 to 3.3.4.
- 2.3 Note the findings of the review in relation to the decreasing amount of burial space available at North Watford Cemetery and agree that a policy be explored which limits burials to Watford residents only but that will also allow for some degree of flexibility and officer discretion in certain circumstances (to be defined). The same policy to also provide details of other options which could be explored to maximise remaining burial space for the benefit of Watford residents. A report detailing this policy, including any financial implications, to be brought to Cabinet for final approval. See 3.3.5 to 3.3.7.
- 2.4 Note the findings of the review concerning the need to standardise the dimensions of new memorials erected within Watford cemeteries and agree the recommendation in 3.3.8 on the dimensions of memorials. This to be approved and implemented immediately. A full review of the cemetery regulations and development of any appropriate enforcement policy will also be undertaken. Cabinet is asked to agree the delegation to the Head of Service in consultation with the Portfolio Holder to approve changes to the regulations and policy.
- 2.5 Note the review findings regarding the need to improve the resilience of the cemetery service and allow for more customer focused office hours by reviewing staff cover and agree to further consultation being undertaken. See 3.3.9.

Contact Officer:

For further information on this report please contact:

Paul Rabbitts, Environmental Services Client Manager (Parks and Streets)

Telephone extension: 8250 Email: paul.rabbitts@watford.gov.uk

Report approved by: Lesley Palumbo, Head of Corporate Strategy and Client Services

3.0 Background

Watford Borough Council currently manages and maintains four cemeteries in the borough on behalf of local residents. These are:

- North Watford Cemetery:
- Vicarage Road Cemetery and
- 2 closed cemeteries (All Saint's Cemetery and St Mary's Church Grounds – grounds maintenance only).

North Watford Cemetery is the only site with space available for new graves, although this availability is estimated to be limited to around 7-9 years, depending on future demand.

The day to day management of the service (bookings, liaison with Funeral Directors, records maintenance, community engagement) is managed by an on-site Cemetery Manager who also lives on site at North Watford Cemetery. The grounds maintenance and cemetery operations element (such as grave preparation) has been managed by the council's strategic partner, Veolia, since it was outsourced in 2013.

Whilst the service has long been an integral part of the town, it is an area of the council's work where we have had limited knowledge in terms of customer perceptions, including from the bereaved, funeral directors and cemetery visitors. Additionally, there is clearly a need to explore a range of emerging issues and to better understand current and future requirements to ensure that the council is well placed to deliver an effective and efficient service that meets the needs of local people and the Watford community.

3.1 Establishing a review of Watford's cemetery service

3.1.1 A comprehensive review of the council's cemetery service was agreed as part of the council's work programme for 2015 (spanning the end of the 2014/15 financial year, with reporting of initial findings set for autumn 2015). The review took as its starting point the Scrutiny Review of Services for the Deceased which was carried out by Watford BC members in 2010. A number of recommendations were made as a result and these were assessed as to whether they had been achieved or should be considered within the current review – see below:

- That the Council continues to provide a wide range of services for the deceased, even though it only has a statutory responsibility to provide for the burial and cremation of any deceased person without relatives or other means of arranging burials or cremation. This was subject to a financial viability recommendation.
(Update: Achieved)
- That the Council should aim to make the cemeteries self-financing in the next five years.
(Update: Not achieved – but income generation opportunities are highlighted in the ICCM report and will be progressed in the Cemeteries Strategy)

- That the pricing structure be reviewed to ensure that it is simple to understand and that the costs of individual services reflect the cost to the Council.
(Update: Partly achieved)
- That officers look further at the areas of the Charter for the Bereaved which could be easily implemented at Watford in order to improve the Council's national ranking, for example, providing a written explanation of 'buying' a grave to purchasers.
(Update: Partly achieved – ranking has improved. The ICCM review has highlighted further areas for improvement that will be included in the Cemeteries Strategy)
- That the Council investigates the feasibility of extending the times during which burials can take place. This would mean operating an 'on call' system on Saturdays for the digging staff. The extra cost to this service would need to be reflected in a revised pricing structure.
(Update: Not achieved – this area is highlighted within the review and options for the delivery of an extended service and associated costs to be explored)
- That the Council continues with the policy of not allowing the pre-purchase of graves.
(Update: Achieved)
- That officers research the logistics of allowing shroud burials within the cemeteries and put in place the requisite measures for shroud burials to be catered for in the future.
(Update: Achieved)
- That the Council considers developing the woodland areas of North Watford Cemetery to allow for the scattering of ashes there.
(Update: Under consideration)
- That green burial grounds be included in the planning for future cemetery sites.
(Update: Under consideration)
- That the Council starts future planning to identify a future site for the cemetery within the next few years due to the scarcity of available land and the cost (at least £1 million).
(Update: Under consideration)

3.1.2 In February 2015, the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM) was appointed to support the review of the council's service. The ICCM provides policy and best practice guidance to burial and cremation authorities and is, therefore, an experienced and knowledgeable resource for the council to work with on the review. It can provide appropriate challenge, sign post best practice and consider where improvements could enhance the service and the resident / customer experience.

3.1.3 The parameters for the review were agreed as:

Management

- Staffing and Cover issues
- Relationship with West Herts Crematorium (WHC)
- Hours of opening
- The visitor experience
- ICT and Records Management
- Lone working policy
- Income opportunities
- Updating of Regulations for Management of Cemeteries
- Muslim and other faith Burials (weekend burials)

Perception

- Consultation and Engagement – identifying service demands
- Benchmarking
- Marketing of Cemeteries

Infrastructure and Environment

- Quality of the grounds and cemetery as a green space
- Building infrastructure
- Growth and expansion opportunities – the need for space and Green Burials

3.1.4 The ICCM delivered an initial draft report in August 2015 (Appendix I). It is an extensive exploration of the current cemetery service and identifies a number of key issues that need to be developed into short, medium and long term actions. It is recommended that, as the next stage of the review, these are taken forward through a detailed Cemetery Strategy and action plan.

3.2 Engagement on the cemetery review

3.2.1 The review has been supported by engagement with a range of stakeholders:

- Funeral Directors and Memorial Masons
- The Muslim community
- The Gypsy and Traveller community
- Watford Borough Council members
- Wider Watford community

This engagement confirmed a number of the issues / concerns / proposals for improvement identified in the ICCM review. An overview of the actions identified from the feedback is attached (Appendix II). It also helped confirm the areas in the ICCM report, which require immediate action and for which this report is seeking approval. These are outlined in 3.3.

3.3 Priority areas for action

3.3.1 Introduction of a weekend and bank holiday burial service in Watford cemeteries

This area is covered in detail within the ICCM review and also featured as a

major focus of the engagement with both the Muslim community and Watford Borough Council members.

In addition, the council received a petition with over 2,000 signatures in June 2015 calling for weekend and bank holiday burials in Watford cemeteries and for consideration to be given to space issues within the council cemeteries.

Limited provision on a Saturday has been available to meet the requirements for those residents and community groups who require burials to be carried out as soon as possible after death for religious or cultural reasons – in Watford this is primarily the Muslim community. However, Saturday burials are not an established part of the service and cannot, therefore, be guaranteed when required by the community. This is because current staffing resources (both Watford BC and Veolia) are set at levels to provide sufficient Monday to Friday service cover. Saturday cover is accommodated if staff are available and prepared to work outside of contracted hours.

The review was, therefore, tasked with finding a sustainable solution that meets the needs for an extended service. This extended service would be required for Saturday, Sunday and bank holiday burials.

3.3.2 Demand for Muslim burials overall

As part of identifying options for the delivery of a weekend / bank holiday service for the Muslim community, the review considered the recent number of Muslim burials undertaken to gauge the possible extent of demand. This is detailed below with some analysis of the figures for additional context. The figures are for residents and non-residents.

Year	No. of Full Burials	No. of Muslim Burials	No. of Muslim Burials on a Saturday*	No. of Muslim Burials on a Monday**
2010	175	38	4	3
2011	144	28	2	4
2012	152	26	0	4
2013	169	39	2	2
2014	166	41	1	5
2015	122	35	0	5

* This figure does not represent all requests received for Saturday burials just those that the current service was able to accommodate

** Monday burials could indicate a death over the weekend whilst the service is closed

Whilst the demand is not high in terms of numbers, the council acknowledges the impact on the Muslim community of not having a guaranteed response to requests and that demand might be higher when an extended service is introduced.

3.3.3 Options for delivering a weekend and bank holiday burial service

Taking into account the figures outlined in 3.3.2. and the feedback from the Muslim community and Watford Borough Council members, a number of options

for delivering a weekend and bank holiday burial service to meet the needs of the Muslim community have been explored within the review. These include:

Option 1:

Commissioning the Gardens of Peace charity to provide the service for Watford's cemetery service

This is a registered Muslim charity, which, as well as running its own Muslim cemetery in Ilford, provides a weekend service for St Albans Council. The council hands responsibility to Gardens of Peace to provide burials for the Muslim community (the community liaise with Gardens of Peace directly when a need arises) at the weekend. An additional fee is charged by the Gardens of Peace, which is paid on top of the burial fee charged by the council. St Albans Council has not had to call on the service on many occasions since it was instigated three years ago but its experience of Gardens of Peace is good. A similar arrangement would be proposed for Watford.

This option has a number of benefits including:

- the experience of the providers and their understanding of religious /cultural and statutory requirements
- it would be relatively quick to action and bring into operation
- it requires no additional resource / investment from Watford BC

Option 2:

Watford BC / Veolia to provide the service

To achieve this option, additional resources would need to be employed by both the council and Veolia. Discussions with Veolia (see Appendix III for an overview of Veolia's response to these discussions) have confirmed that the current staffing structure would not provide the resilience required in terms of allowing for holiday cover, sickness etc and that in order to achieve the council's requirements, there would need to be additional staff employed and possibly changes to terms and conditions for existing staff. Whilst the ICCM report provides a rough estimate of what the cost might be for the extended service, this only covers stand by costs (the assumption made is that existing staff would be sufficient to provide the cover) and does not include the costs of employing and training additional staff.

For this option to be progressed, a robust business case with full costings would need to be worked up by the council and Veolia. Whilst some of the cost would be offset by burial fees, it is unlikely that the full costs would be offset by the demand for the service.

Whilst the options has benefits including:

- experienced, qualified staff who know the service and have a good understanding of religious /cultural and statutory requirements
- staff who have a good knowledge of the cemetery service in Watford

there are issues with the option beyond that of the cost of additional staff, which include the time it would take to implement (recruitment, negotiating changes to

the Veolia contract and staff terms and conditions, training).

Option 3:

Explore partnerships with adjacent local authorities

A benchmarking exercise with other authorities indicated that many have arrangements in place for weekend burials (although not necessarily bank holiday burials). Further exploration indicates that in many cases, the service is very seldom used and so has not been fully tested to clarify whether the needs of the community are being met. As indicated above, St Albans Council's preferred option is being investigated for implementation in Watford but there might be other authorities that Watford could partner with. Costs at this stage are unclear as is the appetite of other authorities to share services.

Benefits of this option include:

- Potential for quick implementation
- Less costly than Option 2

Option 4

Facilitate additional land in the borough for a dedicated Muslim cemetery

This option was raised by the Muslim community. It is not a short term solution as it would require further exploration in terms of identifying suitable land, understanding the viability of using the land for cemetery purposes and for looking at options for how the site would be managed.

3.3.4 In order to facilitate an effective extended burial service to meet the needs of the Muslim community, the Gardens of Peace option is the preferred option to pursue. It will deliver the community's requirement for a responsive, 'out of hours' service that can be achieved relatively quickly compared with the other options explored. The council is in contact with Gardens of Peace and discussions have started on a potential partnership with Watford BC.

3.3.5 Preserving burial space in Watford cemeteries

The council's Local Plan recognises that cemetery space within Watford is limited (North Watford cemetery is the only site available for new graves). This reflects the national picture, where a number of local authorities are facing a similar problem to Watford in terms of space running out but little or no remaining open space on which to site a new cemetery. As there are no sites within Watford that could meet long term demand with the current rates of burial, it is recommended that policies (as outlined in the ICCM report and in 3.3.6 below) are explored to make the best use of available space.

Although there is no statutory requirement for the council to provide cemetery space, there is, nevertheless, a need to ensure that there is sufficient infrastructure, including cemeteries, as part of the plan making process. With the proposed amendments to policies being explored as outlined below, it is recommended that forecasts for available burial space to 2031 are re-profiled. Adjoining districts will also be contacted to test availability elsewhere. With this additional work, there should be no impact on the potential soundness of Local Plan 2.

3.3.6 **Limiting burials to Watford residents only**

The Watford cemetery service is provided for the benefit of Watford residents. The cemetery service is, however, open to anyone (albeit the cost of burials for non-residents is higher than that for residents). Over the years, the council has been willing to provide this service for people who live outside the borough but with the issue of available space running out within 7-9 years and, currently, no definitive option for where a new cemetery could be located, the proposal to explore limiting burials to Watford residents is now being considered. To implement a change to current arrangements, officers will be required to explore developing an appropriate policy for approval. Within this policy, there would need to be flexibility for exceptional cases (for example, a proven local connection such as a partner buried within Watford) where discretion would be applied to a non-resident's request. The policy would also need to set out financial implications.

3.3.7 It is proposed that the policy on limiting burials to Watford residents only forms part of a wider policy that covers all identified measures to preserve / make the most of current burial space within Watford cemeteries. This would include a full audit of space availability and how space is currently designated. This policy to be presented to Cabinet for approval by February 2016.

3.3.8 **Memorial regulations**

The current regulations relating to memorials are out of date and hinder the consistent and effective application of an acceptable height and width for memorials that meet the needs of the bereaved.

Five foot is now a standard height for memorials and it is proposed to set this as the new maximum height for Watford cemeteries. This increased height is important to certain groups within the community. In terms of width, this needs to remain at 3 foot for a single grave and up to a maximum of 7 foot for a double grave. All memorials must be erected by a professional memorial mason.

If approval is given for the revised memorial dimensions, the associated new regulations will be implemented immediately and apply to the erection of all new memorials; it will not be applied retrospectively. However, in order to avoid the past situation when little, or no, enforcement was undertaken when memorials were erected that did not comply with regulations, these new regulations will be enforced fairly and consistently. A policy on enforcement will be developed.

3.3.9 **Staff cover and office hours**

The current cemetery service in terms of day to day management is reliant on one member of council staff – the cemetery manager. As outlined in the ICCM report the cemetery manager works a 37 hour week and also occasionally works on Saturdays. When the cemetery manager is on leave, attending training or is unexpectedly ill, cover is provided by a Veolia employee who is undergoing training via the ICCM. This cover provides a basic service and comes at an additional cost to the council and relies on the Veolia member of staff being available at short, medium and long term notice.

Cover has also recently been provided by West Herts Crematorium as part of a Service Level Agreement but, again, cannot always be guaranteed.

The current level of staff resource means that the service has limited resilience and the quality of the service is compromised in areas such as office cover, which is not available if the cemetery manager is conducting a burial or is engaged in other cemetery business away from the office.

It is proposed that staff cover is reviewed to ensure improved resilience and customer experience of the service, including changes to office opening hours.

4.0 **IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 **Financial**

4.1.2 The Head of Strategic Finance comments that there are a range of financial implications identified within the report to deliver the priority areas outlined.

At this stage the detailed costings for the recommendations are not known but, where they cannot be met within existing budgets, growth bids will have to be put forward for approval.

The financial implications of delivering a weekend / bank holiday burial will be dependent on the final solution adopted. The recommendation to pursue the Gardens of Peace option should be cost neutral to the council but other options are likely to require additional revenue spend, which would need to be met through a growth bid and be approved as part of the budget setting process.

The financial implications of any proposed policy on limiting burials to Watford residents will be considered as the policy is developed and will be included in the budget setting process.

Any increase in staff cover will need to be put forward as a growth bid and considered within the council's overall medium term financial strategy, although securing an additional resource would reduce the payments currently made to Veolia to provide cover for the cemetery manager.

4.2 **Legal Issues (Monitoring Officer)**

4.2.1 The Head of Democracy and Governance comments that any revision of the cemetery policy will require to be considered in terms of the council's statutory duties under the Equalities Act 2010 and an Equality Impact Analysis (EIA) has been developed to address those matters referred to in recommendations 2.2 and 2.4 (see Appendix IV). An EIA for the remainder of the recommendations will be developed as these are progressed.

Consideration will also need to be given to the council's procurement rules in obtaining additional providers to run an enhanced service. Should it be likely that Veolia is required to assist with the provision of an enhanced service the current contract with them will need to be varied.

4.3 Equalities

4.3.1 An initial EIA has been developed alongside the review to address the issues raised in 2.2 and 2.4 (see Appendix IV). As these are progressed the EIA will be reviewed. As individual elements are progressed further EIAs will be developed to ascertain the equalities implications of proposals and to ensure the council's duties under the Equality Act 2010 are considered and equality impacts identified.

4.4 Risk

4.4.1 The Environmental Services Client team will develop a detailed risk register for the Cemeteries Strategy and action plan which will set out all the current risks and identify the mitigating actions needed to manage the risks. This will continue to be monitored and updated throughout the life of the new Strategy.

In terms of the priority areas identified in this report:

Potential Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Overall score
Unable to secure a weekend / bank holiday burial service for Watford	2	4	8
Unable to mitigate current lack of staff resource / cover	2	3	6
Unable to develop a policy to support the preservation / best use of remaining burial space	2	4	8
Unable to secure the necessary resource to provide additional resilience	1	4	4

4.5 Staffing

4.5.1 The ICCM report highlights a number of issues related to staffing, ranging from cover, developmental and strategic work, ICT, data collection, records management. This report seeks approval to review the current level of resource as an initial priority. Staff consultation will be undertaken.

4.6 Accommodation

4.6.1 The office accommodation / storage / income generation options will be explored as part of the Cemetery Strategy development.

4.7 **Community Safety**

4.7.1 Issues of security have been considered as part of this review.

- Appendix 1: ICCM Review of Watford Cemeteries - FINAL 2015
- Appendix II: Cemetery Review. Overview of engagement issues
- Appendix III: Veolia report Cemetery Review Operational Considerations
- Appendix IV: Equality Impact Analysis on Cemetery Review – initial recommendations

Institute of Cemetery & Crematorium Management



A report for Watford Borough Council



***A Review of the Cemetery Service in
Watford***

**Martin Birch, FICCM(Dip)
August 2015**

A REVIEW OF THE CEMETERY SERVICE FOR WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

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A REVIEW OF THE CEMETERY SERVICE FOR WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

Executive Summary

The service provide by Watford Borough Council in their cemeteries service is generally very good. There are dedicated, experienced and well trained staff in post who clearly care about the level of service they provide and who are committed to not only providing the highest level of service they can but also in working towards improvements to the service in the future.

The core activities of the service are well provided such as grounds maintenance and grave digging. The service does however need to consider modernising its service in some areas and improve on its accessibility to the public and overall customer experience.

There are a number of income generating opportunities that have been identified which could not only help move the service into a more financially favourable position but would also provide additional services and benefits to the bereaved.

This review has also examined some key issues currently affecting the cemetery service in Watford. This includes consideration around an enhanced out of hours burial service and the need to update to the current Cemetery regulations. These issues together with many others identified in the original brief have been addressed to provide a transparent and unbiased overview based on experience and current best industry practice.

This review has identified a number of issues and recommendations that would enhance the already good service currently provided at Watford. Whilst there is

much to consider it is strongly recommended that this report and the recommendations contained within it form the basis for a bespoke **Watford Cemeteries Strategy** which would provide a clear direction of travel for the service and enable delivery of a number of actions over future years and furthermore ensure the service is positioned to continually improve. This strategy should be structured over the long term with short, medium and long term objectives included that are reviewed annually and form part of the Councils key aims to ensure that it can provide the very highest standard of what is a very sensitive service that is utilised by many of the local population every year. Structured properly and endorsed by Elected Members such a document will prove to be invaluable in the future improvement of the Cemetery service.

It has been a genuine pleasure to visit Watford and meet the staff and management responsible for the service and the ICCM would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the staff for their time and assistance in providing support and information to assist with this review.

Martin Birch FICCM(Dip)

August 2015

Background & Introduction

In March 2015 Watford Borough Council requested that the ICCM undertake a review of its cemetery service and provide a detailed report and recommendations to further improve and modernise the service.

This report covers all of the points identified in the original brief and provides specific recommendations for the Authority to consider

Watford Borough Council have stated in their brief that:

'The service is one of the most important aspects of service provision that we provide, yet it is an area we currently know little about in relation to what the customer perceives of it, including "the bereaved", funeral directors, cemetery visitors. The Council now wishes to carry out a full review of this important area that will be used to shape the service taking into account current and future needs'.

This review will cover the following subject headings as defined by Watford Borough Council:

Management

- Staffing and Cover issues;
- Relationship with West Herts Crematorium (WHC);
- Hours of opening;
- The visitor experience;
- ICT and Records Management;
- Lone working policy;

- Income opportunities;
- Updating of Regulations for Management of Cemeteries; and
- Muslim and other faith Burials (weekend burials).

Perception

- Consultation and Engagement – identifying service demands;
- Benchmarking; and
- Marketing of Cemeteries.

Infrastructure and Environment

- Quality of the grounds and cemetery as a green space

Watford Borough Council provide a burial service through its two main cemeteries located at Vicarage Road and North Watford and also maintains and manages 2 closed sites at All Saints Cemetery and St Mary's Church Grounds.

The grounds maintenance at the sites is of a very good standard and the staff associated with this work should be congratulated for their efforts. Both North Watford and Vicarage Road sites were extremely well presented and welcoming. No obvious issues were apparent, bins were emptied and no litter was seen around the site.

Veolia currently hold the contract with Watford Borough Council to provide Grounds Maintenance across the Borough after it was outsourced in 2013. This extends to both the grounds maintenance at the cemeteries and the grave digging functions provided.

The day to day management of the service is provided by an onsite manager based at North Watford Cemetery who is

responsible for all of the key elements of the service including bookings for funerals, dealing with the public, maintaining statutory cemetery records, marking and identifying graves for excavation, dealing with the grounds staff and monitoring of the contract with Veolia.

Key Statistical Information

Sites: 4 No. – (1) North Watford Cemetery; (2) Vicarage Road Cemetery; (3) All Saints Cemetery;(Grounds Maintenance only); (4) St Mary’s Church Grounds (Grounds Maintenance Only).

Average No of Burials Per Year: 160 Full Burials 27 Cremated Remains

Services Offered: Full Burials; Cremated Remains Burials

Population: 93,700

No of Registered Deaths in Watford 2013: 695

Current Death rate: 0.74% per year

Part 1 Management

Staff and Cover Issues

At present, the Cemetery Manager is responsible for all aspects of cemetery management and works a 37 hour week as well as some Saturday working. However, when she is on leave, attending training or is unexpectedly ill, cover is provided by a former colleague who is undergoing training via the ICCM but is now employed by Veolia. This cover is generally effective but comes at a cost and does not provide cover when the Manager is on site attending to funerals and also relies on the Veolia colleague being available at short, medium and long term notice. Cover has also recently been provided by West Herts Crematorium as part of the SLA but again cannot always be guaranteed.

Brief response – *to look at current cover arrangements and assess staffing needs as part of ensuring a more comprehensive service is provided for the bereaved, funeral directors, members of the public and cemetery visitors.*

On visiting North Watford Cemetery and discussing this issue with the Manager it is clear that the current arrangements are hampering the provision of a better service for the bereaved and key service users of Watford's cemeteries.

As a lone worker the Manager is required to close and lock the office at various times throughout the day to either attend burials, meet with visitors or deal with any other issue outside of the office which also includes visiting and attending other sites.

In this modern age the current arrangements can seem antiquated and not those expected by residents of a busy and progressive Borough. While the office is closed visitors with enquires need to wait outside

until the manager returns, the telephone is not answered (however an answer phone service is in place), this can lead to a direct impact on the bereaved if a funeral director is trying to book or confirm a burial time on their behalf.

A further issue is that of covering the service during periods of sickness and leave. Whilst arrangements are in place to cover leave in some instances this can be problematic. The current options are a member of staff contracted to Veolia however the cost for this service is £180.00 per day (£900 per week), an alternative option is the use of West Herts Crematorium Staff.

It would appear that neither of the 2 options above are 'guaranteed' in any way. There is a service level agreement in place between West Herts Crematorium and Watford Borough Council which states that WHC '*will endeavour to provide holiday and sickness cover when required subject to availability and sufficient notice*'. There is no charge for this service. Veolia do not appear to have a similar SLA in place but do charge a significant fee if their staff are utilised to manage the cemetery service.

It is clear that alternative arrangements should be considered to ensure that during periods of absence from the office by the manager (either short or long term) a degree of continuity in the service can be maintained and a full time and professional service offered.

However, whilst there is clearly a case to increase the staff within the service it is arguable as to whether an additional full time post could be justified given the numbers of funerals occurring each year. Additional staff resources however would assist in addressing some of the other current issues within the service such as backfeeding of historical records and implementing income regenerating initiatives.

Relationship with West Herts Crematorium (WHC)

The Council recently signed an SLA with WHC as detailed above. Considerable technical expertise is available locally within WHC and there are opportunities that have been identified for closer working relationships with them to assist and support the Council in relation to the day to day management of the Cemetery Service.

Brief response – *to look at how closer working relationships can be developed with WHC as well as wider management opportunities for a more comprehensive service at NWC and VRC.*

A good and healthy working relationship exists between West Herts Crematorium and Watford cemeteries service. Both managers clearly have a high level of mutual respect for each other and the services they both provide, however both realise that their skills and background lie in cremation and burial services respectively.

The manager at West Herts Crematorium is regularly available to offer help and support to the cemeteries manager when asked. She has an extensive knowledge of dealing with the bereaved having worked in the industry for around 20 years.

The service level agreement currently in place to provide cover when required by WHC to Watford Cemeteries is neither robust nor ideal in its current format.

The manager at WHC provides the cover herself when requested and if she is available, unfortunately this is not always convenient, particularly when looking to cover short notice sickness, and she has been known to alter working arrangements at WHC in order to accommodate Watford cemeteries requests.

When the manager is absent from WHC she needs to ensure adequate cover exists at the crematorium and often can only cover part days for Watford. Whilst the WHC manager has more than adequate skills to deal with the bereaved on a day to day basis her operational knowledge of cemeteries is limited, this is further compounded by not being regularly placed at NWC in order to gain more knowledge and experience about the service. It is also noted that WHC receive no financial contribution for the cover they provide.

The current situation is unacceptable from both a customer service perspective and a business perspective for West Herts Crematorium and a more robust solution needs to be considered. As identified above an additional member of staff to work alongside the manager at NWC would help alleviate this issue with the current service level agreement remaining in place to provide cover in extreme circumstances.

Hours of Opening

Current opening hours for the cemetery are:-

<i>Month</i>	<i>Open</i>	<i>Close</i>	<i>Month</i>	<i>Open</i>	<i>Close</i>
<i>January</i>	<i>9am</i>	<i>4pm</i>	<i>July</i>	<i>9am</i>	<i>8pm</i>
<i>February</i>	<i>9am</i>	<i>4pm</i>	<i>August</i>	<i>9am</i>	<i>8pm</i>
<i>March</i>	<i>9am</i>	<i>6pm</i>	<i>September</i>	<i>9am</i>	<i>7pm</i>
<i>April</i>	<i>9am</i>	<i>7pm</i>	<i>October</i>	<i>9am</i>	<i>6pm</i>
<i>May</i>	<i>9am</i>	<i>7pm</i>	<i>November</i>	<i>9am</i>	<i>4pm</i>
<i>June</i>	<i>9am</i>	<i>8pm</i>	<i>December</i>	<i>9am</i>	<i>4pm</i>

Office opening times are however 9.30am to 2.30pm from Monday to Friday. Office opening hours do not reflect cemetery opening hours and the Cemetery manager as a lone worker often has to balance

administration work, taking bookings, attending funerals as well as the needs and availability to members of the public and funeral directors. Informal feedback has indicated that the office opening hours are not long enough and need to be reassessed. The manager is in the office from 7.30 – 3.00 daily and often sees customers outside office opening times. Calls also come into the office out of office opening times especially for Muslim burials which need to be arranged by 9.00am. Cemetery staff from Veolia are on site from 7.30 am and the manager uses that time to ensure graves are picked and ready for digging before the first burial which can be at 10.00am.

Brief response – *to assess current opening hours against the needs of cemetery users and propose hours of opening based on local benchmarking, best practice and feedback from the local community.*

It is not unusual for cemetery grounds opening times to vary from the cemetery office opening times around the UK. It is generally accepted that during the summer and lighter evenings cemeteries should remain open for longer hours for the benefit of visitors, it is not however necessarily cost effective or essential that the administration and enquiries office remains open for the same hours.

In Watford there is only one office available which is located at North Watford Cemetery. There was an additional office located at Vicarage Road Cemetery however this was closed and converted back to living accommodation some years ago.

The office at North Watford Cemetery opens to the public between the hours of 9:30 am until 2:30 pm Monday to Friday. In addition to this due to the lone worker issue at this site the office can be closed for other periods of time during these hours.

The opening hours are acceptable however not ideal. It could be very frustrating for visitors who have travelled from far away to visit to find the enquiries office closed when they arrive. In addition to this local funeral directors are restricted as to when they can ring to book funerals.

The manager works between the hours of 7:30 am and 3:00 pm Monday to Friday and often deals with phone calls and visitors after these hours. This would indicate a need for longer opening times. It would however be beneficial to undertake consultation with key service users such as funeral directors, religious groups, visitors and memorial masons to gauge their views.

It may be a viable option to extend the office opening hours to something more traditional such as 9:00 am – 5:00 pm Monday to Friday and amend working arrangements or incorporate additional staffing resources to cover the period.

It should be further reviewed if there is a need for the manager to start at 7:30 a.m.. Whilst time is required to undertake administrative work and liaise with grave digging staff this could be done at a later time in the day providing that the office is manned for public enquires and to receive telephone calls.

The Visitor Experience

When visitors arrive at NWC, they park in a small car park by the Cemetery Lodge / Office. The Cemetery office is based in the main Cemetery Lodge where the Manager lives. The office is however perceived to be dated and old-fashioned. It does not appear especially welcoming and as a reception, does not function well.

Brief response – to review the current office environment / reception area and make recommendations for improvements to enable a more welcoming environment for customers and clients.

The entrance to North Watford Cemetery is very welcoming and signage at the entrance is of a high quality and clear to read. Toilets are available to the left, with the office to the right and car parking is clearly signed.



The entrance is nicely landscaped and the high quality of maintenance apparent throughout the site starts here.

On entering the office it is clear that the reception takes the form of a previous room



of the cemetery lodge. Again this is not uncommon around the UK and whilst it does not offer perhaps the best perception of a site does serve its purpose as being a point of contact for the public and is better than no office on site at all.

The office is of a good size and incorporates the



usual desks, PC, telephone, printer and records storage that would be expected in any office environment. There is limited space for people to wait to be seen or any sort of private area which may be required to deal with some more emotional visitors. Most of the records pertaining to the service are stored within this office against the walls in fire proof safes; however it would appear some other non-statutory records are stored elsewhere.

It is essential to stress that Cemetery Records are covered under the Local Authorities Cemeteries Order 1977 Article 9 which states:

(1) A burial authority shall maintain a plan showing and allocating distinctive numbers to—

(a) all graves or vaults in which burials are made after the coming into operation of this order or are known to have been made before that event; and

(b) the grave spaces subject to the specified rights.

(2) A burial authority shall also maintain records, by reference to the numbers in the plan, of—

(a) the burials made after the coming into operation of this order in any graves or vaults; and

(b) the specified rights existing in any graves or vaults, or grave spaces, and the names of the grantees thereof as recorded in the register maintained under Part II of Schedule 2 or in the registers described in paragraph 2(b) of that Part.

The Local Authorities Cemeteries Order 1977 is also clear as to how records should be stored under article 12 which reads:

The following, namely—

- *the plan maintained under article 9(1);*
- *the records maintained under article 9(2);*
- *the register of burials maintained under article 11(1);*
- *any register of burials in the cemetery maintained before the coming into operation of this order;*
- *the record of disinterments maintained under article 11(5);*
- *the register maintained under Part II of Schedule 2;*
- *the registers described in paragraph 2(b) of the said Part II; and*
- *the records of memorials made and kept under paragraph 16 of Schedule 3,*

shall be stored so as to preserve them from loss or damage and be in the charge of the officer of the burial authority appointed for that purpose.

The storage of the records in the fire proof safe is good and compliant, however site plans are not protected in the same way and consideration should be given to this issue urgently.



The reception area is not as welcoming as

would perhaps be wanted by the service but it is clear that the manager has to 'make the best of what she has available'. There are only 2 real options to to improve the current office and reception area.

Option 1 – Refurbish to a modern standard and ensure that adequate storage is provided for all required items



and avoid keeping boxes etc on top of safes and cupboards. Whilst refurbishment would make the area more welcoming, space is clearly the issue and therefore option 2 below should be seriously considered.

Option 2 – Extend the current office area to the left hand side into the garden of the tied accommodation. This could provide an ample storage area for all of the records, plans and other necessary office supplies. This would free up the existing office to be



refurbished as a much more attractive reception area, which would have enough space to provide a small seating/waiting area for families and or a private interview area.

There is no available waiting area for families congregating before a funeral service, whilst the office is not currently suitable to offer this a mourners shelter could be considered to be placed in the corner of the car park close to the office and main entrance as a designated waiting area for those attending funerals. A covered wooden structure would suffice with bench type seating underneath larger enough to provide a waiting area for up to 20 mourners. This would be relatively inexpensive to provide and provides an enhanced service for visitors.

ICT and Records Management

At present, the Cemetery Manager uses the Gower Cemetery Management Software which is backed up locally at NWC by the Cemetery Manager. The current system is not linked into the Council's main frame. Many records are also stored at the cemetery as old paper records and require digitising. They are currently stored in a nearby building opposite the Cemetery Office.

Brief response – *To assess current ICT provision and make recommendations for upgrading the system, backing up and records management.*

North Watford Cemetery has the Epilog system provided by Gower as its electronic administration system. The Gower system is used for the storage of records and recording of bookings, however a manual diary is also used and the information transferred across. The manager states that all records dating back to the late 1990's are held on the computer system and the index data which consists of the name and date of death of the deceased for all other graves has been back fed into the system prior to her appointment, it is not known if all of this data is accurate. The system also holds details of the graves at Vicarage Road Cemetery including the basic indexing data.

Not all of the historical records have been completely backfed into the computerised system. This is work that should be considered which would not only provide a more robust record keeping system but could also in time allow for income generation through making the records available online whereby charges could be made for accessing the information either directly or in partnership with a commercial company who deal with family history and death records.

It is of concern that the Gower system is only backed up locally and the back-up CD's stored in the office. Whilst it is not essential that the Gower system link to the

Councils mainframe it would provide a much better failsafe if the records held on the system were backed up remotely and centrally at an alternative location. Connectivity may be an issue and options should be discussed with the Councils own IT department and Gower around the best options available. At the very least the current back up disks should be stored off site at another location.

The Authority should consider working with the current supplier of the computerised system (Gower) to explore what updates may be available which would help modernise and streamline the current service. Options such as remote bookings available out of hours should be considered to provide a better service to local funeral directors and families. At present if a death occurs on a Friday after 3:00 pm no time can be arranged for a burial until 9:30 am at the earliest on the following Monday. An online system would help but needs to be well managed by the staff.

The Authority may also want to consider further testing of the market and look at other software packages currently available and decide if in their view something more suitable is already available.

Digitising of the plans also needs to be considered. Gower do provide a mapping option to their Epilog system (Epic) and enquiries should be made as to this being integrated with the current operating system. This would not only provide a robust back up of the cemetery plans but also provides additional data that can be utilised by both staff and visitors much easier than photocopying existing section plans.

The Gower system is not used as the only diary for the booking of funerals and a manual diary is utilised. This does offer the manager flexibility to offer times suited to the funeral director however a more structured diary with set times for burials would allow increased booking provision.

Lone Working Policy

The Cemetery Manager currently works at the cemetery primarily as a lone worker. Although the office is based within the manager's residence and Grounds Maintenance operatives are on site daily, the lone working policy for this staff member needs to be reviewed.

Brief Response – *assess the requirements for a lone working policy but also take into account public accessibility, design of the reception and staffing / cover issues as highlighted previously.*

As a Lone Worker the manager is in a vulnerable position in the office should they have to deal with an irate or upset member of the public which can occur when they are affected by grief.

Fortunately no significant incidents have occurred to date. The manager has access through a door to her left directly back into her home which she keeps open whilst she is alone in the office. This she would utilise in the event of an unpleasant situation arising. She is also partly protected by a long desk however this has no screen and would be relatively easy to move.

In terms of access out of the office should the main door be blocked the only option is through the exit into the house to the left. An issue does arise however should the manager be on leave or sickness as this door would then be unavailable and whoever is in the office to provide cover is effectively trapped from exiting the office should the need arise.

There also appears to be no sort of personal alarm system in place to alert anyone else of a problem. There are grounds staff on site employed by Veolia however they are not based in the office but do call in throughout the day.

A review of the layout of the office needs to be completed and should the decision be taken to refurbish and/or extend the final design should consider the health and safety of the staff and in particular acknowledge that staff do have to work alone at this site.

Some sort of alert system should be considered that could inform other staff on site of a potential problem in the office so that they can attend quickly. This would be relatively cheap and easy to implement and whilst it is recognised that no issues have occurred to date prevention is clearly better than cure in regards to the health and safety of staff.

Income Opportunities

The Council derives income from the cemetery service in relation to a range of burial services but with more people turning to cremation, this income stream is under pressure. Charges were recently significantly increased in 2011 but are now in line with average costs elsewhere. Charges are however significantly cheaper than most of the London Boroughs.

Brief Response – *to assess all current income opportunities, pricing structures and any further opportunities for deriving income e.g. family history searches are currently not charged for and provided by the cemetery manager free of charge but take up some time.*

The main sources of income for the service are derived from the sale of Exclusive Rights of Burials and Interment Fees. Other income is received in the form of permit fees for the permission to erect memorials on grave spaces.

The cost for the purchase of Exclusive Rights are trebled for non-residents of the borough, with the exception of one parish area who pay NWC around £25k per year to allow their residents to be charged only resident fees.

Interment fees however are charged at a single rate in all instances regardless of depth to be dug.

It is not clear from the brief provided what the Authority is being charged by Veolia for the provision of gravedigging services it is expected however that the charges are less than the cost charged to the public.



North Watford Cemetery is an attractively and well laid out site and does have the opportunity to provide additional services which could attract a charge. Vicarage Road Cemetery has more limited options given the lack of space within the site but there are still options to consider.

There are no other options for cremated remains except burial or scattering on a grave. Consideration should be given to the provision of above ground niches for cremated remains, there are various suitable locations around the site and also at Vicarage Road Cemetery that could be utilised. Modern niches can accommodate a large number of remains within a very small area and further research should be undertaken and invite suppliers to look at the site and provide ideas and costs.

Clearly a large number of residents choose cremation and would utilise the services of West Herts Crematorium, however they also only have a limited number of memorial options and it would appear that there is a relevant market in the area for alternative options.



There is a large grassed area at the far end of the car park which could potentially be landscaped into a formal garden of remembrance providing a range of memorial options.

It was noted that a number of benches (some of which may well be unauthorised) are in situ in some areas of the cemetery. Again benches could be provided with dedicated memorial plaques on 10 year leases to provide a sustainable income stream. There are some beautiful areas within North Watford Cemetery which would be ideal to place dedicated seating areas which could attract a charge.

Tree dedication schemes could also easily be introduced by using current tree stock and planting new trees in designated areas. A plaque on a post in front of the tree could be provided again on a lease basis for a fixed fee.



It is essential to consider however that the above ideas will only succeed if they are effectively marketed to both the public and funeral directors. It should also be noted that at present a number of the options above including that of Columbaria Niches for the housing of cremated remains is not offered at West Herts Crematorium.

The current price list details a charge for searching records and providing an extract which is £35.00. Not everyone will require an extract and some family history firms may be profiting from NWC records by undertaking research on behalf of paying clients.

A reasonable charge should be introduced for the searching of records and provision of information as several hundred searches are carried out each year by the manager. In the main this information is provided by either email or post, however a charge should be decided on based on the amount of time on average the manager spends undertaking this task. The price needs to be reasonable but should not be seen to be excessive and added value to this element of the service could be introduced with the digitising of plans and backfeeding of data into the computer system, both could be then be given to customers making an enquiry.

Grave maintenance schemes could be introduced however this would be dependent on available staff resources from Veolia to carry out additional works to individual

graves. This could include a range of chargeable services perhaps grouped into Bronze, Silver and Gold services and would range from the basic of a monthly wash down of the memorial, removal of weeds through to additional mowing/weeding, placing fresh flowers on a grave space on specific dates and a photograph sent to the grave owner.

At the entrance to North Watford Cemetery on the left hand side there are public toilets and a small office/mess room currently utilised by staff of Veolia (Park Rangers) however these staff are not connected to the Cemetery Service. This building



is in a prime location to offer ancillary services to the bereaved such as a florist. Exploratory work should be undertaken with local businesses to gauge interest in opening a florist at this site, the Authority could then generate income through a lease agreement.

The Authority sells the exclusive Right of Burial for new graves for a fixed period of time. An option to consider is to use these existing sales to look to both generate income and keep in touch with grave owners (which is particularly useful when dealing with memorial safety issues). A simple exercise of sending out a standard letter to grave owners after a period of 5 years offering to extend the lease period for a further 5 years for a fixed fee could be considered. This letter could also be used to inform service users of any changes or events connected to the cemetery and assist with longer term marketing and build on improving customer relationships.

There are clearly a number of options to be considered that could generate additional income for the service but they will require effective marketing and initial investment for them to be a success.

With the increase in cremation as a choice for the bereaved Watford Borough Council must look to how it can generate income from these families by offering high quality final resting places for cremated remains in local cemeteries.

Updating of Regulations for the Management of Cemeteries

A number of regulations exist for the management of cemeteries in Watford that were adopted many years ago. An example would be the acceptable height of memorial stones which is no longer in line with national ICCM guidance. The adoption of these regulations is some years previously but with no apparent date as to when they became policy. They require a complete review and new policy guidelines re-written in line with current national policy.

Brief Response – *to assess current Regulations and update in accordance with ICCM guidelines.*

It is not clear when the current regulations for Watford Cemeteries were published however it is recommended that a complete re-draft be considered to ensure they are fully up to date.

The inclusion of any regulation should be justified and its purpose clearly stated within the regulations. Best practice is also to undertake a thorough review of cemetery regulations every 3 years to ensure that they remain current and fit for purpose.

The current regulations are in need of a review as in some instances could be seen to be unenforceable or overly restrictive with no justification. They also do not take into account current needs of the bereaved or any modern practices, it is therefore recommended that new regulations are prepared and introduced for the effective management of the service.

Memorial Safety

Whilst a complete review of regulations is required it is essential to raise the issue of memorial safety at this point. Whilst it is recognised that the Authority does undertake memorial safety testing the current regulations do not reflect this issue or specific details around fixing of new memorials therefore a suitable policy on memorial safety should be included in the new regulations.

The issue around safety of memorials has been ongoing since the 1990's when it was discovered that in many cemeteries throughout the UK fixing methods were inconsistent and in some cases very poor which led to memorials becoming dangerous.



Unfortunately there are many reported cases of accidents due to unsafe memorials resulting in injuries but more concerning is that a number of deaths have occurred in cemeteries around the UK due to dangerous memorials falling on children and adults, most recently a death of an 8 year old boy occurred in a Glasgow cemetery in May 2015.

Watford need to ensure that they are managing their memorials safely and in line with current best practice. The ICCM policy document on the Management of Memorials should be adopted by the Authority and a regular memorial inspection scheme implemented to ensure every

memorial is inspected once every 5 years. To compliment this policy the ICCM do provide training to cemetery staff around memorial safety and how to undertake testing and recording under current best practice. This provides an ideal opportunity for relevant staff at Watford to make progress with their memorial safety programme and the workshop will ensure that all the staff involved will be suitably trained and competent in the work they are asked to carry out.

In addition to the above and should new regulations be introduced the Authority should consider a suitable registration scheme for memorial masons or adopt the national register provided by the British Register of Accredited Memorial Masons (BRAMM) to ensure future compliance with industry best practice in the fixing of new memorials in the future.

Addressing Historic Non-Compliance of Regulations

Enforcing regulations in cemeteries is never an easy task due to the sensitivity and emotion attached to such matters. Watford Borough Council must therefore ensure that any new regulations are clear to understand by both the public and Elected Members, and it is elected members and senior officers of the Council who must also be asked to support them at their introduction and in the future if challenges from any areas of the community occur.

In order to be fair and reasonable it is recommended that Watford Borough Council agree a policy on how to deal with any unauthorised items such as memorials that are currently within the sites from this point forward and once the new regulations are implemented. There are 2 basic options that should be considered which are:

- Implement the new regulations once approved and apply them retrospectively. This could obviously cause some upset to bereaved families and visitors particularly if it involves the wholesale removal of unauthorised memorials from graves that may have been in place for a number of years. This would no doubt result in very bad publicity for the service and the Authority and could be seen as an insensitive approach.
- An alternative and more sensitive approach would be to '**draw a line in the sand**' and enforce the new regulations from the date of implementation only. There are of course potential issues with this approach with some users feeling they are being treated unfairly as they may not be permitted options that others using the service are already afforded. In order to counter this the new regulations should include a policy on how to deal with historical issues. An effective policy to consider is to leave any unauthorised items in situ and only deal with them when they become neglected after which time the Authority should photograph the grave, remove all unauthorised items and reinstate the grave back to the standard of the new regulations which would then be subject to those controls in the future. This action should be publicised before implementation to ensure that all cemetery users are aware of the Councils stance.

The second option above is both a practical and effective and can be seen as a reasonable stance for the Authority to take which effectively permits historical unauthorised items to remain but only whilst the grave owner is maintaining them to an acceptable standard.

Having reviewed the current regulations a draft updated version has been provided to officers which covers all of the key issues around cemeteries and their management and includes current best practice and the second option detailed above for implementation. These regulations should be used as a starting point for the service to consider implementing and updated and amended as required to fit the specifics of Watford's Cemetery Service.

Muslim and other Faith Burials (Weekend Burials)

Two issues that require considering. 1) the lack of burial space at NWC as described above and 2) the current lack of 24 hour burials at weekends and bank holidays. An assessment was made in 2013 for out of hours burials and associated issues in relation to cover, demand, costs and opportunities. As the demand was so low and costs prohibitive, this was not pursued. The local Muslim community have asked the Council to consider opportunities for 24 hour out of hours burials and how this could well be provided in Watford. The review should also identify the demand for weekend burials from other groups and consider the matter both as part of the need for burial service provision generally or alternatively as a stand alone exceptional requirement for specific faith groups.

Brief Response – *to assess what opportunities there may be for providing such a service, cost and logistical issues, and local demand. The demand is currently very low and there are alternatives locally but this needs reviewing in line with the increased population growth of other sectors.*

It is essential to remember that the bereaved will have various religious and cultural differences and it is the duty of the Local Authority to take all reasonable steps to accommodate those needs in the provision of its service.

At present it is understood that a burial can usually be accommodated at North Watford cemetery within 24 hours Monday to Friday however only limited provision is offered for Saturday mornings providing the booking is made before noon the previous day and Veolia / WBC staff are available.

It is known that there are Muslim burial sections located in the nearby area at Woodcock Hill Cemetery in Rickmansworth (8 miles) which will cater for weekend and bank holiday funerals and also Carpenders Park Cemetery (6 miles) which provide burials on Saturdays providing a booking is made no later than 12:00 noon the previous day. Therefore there are local options that the Muslim community can consider should North Watford Cemetery not have availability.

There are a number of issues that have to be considered to provide an enhanced burial service outside of the current usual working hours to include weekends and bank holidays. Consultation will be essential in exploring this option, in addition to this cost vs demand must also be taken into account.

Standard Requirements for an Enhanced Out of Hours Burial Service

In order for a burial to take place the death must first be registered with the Registrars of Births Deaths and Marriages in the District where the death occurred. This is a legal requirement under Section 15 of the Births and Deaths Registration Act 1953.

As this process must be completed before burial the Registration Service must be available at weekends and Bank Holidays to carry out the statutory registration process. In addition to this it is usual at Watford for 2 gravediggers and the Cemetery Manager to attend all funerals.

In order to provide an out of hours service Watford Borough Council will need to implement a standby system every weekend and for bank holidays. It is arguable however whether religious holidays such as Christmas Day, Good Friday and Easter Sunday should be included in any agreement.

Standby costs alone would be **significant**, and in addition to this overtime costs would be incurred when staff are called out.

The current staffing levels are also prohibitive in providing this level of service at Watford at present. With only one cemetery manager and 2 grave diggers currently in post this would require all 3 of them to be on call every weekend, in terms of a work/life balance this may be prohibitive and it is unclear if the staff concerned would agree to such a change in their terms. There are also issues of cover for periods of sickness and leave to consider, again with limited numbers of suitably qualified staff on hand to deliver the service managing this may be difficult. Veolia were consulted on operational issues that would be impacted on in delivering an out of hours service and this is attached as an Appendix This highlights 3 areas of operational challenges that are of concern:-

- Operational Challenges – Labour
- Operational Challenges – Mechanical Resource contingency
- Operational Challenges – Management and Administration

Veolia are willing to assist WBC in ensuring that the satisfaction levels within the community relating to the cemetery

service remain high and that wherever possible they help to achieve and surpass local stakeholder's expectations.

The challenge of trying to introduce a weekend and bank holiday burial service within the cemetery would be less challenging for a larger borough with a larger workforce as there would be more capacity for weekend working via overtime. With such a small pool of employees to draw from the challenge for WBC and Veolia collectively would be to find a balance of available human resource that does not incur enormous cost.

The Registration service must also be included in future consultation to ensure they are available to provide the required paperwork outside of normal office hours.

Cemetery users should also be consulted on the provision of extended burial times covering weekends. It should be remembered that for many Sundays are a traditional day to visit loved ones graves and other cemetery users may raise concerns about any changes to the current permitted burial times.

Service Demand

Burial Figures for North Watford Cemetery are detailed below which shows around a fifth of all burials taking place at the site are for the Muslim community. It is known that there are a number of Muslim sects who use the facility, however for the purposes of this report total Muslim numbers have been used including the burial of children to ensure a complete picture is shown.

Year	No. of Full Burials	No. of Muslim Burials	% of Muslim Burials
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2010	175	38	21%
2011	144	28	19%
2012	152	26	17%
2013	169	39	23%
2014	166	41	24%

5 Year Average	160 per year	34 per year (22 Adults 12 Children)	20%
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The above table shows demand for the service to be around 20% of all burials carried out at North Watford Cemetery to be for the Muslim Community, however of those only 9 have been arranged for a Saturday over the last 5 years. The trend however is increasing and in 2014 almost a quarter of all funerals were for the Muslim community.

Whilst there is a clear demand to provide a service for the Muslim Community the number of burials undertaken at weekends as a percentage of total Muslim burials is only 5% of all deaths. It is not clear from the data available whether any requests for weekend burials over the last 5 years have been declined due to operational reasons or regulations.

The average number of Muslim burials is currently 34 per year, it is clearly impossible to state exactly how many funerals will be required at weekends throughout the course of a whole year. The formula to offer a best estimate would be $34 \text{ deaths} \div 12 \text{ months} = 3 \text{ funerals per month}$. It would therefore be a safe estimate to assume at least one of those 3 would require a weekend funeral.

Research should also be undertaken to establish if there is sufficient demand from the wider local population for burials at weekends from other faiths or groups. The results of this may provide a larger issue to be considered by the Authority.

Cost vs Demand

Excluding the issues around staffing resources highlighted by Veolia, in terms of cost vs demand in terms of providing an enhanced service at weekends and Bank Holidays it would be fair to place that cost of the provision against the groups using the service which is likely to make it unaffordable.

Standby payments are set at approximately £27.50 per session. A full out of hours service for Watford would result in 4 staff being required to be on standby namely:

- Funeral Attendant/Cemetery Manager
- Grave Diggers x 2
- Registrar of Births and Deaths (employed by HCC)

The requirement of the 4 staff above are in order to provide an effective service at weekends and bank holidays and it should be made clear that these posts cover 4 different individuals.

The Funeral Attendant/Cemetery manager is required to co-ordinate the booking and ensure staff are available to work. This role will also include preparation of digging instructions, completion of statutory registers and paperwork and overseeing the burial service and dealing with any issues before and during the burial. Given that the service is operating out of normal hours it is essential that an experienced and suitably qualified member of staff is available to undertake these essential duties.

The grave digging staff are obviously required to prepare the grave space on the day of the burial, this may include the excavation of a new grave or dealing with a pre-dug stock grave which may still require work to deal with water ingress or collapsed

walls. It is essential to have 2 gravedigging staff due to the nature of the work and to comply with best practice and health and safety requirements.

Key to the whole process is ensuring that a Registrar of Births and Deaths is available to undertake the statutory requirement of registering a death. Without this element of the process in place the relevant paperwork cannot be issued and a burial cannot go ahead. The registration of a death can only be completed by a duly appointed Registrar or Deputy Registrar. It should also be noted that in some cases where a death may have to be referred to the Coroner it is unlikely permission would be granted for a short notice burial particularly over a weekend.

Therefore to operate an enhanced scheme a minimum of 4 staff would be required to be on standby each weekend and the calculations below are based on this level of service.

Each individual above would be required to be on standby for 2 periods each weekend which is a total cost of £55 per person x 4 = £220 per week x 52 weeks = £11,440 for standby payments plus any additional enhancements for Sunday and Bank Holiday working

Overtime payments are calculated as an average of £18.46 per hour (Time + Half at scp 27) per person and attributed as follows:

- Funeral Attendant/Cemetery Manager - 4 hours
- Grave Diggers x 2 - 8 hours (4 hours each)
- Registrar of Births and Deaths – 1 hour

This would total £18.46 x 13 hours = £239.98 (approx.) based on an average of 1 weekend per month this would be an annual overtime cost of around £3000.

Costs are therefore **estimated** as follows:

Annual Standby Costs	£10,000
<u>Annual Overtime Costs</u>	<u>£ 3,000</u>
Total Annual Cost	£13,000

If it is agreed that the average number of out of hours funerals would be one per month this means that the actual cost of providing an enhanced out of hours service would be in the region of £1,100 per out of hours burial to include the associated overtime and standby costs.

The only additional income to offset these costs is the weekend surcharge currently set at £300. Based on the figures above this would generate £3,600 per year (£300 x 12) a shortfall of £9,400 per year of the actual cost. **This does not take into account the actual need to appoint and train extra staff to deliver such a service and is based on the current provision available and therefore does not give a true reflection of the costs which in reality are likely to be much higher.**

There are **significant costs** issues associated with providing an enhanced out of hours service and of course operational and staff resources to also consider as described in an analysis by Veolia. Engagement with a number of neighbouring Authorities has taken place; the results show a varying range of service levels being provided and a range of costs. However it should be noted that it does not appear that there is a 'perfect solution' already in place that could be easily adopted by Watford Borough Council and the Council must review the results of this exercise together with the projected costs, resource implications and demand for the service before reaching a final decision.

A more thorough consultation exercise needs to be undertaken in order to obtain a clear direction for the Authority to take at this time.

Further consultation should include as an absolute minimum:

- Cemetery Staff and Management;
- Registrars of Births, Deaths and Marriages;
- Elected Members;
- Finance Department;
- Human Resources;
- Veolia;
- All Muslim Community Leaders; and
- Funeral Directors.

The consultation must clearly identify the following at an early stage in order that **further options** can then be explored:

- Minimum expectations/needs of the local Muslim Community (currently a 7 day service, 365 days a year);
- Staff Views; and
- Whether the service be subsidised or operate as a cost recovery service.

The Muslim community groups should be consulted so it is clear as to what the minimum acceptable standard of service they feel should be provided by the Authority is. This will enable the Authority to **accurately cost** what that provision would be. Consultation should also seek to gain a financial view from senior management, Elected Members and finance as to whether the enhanced service should operate on a cost recovery basis or be subsidised. It also is essential to gain

the views of staff as without them to carry out their individual roles the enhanced level of service would not be viable.

Other options to consider may be to look at a partnership approach with the sites at Rickmansworth and Carpenders Park to see if a more joined up approach could be considered that would benefit the Authority and the local Muslim communities.

Alternatively, and possibly the most viable solution, the Authority may wish to consider identifying a piece of land to sell, lease or give to the Muslim community in order that they are able to manage their own burials entirely, this would however have a negative impact on the current income stream for the cemetery service. It is important to note that this option would require the community to ensure that they comply fully with all relevant burial legislation and it must be remembered that this would be a significant undertaking as it is not clear if the community possess the relative skills and knowledge to operate its own site at present.

There is a general pressure on suitable burial space for all denominations and groups throughout the Watford area so whilst this is a significant issue for the Council it forms the basis for an overall strategy to identify burial land in general but does not preclude the fact that some existing areas of land are running out faster than others and so sourcing a viable alternative for the Muslim community remains paramount and is a priority.

It would seem sensible given the information above for the Authority to look to formalise a Muslim Burial Board made up of a small number of key community leaders who are able to meet on a regular basis with the Cemetery manager to discuss any issues and form a stronger partnership working relationship. This will in the future allow all parties to better understand the issues that each group has and

provide a suitable platform for issues and ideas to be discussed and developed in the future.

Part 2 – Perception

Consultation and Engagement – identifying service demands

Watford Borough Council has an excellent track record of local community engagement and consultation, yet there has been no recent consultation with cemetery users, clients, funeral directors or the bereaved in recent years. Informal feedback has been received over the years that the service is a good service but issues arise over lack of availability, opening hours, Muslim burials availability etc. In 2010/11 Policy Development Scrutiny Committee set up a Task Group to review the services for the deceased. The Task Group met and produced a final report in November 2010, which was then considered by Cabinet at its meeting in December 2010. An action plan was produced and Policy

Development Scrutiny Committee reviewed the action plan and asked for a further update in a year. Since then, no further engagement has occurred especially with users, direct and indirect.

Brief response – THIS ELEMENT WAS CARRIED OUT BY WBC

Whilst it is noted that WBC will be addressing this element in more detail it should be stated that no formal stakeholder groups appear to exist at present connected to the Cemeteries service.

Whilst there are informal groups and clear good working relationships are in place between management and funeral directors and memorial masons these relationships should be formalised and regular (perhaps twice yearly) meetings should be arranged to both gauge views and opinions of stakeholders and discuss future plans, changes and new ideas for the service.

This form of customer engagement can be extremely useful and beneficial to the service and pave the way for much improved relationships with regular service users.

Customer feedback from the bereaved is also important and should be sought through questionnaires soon after the funeral has taken place. This will help identify any perceived shortfalls in the service and allow them to be addressed quickly and allow regular improvements to the service.

Benchmarking

Watford has traditionally managed cemeteries as a standalone service without any formal benchmarking although more informal benchmarking is carried out locally in relation to pricing structures.

Brief response – *To look at local, regional and national benchmarking in relation to pricing, quality and overall provision of service, grounds maintenance and make recommendations.*

At present it is not possible to benchmark the service against anything other than the Charter for the Bereaved of which Watford Borough Council is a member.

Watford offers a Bronze level service based on the national scoring of the Charter for the Bereaved which is completed annually by Charter Members. There are 3 levels based on the score achieved, these being bronze, silver and gold.

The Charter is a good benchmarking tool and does allow for continuous improvement to the service by introducing new ideas and services and simply turning a No into a Yes on the annual questionnaire. The service has increased its score of

previous years by making regular changes, this should continue and the service should challenge itself to achieve a silver level within the next 2 years.

No other benchmarking is regularly undertaken with the exception of checking fees and charges with neighbouring Authorities. With the exception of the Charter for the Bereaved the only other national benchmarking tool which could help the service is the APSE benchmarking service for cemeteries and crematoria. Although the annual return is quite detailed to complete the information returned can be extremely valuable and also puts the service into a benchmarking group which would allow for the sharing of good practice and ideas. In addition to this staff should be encouraged to attend regular ICCM Branch Meetings and events such as the ICCM Learning Convention to network and learn about new trends and ideas.

The formation of a Local Benchmarking group should be considered initially involving the Bereavement Service/Cemetery Managers of the Authorities who form the management committee of West Herts Crematorium namely:

- Dacorum Borough Council;
- Hertsmere Borough Council;
- St Albans City & District Council;
- Three Rivers District Council;
- Watford Borough Council; and
- West Herts Crematorium.

An agreed benchmarking template could be completed annually to compare service standards, costs and income and the group work together to look at ways to collectively improve. Quarterly meetings should be sufficient for the group to be

effective and it may be surprising how useful the regular sharing of knowledge and experiences can be.

There are many benefits of establishing a local group in addition to sharing useful local data the benchmarking group can work effectively together to explore improved and efficient ways of working and look to identify collective opportunities that benefit all customers and service users. This may include items such as standardisation of application forms, memorial regulations, memorial safety policies and registration schemes.

Marketing of Cemeteries

Although signage at both cemeteries is now excellent, no publicity or marketing material exists for the cemeteries covering what is on offer, service provided, who actually provides it, costs, contact details. This is in stark contrast with the nearby West Herts Crematorium.

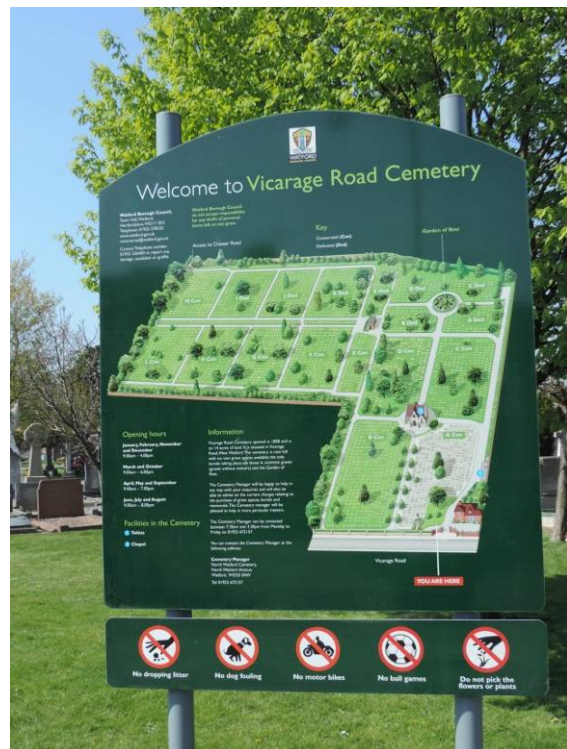
Brief Response – *Assess opportunities for the marketing of the cemetery service in relation to the development of a brochure, social media, internet, advertising and other potential opportunities.*

As detailed above in the section covering income opportunities marketing of the service and the services offered is key to raising its profile and generating additional income.

West Herts Crematorium is an excellent example of how to produce good marketing material with glossy brochures, neatly drawn maps, information and application forms and lots of good quality information all with a specific corporate brand and logo

which is easily recognisable. Quality information like this promote a quality service and is clearly the way Watford need to go in marketing its cemetery services.

The maps at the cemetery entrances are of an excellent standard, well drawn with good detail and all areas clearly marked. This is in stark contrast to the maps handed out from the cemetery office. Watford Borough Council should request the artwork used for the main entrance signage to be produced in a printable format which could be handed out to visitors at the cemetery.



A brochure (including a detailed and professionally drawn map) promoting the services offered must be considered and include contact and ownership details about the sites as well as information around the types of services and facilities available, this would be essential should the Authority decide to expand its current provision of services and consider provision of new memorial options, green burials or columbaria.

The internet should also be used and dependent on local IT policy consideration should be given to a dedicated web site for the service. This could provide extensive information about the service, memorial options, price lists, forms and maps and be regularly updated to inform service users of any changes or upcoming events.

As detailed earlier once all of the historical records are backed onto the computer system links through the cemetery website could be used to access records and generate income.

The service should also consider marketing and promoting itself through holding regular events such as an annual Christmas Memorial service or an open air memorial service during the summer. These could be sponsored by a Local Funeral Director or Memorial Mason and a collection made to be given to a local charity. Involving the Mayor at such events will help raise the profile of the service significantly.

Consideration should also be given to working more with the local community and the service should look to assist with the formation of a Friends group, this is likely to be particularly beneficial to Vicarage Road Cemetery given its age and amount of local history it contains. A properly constituted friends group can seek charitable donations and grant funding to carry out repairs and improvements to sites and preserve local history. In the current period of austerity within local government seeking additional income sources to assist with improvements and preservation is sensible as is generating local public interest in the sites.

Part 3 – Infrastructure and Environment

Quality of the grounds and Cemetery as a Green space

The grounds of both cemeteries are maintained by Veolia having outsourced the service in July 2013. This covers all works related to grounds maintenance including grass cutting, shrub maintenance, weed control, tree management, litter management and clearance as well as grave digging / backfilling. The quality of the open space at NWC and VRC is generally very good with recent improvements to the entrances, external works of both chapels, car parking and signage. However, there are no long term development plans for improving the grounds – they are simply maintained to an agreed standard. NWC has the potential for further improvements and could well satisfy Green Flag Award standards for entry to the award. NWC may also have the potential for a future HLF Parks for People bid as it has considerable local historical interest.

Brief Response – *to review the quality of the spaces and grounds maintenance specification against current standards and as part of any potential masterplan development, highlight opportunities for improvements. To also review and challenge the current practices related to grave digging and backfilling and ensuring full compliance with agreed good practice.*

The grounds maintenance at both sites is extremely good and of a very high standard. Grass is well maintained throughout both sites and there was no evidence of overgrown areas, poorly managed shrubberies or litter problems.



The maintenance specification provided to Veolia (Document P&OS16 – Cemeteries) has been reviewed. The document is concise and covers general requirements for grave digging, backfilling and exhumation all of which are well covered and clearly set out in the specification.

The document is focused on responsibilities of the contractor rather than it being an actual specification of works, for example it does not detail the number of grass cuts to be undertaken in each cemetery per year or the requirements of annual bedding displays. The specification includes a line at 68.4.5 stating that the partner shall ‘Maintain the grass, trees, shrubs, flowerbeds and hedges’. The detail relating to the specification of standards of grounds maintenance forms part of the overall maintenance specification for the Borough. The management of the grounds maintenance does not appear to be an issue given the high standards witnessed at the site.

Green Flag Awards

Watford Borough Council already has a good track record in managing its parks and open spaces with Green Flag awards at 6 of its parks awarded in 2015. The cemeteries should be viewed as just as an important open space as the towns parks and achieving a green flag not only recognises the hard work and efforts of the staff working at the site but also raises the profile of the site and provides a mechanism to introduce a continuous method of improvement for the site.

All Green Flag sites are judged on 8 key criteria and a number of factors contribute to each of these headings as detailed below:

A Welcoming Place

When approaching or entering the park/green space, the overall impression for any member of the community - regardless of the purpose of their visit - should be positive and inviting. There should be:

- Good and safe access
- Good signage to and in the park/green space
- Equal access for all members of the community

Healthy, Safe and Secure

The park/green space must be a healthy, safe and secure place for all members of the community to use. Any issues that have come to light must be addressed in the management plan and implemented on the ground. New issues that arise must be addressed promptly and appropriately.

- Equipment and facilities must be safe to use
- It must be a secure place for all members of the community to use or traverse
- Dog fouling must be adequately addressed
- Health and safety policies should be in place, in practice and regularly reviewed
- Toilets, drinking water, first aid, public telephones and emergency equipment where relevant (e.g. life belts by water) should be available in or near the park/green space, and be clearly signposted.

Clean and Well Maintained

For aesthetic as well as health and safety reasons, issues of cleanliness and maintenance must be adequately addressed, in particular:

- Litter and other waste management
- The maintenance of grounds, buildings, equipment and other features
- A policy on litter, vandalism and maintenance should be in place, in practice and regularly reviewed.

Sustainability

Methods used in maintaining the park/green space and its facilities should be environmentally sound, relying on best practices available according to current knowledge. Management should be aware of the range of techniques available to them, and demonstrate that informed choices have been made and are regularly reviewed. Parks/green spaces should:

- Have an environmental policy or charter and management strategy in place, which is in practice and regularly reviewed
- Minimise and justify pesticide use
- Eliminate horticultural peat use
- Recycle waste plant material
- Demonstrate high horticultural and arboricultural standards
- Have energy conservation, pollution reduction, waste recycling, and resource conservation measures

Conservation and Heritage

Particular attention should be paid to the conservation and appropriate management of:

- Natural features, wildlife and fauna
- Landscapes
- Buildings and structural features
- These should serve their function well without placing undue pressure on the surrounding environment

Community Involvement

The park/green space management should actively pursue the involvement of members of the community who represent as many park/green space user groups as possible. The following should be demonstrated:

- Knowledge of user community and levels and patterns of use
- Evidence of community involvement in management and/or developments and results achieved
- Appropriate levels of provision of recreational facilities for all sectors of the community

Marketing

- A marketing strategy should be in place, which is in practice and regularly reviewed
- There should be good provision of information to users, e.g. about management strategies, activities, features, ways to get involved
- The park/green space should be promoted as a community resource

Management

- A management plan or strategy should be in place
- This should clearly and adequately address all of the above criteria and any other relevant aspects of the park/green space's management
- The plan must be actively implemented and regularly reviewed
- A financially sound management of the park/green space must also be demonstrated

Cemeteries are still a fairly recent addition to the Green Flag process and the number of sites appears to grow on an annual basis. There are a number of benefits to achieving this nationally recognised award most notably the fact that it recognises the hard work and dedication of staff at the site and also serves to raise the profile of the service.

In looking at the key criteria above it should be noted that Watford cemeteries are clearly already some way towards satisfying the criteria to achieve a further two Green Flags for its cemeteries in the future. Some work is required of course such as the preparation of a management plan or strategy, improved marketing and community involvement, however given that the Authority has already achieved 6 awards there is clearly an in-house resource that should be utilised to assist the cemetery service achieve Green Flag status in the future.

This review document has already identified some of the missing criteria that would be required and should form the basis of an improvement strategy for the cemetery service to not only seek Green Flag recognition but also to drive continuous improvement through the service over a longer period.

Building Infrastructure

Both cemeteries have a number of buildings including occupied lodges, chapels, ancillary buildings and maintenance yards. Some have been improved whereas others require investment or possible alternative uses sought. The recent Property Review needs to be taken into consideration as part of the assessment of buildings at both cemeteries.

Brief Response – *To assess all buildings in both cemeteries in relation to condition, usage and accessibility and take into account the wider recommendations of the Property Review and to make further recommendations based on the needs and operation of the cemetery service*

Buildings at North Watford Cemetery

There are a total of 4 buildings at North Watford Cemetery all of which are in generally good condition externally. However consideration should be given to improvements or alternative uses to some of these buildings.

Office & Living Accommodation (Main Entrance)

The living accommodation was not inspected as part of this review, however it should be noted that it is not uncommon for cemetery lodges to continue to be occupied by operational staff and can be seen as a benefit to the service in terms of security whilst still generating an income through receiving an annual rent.

Information around the office has been covered in section 1 under the visitor experience and it is recommended that improvements are undertaken to make this more welcoming and consideration given to important areas such as records storage and security of staff working alone.

There is scope to extend the office to accommodate an improved store and would allow a complete remodelling of the main reception area. In addition to this consideration should be given to provide an external waiting area for mourners to gather under in advance of a funeral arriving.

Toilets & Mess Room (Main Entrance)

Opposite the main office at North Watford Cemetery is a building incorporating public toilets and a mess room utilised by staff of Veolia.

The toilets when inspected were deemed to be adequate but consideration should be given to refurbishment in the near future and a review as to whether they satisfy current DDA requirements. The room between the toilets is currently utilised as a mess room and is used by Veolia staff however these staff are not connected to the cemetery service.

As stated previously in the report a better use of the building to be considered would be to offer a lease to an individual or a company to operate a cemetery related business from this building such as a florist or perhaps a memorial mason. Not only would this bring in a new income stream for the service from the lease but would further enhance the visitor experience at the site. Florists have successfully been opened at a number of sites around the UK generally by individuals looking to establish a new business. Not much space is required and the required infrastructure of water and electricity is already in place making this an excellent opportunity.

Mess Room & Operational Yard

There is a small operational yard at North Watford Cemetery which is utilised by the staff contracted to Veolia. It provides adequate storage for plant and equipment and reasonable mess and toilet facilities for the staff.

It was noted that ground areas of the yard are not solid and consideration should be given to concreting the area to provide a hard standing which would be particularly useful during the winter period and allow the staff to operate in cleaner conditions.

Security throughout the whole site is good given there is only a single entrance and the manager lives on site however the excavator whilst stored in the locked compound is not secured in a shed or container and a review of this should be considered if space allows.

Cemetery Chapel

There is a burial chapel located in the centre of the site that is utilised for burial services. Externally it is attractive and well maintained and common of small burial chapels found in many cemeteries around the UK.



Internally the building does need some work to bring it up to a more acceptable standard. There is a problem with the roof which appears to have water ingress and dated and ineffective electric heaters. There is a basic music

system used to provide music at services however this is only a domestic CD player and consideration should be given to

installing something more commercial. A loop system to assist the hard of hearing is also in place.

Buildings at Vicarage Road Cemetery

Living Accommodation

At the main entrance to the site there is a large well maintained property. This is utilised as a domestic property in the same way as that at North Watford Cemetery but does not have an enquiries office attached. The occupant is employed by Veolia and undertakes duties associated with the security of the site.

Toilets

There are toilets located close to the main entrance of the site however on the day of the visit both were locked and inaccessible.

Cemetery Chapel

The chapel located at Vicarage Road is similar in size and design to that at North Watford Cemetery. It is also well maintained and attractive and it appears that some restorative work has been undertaken in the past.

Internally it is basic with hard wooden seats in place and there does not appear to be music system. It is however clean and well lit from the large ornate Victorian windows.

The only heating is the electric heaters placed at a high level (similar to those at North Watford Cemetery). It was not clear if they are currently working however if they are they would be expensive to operate and it is doubtful they would be

particularly effective in a large stone building.

Should areas of Vicarage Road cemetery be reused in the future then this chapel may become more frequently used, however at present it may be better suited to an alternative but cemetery related use.

Growth and Expansion Opportunities – The Need for Space and Green Burials

No new grave spaces are available at Vicarage Road Cemetery and there is now limited space left at North Watford Cemetery. Burial space is especially limited in relation to the Muslim section which has circa 2 years space remaining. The Local Plan has identified 2 potential sites at Lower Paddock Road on the site of the former parks depot (under council ownership) as well as a green field site at the end of Hempstead Road, adjacent to Russell Lane (not under council ownership and since objected to by the EA) and the potential for expansion at North Watford Cemetery. There are also no current opportunities for Green Burials in Watford.

Brief Response – *To assess the local need for Green Burials, assess the success elsewhere through localised benchmarking and review the proposed alternative sites and scope for cemetery extensions, green burials and possible capacity. There is also a need to review how many years left there are at NWC based on current demand.*

Burial Space is a major issue facing Burial Authorities throughout the UK and Watford is no different. The brief identifies that the service recognises it is running out of space and needs to identify options for its sites in the future. As of 1st January 2011 records state that North Watford Cemetery had 4 hectares of land available for burials. 4 hectares = approximately 9.8

acres. However examining the site shows that only approximately 1 acre would appear to be currently available for immediate use. It is strongly advised that a thorough site survey be undertaken to establish an exact current position in relation to available land and mapped on the GIS system to assess exact availability.

From the data supplied and based on there being 1 acre of land available it has been calculated that there is currently around 12 years' worth of burials remaining at North Watford Cemetery based on current death rates and land usage. Calculations state that the figure could be 12 years however it is known that certain areas are unsuitable for burial and cannot be utilised, therefore the area available will be closer to **7- 9 years space**. At present the service is undertaking an average of 160 full burials per year this is made up of around 75 new graves and 85 re-opened graves.

The common formula to identify available burial space is:

- number of acres available (1) ÷ average number of annual burials (75) x number of graves per acre (900) = number of years available (12)

If new grave spaces are set out as 9' x 4' (36 square foot) most cemeteries can accommodate around 900 graves in an acre of land to include paths and minor landscaping. Based on this assumption North Watford Cemetery currently has 12 years of burial space left in total, however some of the land area is known to be unsuitable for burial reducing that capacity to an estimated 7-9 years and consideration has also to be given for provision of land for different faiths such as the Muslim community. If a more accurate measure is required the same formula above can be used but based on a specific denominational use of a set area.

Whilst 7-9 years may seem a considerable life span for the cemetery it is essential to be aware that establishing a new burial

ground can take a considerable amount of time (3-4 years) due to the needs associated to satisfying the Environment Agency and gaining planning consent. Therefore work should commence now in looking to identify new ground and ensure it is reserved for future use or alternatively/additionally to examine ways to increase the capacity of the land to lengthen the period of availability such as grave re-use or policy restrictions on who can be accepted for burial e.g. Watford residents only.

Grave Re-Use

The ICCM have previously undertaken a study of Vicarage Road Cemetery and recommended that grave re-use could be considered at this site either through legislation under the Local Authorities Cemeteries Order 1977 to reclaim graves where the rights have expired and have never been exercised. An alternative option being undertaken by other Authorities at present is to apply for consent to the local church diocese to exhume remains from consecrated areas of burial. These remains can then be re-buried at the end of the row of the same section freeing up new space for burials. Whilst this can be sensitive consideration should be given to this option at Vicarage Road cemetery and the ICCM will be able to provide additional advice on this option if required. A copy of this original ICCM report has been provided to officers.

New Cemetery Options

There is often a perception among residents that “there is never enough green space”, but when Watford assessed the amount of green space over a range of open space typologies (Parks & Gardens; Amenity Green Space; Natural Green Space; Outdoor Sports Facilities; Children and Young People; Cemeteries), as a town, Watford is very well endowed, and many of the wards have excellent provision of green space over a range of typologies. Some deficiencies do occur, especially with regards to natural green space, but overall, Watford is well provided for. However, accessibility is an issue for many and the Watford Green Spaces Strategy advocates adopting green infrastructure principles and developing a strategic green space network for the town. By setting standards of provision Watford can concentrate on those sites that are most important which need to be protected at all costs as well as continually enhanced.

But there are a number of sites that are not performing well and may be deemed low quality and/or low value. Several sites fall into this category at present. There is a clear policy on how these sites should be treated either enhancing the quality of these green spaces as long as it is possible to improve and enhance the value of them or if this is not possible, consider the space surplus to requirements in terms of its current use and consider alternative uses (which could include potential provision as cemetery space). However, this must be considered in the light of wider planning policies such as the need to determine **other typology deficiencies** in the area within distance thresholds, whether enhancement is realistic and determine community value by local consultation.

Woodland and Natural Burial

Woodland and Natural Burial grounds have been operational in the UK since 1993 when the first area was opened in Carlisle as part of its existing cemetery. Since then the concept of woodland



burial and associated services such as natural burial and meadowland burial has grown steadily in the UK resulting in both the private and public sector venturing into this market.

The basic concept is that the deceased is laid to rest in an existing woodland area, or a woodland is created around new burials and the site managed as a natural woodland area. It must be stressed that this concept is not to everyone's taste and maintenance standards can and do vary so it is essential to identify exactly what Watford would want to offer and achieve. It is suggested that the management of the service look to visit providers in the area to gain their views and also look at the service provided by private sector organisations.

With the exception of Woodcock Hill Cemetery and Carpenders Park there appears to be no other provider in the area of woodland or natural burials.



There is definite scope to provide Natural Burial at North Watford Cemetery in an

area to the east of the site which is currently wooded but does have some natural openings into the area and is currently used as a surplus soil storage area. The area

could not be utilised for traditional burials as clearance of the site would be expensive and tree roots would provide a continual problem in regular excavation of new deep graves.

I would recommend utilising this area as a natural burial ground as a suitable basic infrastructure is already in place and there is little capital outlay required to prepare the site as only minor works would be required to clear and level an area and prepare the ground and undertake planting of natural wildflowers and or native tree species in and around the area.

It would of course be necessary to undertake some test digs in the area to ascertain the current composition of the ground and eliminate any possible problems before opening the area to natural burials.

If the area is deemed suitable regulations need to be introduced for the future management and control of the area, however as stated above it is essential that the Authority establish early what type of woodland burial area it intends to provide.

The ICCM in conjunction with Stratford Business School are shortly to introduce a new education diploma based around Natural Burial and it is highly recommended that the Cemetery Manager be encouraged to complete this course.

Paddock Road Site

The old depot site at Paddock Road was examined as part of this review and consideration given as to whether it could accommodate woodland burials in the future.

Access to the site along the roads in the area would be difficult for a funeral cortege with many of the streets on the approach both narrow and regularly double parked by residents. It should be considered that a funeral hearse and limousine are wider than standard vehicles and therefore could have problems on the approach to the site.

The only access from the road appears to be through the single tracked road between the local allotments in the area. It has to be considered if this would be acceptable to both the bereaved as part of the 'final journey' of a loved one and also to the allotment holders who would witness funeral corteges passing through on a regular basis. The single track road could also be problematic as only limited passing places exist and a funeral cortege could be made up of a number of vehicles.



The entrance to the site is better protected from the allotments and has adequate parking outside and a field utilised for grazing opposite.

On entering the site there are a large number of buildings which include offices, workshops and storage garages. They vary in size and most if not all would need to be demolished if the site was to be used as they are not in



keeping with a woodland/natural burial ground setting but one or two could possibly be converted to provide storage of equipment or a ceremony hall.

The ground appears to be a mix of concrete, tarmac and soil in different areas throughout the site, again to permit burial all of the hard materials would need to be



removed and this would also include removal of foundations under the existing buildings. Costs may be significant but substantially less than purchasing land elsewhere not in Council ownership

The surrounding fields provide a pleasant and peaceful area and would lend itself to a natural burial ground environment however it is unclear if the Authority owns this land or not and if any restrictions exist as to its future use.

On first impressions it is difficult to see the actual depot site at Paddock Road functioning well as a burial ground primarily due to the difficult vehicular access. In terms of preparation of the site this could be extremely expensive given the substantial amount of ground works that would be required to remove the buildings and tarmac areas. The surrounding fields however would



provide extremely good natural and woodland burial facilities however the difficult access issues remain. If an alternative route into the area could be found or created this may well be worth further consideration.

Cemetery Review: Actions from Engagement

As of 24 July 2015

The following are the actions arising from the engagement to date:

- Funeral Directors and Memorial Masons
- Muslim community (x 2)
- Gypsy and traveller community
- Members
- Community

Ref	Action	Arising from	By when: (short / medium / long term)* <i>See end of document for timescales</i>
01	Review cemetery office hours	Funeral Directors and Memorial Masons Muslim community	Short
02	Explore option of online booking – more transactional on the website	Funeral Directors and Memorial Masons Muslim community	Long
03	Review of cemetery information / communications – improve how it is advertised – including website	Funeral Directors and Memorial Masons Muslim community	Short (to include changes approved in Sept)
04	Introduce new regulations on memorials for consistency and safety <i>NB height and width issue</i>	Funeral Directors and Memorial Masons Gypsy and Travellers	Short
05	Explore introduction of an annual meeting for those local Funeral Directors / Memorial Masons with link to Watford cemeteries	Funeral Directors and Memorial Masons	Short

Ref	Action	Arising from	By when: (short / medium / long term)
06	<p>Benchmark against what other areas provide (including prices / costs). It was explained this was being done as part of the review and the elements raised in relation to facilitating weekend and Bank Holiday burials would certainly be included. Representatives suggested the following being followed up:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carpenders Park • Amersham • Chesham (allow community to help with burials) • Luton • High Wycombe • Three Rivers • St Albans 	<p>Muslim community</p> <p>Councillors</p>	Short
07	Explore an 'on call' option for weekend and Bank Holidays	<p>Muslim community</p> <p>Councillors</p>	Short
08	<p>Explore setting aside time slots at weekends and Bank Holidays for burials. There is no need for the service to be 24/7 but what is being requested are times when burials could be achieved.</p> <p>The optimum time for burials for the community would be 12 – 3pm (this allows for burial prayers after 12 noon prayers)</p>	<p>Muslim community</p> <p>Councillors</p> <p>Community</p>	Short
09	Explore scope to train up members of the community to help provide cover – reducing the need for stand-by. This was done in Chesham.	<p>Muslim community</p> <p>Councillors</p>	Short
10	Identify the additional cost of an enhanced / extended service	<p>Muslim community</p> <p>Councillors</p>	Short
11	Consider only offering weekend and Bank Holiday burials to Watford residents	<p>Muslim community</p> <p>Councillors</p>	Short
12	Undertake a detailed analysis of the capacity of the Muslim sections at North Watford Cemetery as part of an overall review of space remaining within NW cemetery	<p>Muslim community</p> <p>Councillors</p>	Short

Ref	Action	Arising from	By when: (short / medium / long term)
13	Explore if there are solutions to the water supply issue for the Muslim section	Muslim community	Short
14	Ensure consistency of the registration for plots that have been reserved (when this was permitted)	Muslim community	Short
15	Consider whether there are any suitable sites outside the borough for cemetery provision (e.g. Link Road / Langlebury)	Muslim community Councillors Community	Medium
16	Re-examine cutting down the trees to expand North Watford Cemetery	Muslim community Community	Medium
17	Identify, if available, pockets of land that could be used (examples were given of land around North Watford mosque / Harebreaks – around the APG)	Muslim community Community	Medium
18	Explore any land held by other public sector bodies in the borough that could be used for a new cemetery	Muslim community Community	Medium

Timescales for action:

Short: August 2015 to March 2016

Medium: April 2016 to October 2016

Long: November 2016 to March 2017

Appendix III Cemetery Review – Operational Considerations

4th August 2015

Cemetery Review – Operational Considerations

1. Introduction

As part of the contract for the management and operation of front line environmental services including: Waste collection, recycling, street cleaning and maintenance of parks and open spaces for Watford Borough Council (WBC), Veolia undertake the operational maintenance and burials within Watford Borough Council Cemeteries. The management and administration of the cemeteries remains with WBC.

As part of WBC's continuous improvement they have commissioned a review of the Cemetery service by the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management. This review is to ascertain what improvements could be made to ensure a high quality, good value, service, and the estimated amount of time remaining at current use rate for the cemeteries as well as understand if the needs of the community are being met. As part of the review WBC officers also met with local community groups and stakeholders to understand what the local community felt about the current service provision and what improvements they thought would be beneficial. It has emerged that the Muslim community would like the service to operate on a 7 day a week basis to allow for bodies to be buried within 24 hours as per their religious beliefs.

As part of the overall cemetery review WBC have asked Veolia as the operator of the service to outline the works undertaken as part of the service and the potential challenges faced by moving to a 7 day week service which this paper aims to do.

2. Operational Services Undertaken

Under the service specification element of the parks and open spaces contract between WBC and Veolia, Veolia undertake a very wide range of activities to ensure the cemeteries remain aesthetically pleasing and that the service operates with minimal fuss and with the sensitivity required during a highly emotive process.

The Parks and Open Spaces team consists of a total of 19 full time operatives, which is enhanced by a further three seasonal operatives between March and October to help deal with the increased seasonal work load, such as grass cutting, flower bed maintenance, watering and litter collection created by warmer weather. Of the 19 full time operatives there are currently five operatives that have attended the Institute of Cemetery & Crematorium Management (ICCM) Cemetery Operatives Training Scheme (COTS) and deemed competent to undertake excavation and backfilling of graves.

The team at North Watford Cemetery consists of 3 full time employees with some support from the wider team during peak periods and to cover employee annual leave, sickness etc. The Team also assists with funerals that take place at Vicarage Road Cemetery, but these are quite rare with approximately only 10 a year taking place. The teams working hours are:

7:30am – 3:00pm on Mondays
7:30am – 3:30pm Tuesday to Friday

The current contractual requirements are where possible burials shall normally be arranged to take place Monday to Friday between:-

09:30 and 15:00 hours during April to September; and
09:30 and 14:00 hours during October to March.

The reason for the seasonal changes is as a result of the reduction of daylight hours in winter. However, burials may be arranged outside of these days and times and WBC will inform Veolia if any burials are likely to take place outside of the standard days and times as soon as reasonably possible.

Normally WBC will notify Veolia of a burial at least forty eight hours prior to the interment time, and twenty four hours prior to the interment time in exceptional circumstances (i.e. during high demand); and four hours prior to the interment time where special circumstances or religious rites demand an early interment. To ensure that these special circumstances can be accommodated it is intended that two stock graves are pre-dug and secured using lockable excavation covers.

In addition WBC will also notify Veolia of any special requirements in terms of the grave size and special requirements (i.e. bricked grave), and in normal circumstances arrange for only one burial at any one time and no more than three full burials in any one day.

In addition to the excavation of graves and filling in graves, including reinstatement of turf and levelling of graves following burial, other activities and maintenance delivered by the team at North Watford cemetery include, but are not limited to, the activities detailed in table 1 below

Table 1 – Cemetery Team Tasks & Activities

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Un-lock and lock cemeteries at the times specified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out statutory memorial safety inspections including topple tests
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain the grass, trees, shrubs, flowerbeds and hedges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repair and/or remove memorials in the cemeteries as necessary
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out weekly cleaning duties to the chapels of rest and as instructed by the Cemetery Manager prior to services being held 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove floral tributes from graves and memorials fourteen days after the date of the interment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Top up the grave with top soil following settlement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To empty litter bins to ensure they are never more than three quarters full and to remove any litter of whatsoever type, bags of rubbish, turf, wreaths etc. on the ground surrounding or below the litter bins
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seed graves nine months after the date of the interment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When instructed by the Authority, Veolia will undertake exhumations in line with industry best practice.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assisting others Parks services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrange for collection and disposal of waste and soil spool

Many of these activities are time consuming and some are reactive or seasonal, but it is very rare that the services are not completed to a good standard. This is due to the diligence of the team at North Watford Cemetery and the support network from the rest of the parks and open spaces department who assist when required in ensuring standards are met and objectives achieved.

3. Challenges of Supplying a Weekend Service

Following the consultation with the community stakeholders as part of the service review there is a desire to explore the potential of delivering a burials service at the weekends and bank holidays (the extent of bank holiday cover to be confirmed). An extended service would accommodate those of a Muslim faith where burial is the only option and there is a religious imperative to bury the deceased as soon as possible with a preference of within 24 hours of death. This emerged strongly from the engagement undertaken with Watford's Muslim community. Engagement did not identify that there was a high demand for weekend and bank holiday burials from other areas of the Watford community but, should a service be available, it would be anticipated that other residents might want to avail themselves of this option.

Delivering such a service comes with operational, managerial and administrative challenges. With these challenges comes potential additional cost for both WBC as the Local Authority and Veolia as its service delivery partner and these costs would need to be discussed at length before any final decisions could be made as they would create a variation to the current contractual terms.

Operational Challenges – Labour

The main challenge faced in operating a 7 day a week service relates to resources. From a labour perspective, and as outlined previously, the Parks and Open Spaces team consists of 19 full time frontline employees. This is a small workforce due to the size of the works needed to be undertaken within Watford. In order to complete existing scheduled and reactive tasks the team works efficiently and very closely with the Street Cleansing service to complete litter bin emptying, graffiti removal, cleansing of hard services, and maintenance and inspection of assets.

Added to the standard working week are the ground staff duties at the weekend for sports where 3 operatives will work Saturday and another 3 operatives will work on Sunday (totalling 6 operatives) at Cassiobury Park, King George V Playing Fields and Woodside Playing Fields. This often includes members of the cemetery team. Generally speaking an operative will not work both days over the weekend as they will want, and we encourage, at least one days rest per week and to try and achieve a reasonable home life, work life balance.

This additional work, along with occasional events in the parks, and street cleansing services in the town centre coupled with annual leave and sickness seriously reduces the potential competent work force available to work within the cemetery over the weekend and bank holidays. Even with more individuals trained to the COTS standard the existing work force would not have the capacity to take on weekend burial services.

We have considered creating a shift pattern for employees with two operatives working Monday to Friday and two Operatives working Wednesday to Sunday. However we would need to consult and negotiate with the work force Union over changes in employee terms and conditions, and potentially pay as the employees working the weekend would expect a financial enhancement for weekend work. This in turn would create a two tier work force and it is likely that this would be a very unpopular decision and would lead to low morale and motivation and a reduction in service quality and team spirit. The secondary risk that could potentially be realised is that the service could be over staffed on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday by one operative (although the operative could be deployed on other parks services as well), but understaffed on Monday, Tuesday, Saturday and Sunday by one operative.

The recruitment of any additional prequalified staff could be difficult, especially if trying to incorporate weekend working into the working week without any enhancement as culturally the industry has predominantly a 5 day week service and there is an expectation for enhanced rates.

Some thought has been given to operating set burial times in order to alleviate labour issues such as 12pm to 3pm on Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays, but many of the points discussed above regarding human resource would remain. The work associated in preparing for the funeral, the funeral itself, and backfilling would generally need to be carried out on the day of the funeral. The list of works to be completed is broken down in table 2.

Table 2 – Funeral preparation, Service and Backfilling tasks

Preparation & Excavation

- At all times employees will conduct themselves in accordance with the Institute of Cemetery & Crematorium Management (ICCM) Code of Safe Working Practice for Cemeteries;
- Not excavate a grave earlier than one Working Day prior to the day of interment unless agreed in advance by the Authority
- Store all topsoil excavated from the grave in a designated area within the cemetery;
- Ensure that the bottom of the grave is level and free of undulations in excess of 50mm;
- Shore all excavations with either hydraulic shoring or timber walling;
- Ensure all paths, roadways adjoining graves and adjacent areas are free from all soil arising from the work of the excavation;
- Wash down with clean water any memorial soiled by the excavation works;
- Make good any damage caused by the excavation process to the surrounding area(s);
- Ensure that open graves are not left unattended unless the grave is covered with strong grave boards or planks.

The Funeral Service

- Check the grave at regular intervals to ensure that the grave has not collapsed and is clear of any visible water;
- Remove any flooding using an approved pump and surface drainage pipe;
- Promptly carry out reinstatement following collapse and draining of water to ensure that the funeral can take place at the appointed time.
- Thirty minutes before the funeral cortege is due to arrive remove the grave boards/planks, and dress the floor of the grave with grass cuttings, greenery or sawdust;
- Supply clean synthetic grass mats and drape them 1000mm in to the grave completely over spoil heaps and completely over grave boards extending 1000mm on the remaining three sides
- Place coffin lowering webs of synthetic material and strong varnished wooden struts across the grave in readiness to accept the coffin
- Leave the graveside as the cortege approaches and wait at a discreet distance until instructed to commence backfilling, or until required to carry out additional work instructed by the Authority.

Backfilling

- Manually backfill the grave after the mourners have left the cemetery. However, subject to religious rite or personal preference, Veolia may commence backfilling before the family have left or with the assistance of the mourners if instructed to do so.
- Remove the webbs, struts and grave mats;
- Break down large clods of earth before use to ensure damage to the coffin does not occur;
- Firm down the soil at every 600mm depth to minimise future settlement, unless instructed not to do so by WBC.
- Fill the last 150mm of the grave with top soil saved from the excavation;
- Ensure the grave is level with adjacent ground levels or instructed height
- Remove all timbers and shoring systems and store them in the cemetery stores
- Place floral tributes on the grave;
- Remove all excess spoil and deliver to the stock pile in the depot.

It is highly unlikely that this amount of work could be undertaken in a 3 hour time slot considering the sensitivity that has to be exercised when waiting for mourners to leave the burial site, and so it is our opinion that a minimum 6 hour shift would be required to undertake a funeral from start to finish.

It is worth noting at this point that the demand for the service may not be for both days on every weekend and bank holiday. This could potentially mean that operatives could be being paid to be on duty in the cemetery, but with no internment (and therefore revenue) to perform. A solution to this could be to pay a retainer to the employees to ensure their availability and if a funeral is booked they come to the cemetery and then are paid the full hourly rate of pay. This solution would still however require an increase in the total number of operatives on the service.

Operational Challenges – Mechanical Resource contingency

Veolia operates one excavator for cemetery and burial operations. Although this equipment is relatively new and so quite reliable, there is the possibility that it could break down and that the funeral could not go ahead as the grave would not be dug. This risk is quite minimal during the week as our internal workshop is operating to undertake repair and in the event the breakdown could not be repaired hire shops are open and available so we would be likely to obtain a replacement excavator within a few hours.

During the weekend and bank holidays our workshop team are on call in case of vehicular breakdown, but will be much slower to react and will not be able to access suppliers and replacement parts to potentially complete a repair. The plant hire centres will also generally be closed meaning replacement equipment would not be accessible and the funeral may need to be postponed which would not reflect well on both WBC and Veolia's reputation.

Operational Challenges – Management and Administration

In order to offer funerals at the weekend or over bank holidays, and particularly those that are of Muslim origin that may require a circa 24 hour internment it is necessary for WBC to have the ability to take phone calls and bookings as well as notifying Veolia of the funeral and managing the payment process. Currently the WBC Cemetery Manager works Monday to Friday and would not have the scope in their current working arrangements to manage the weekend requirements. Additional management time and systems would need to be implemented in order to administrate the weekend work load.

4. Summary

To summarise this paper, Veolia are willing to assist WBC in ensuring that the satisfaction levels within the community relating to the cemetery service remain high and that wherever possible we help achieve and surpass local stakeholder's expectations.

The challenge of trying to introduce a weekend and bank holiday burial service within the cemetery would be less challenging for a larger borough with a larger workforce as there would be more capacity for weekend working via overtime. With such a small pool of employees to draw from the challenge for WBC and Veolia collectively is to find a balance of available human resource that does not incur enormous cost (that could hopefully be balanced by the revenue received from the service) to the partnership contract.

Further discussion and exploration is required to try and find the most advantageous solution, but for the meantime the most basic of challenges and risks have been highlighted. Once the cemetery review recommendations and political drivers are known, this will determine what further work will be required.



Equality Impact Analysis

Service and section / team	Corporate Strategy and Client Services
Title of policy, function or service	Watford BC Cemetery Review 2015 – initial recommendations
Lead officer	Paul Rabbitts
Person completing the EIA	Kathryn Robson
Type of policy, function or service:	New/Proposed ×
Version	v.01 (August 2015)

For more information on this Equality Impact Analysis, please contact: Kathryn Robson, Partnerships & Performance on ext. 8077 or by email: kathryn.robson@watford.gov.uk

Cemetery Review (2015)

Background to the Equality Impact Analysis

This Equality Impact Analysis considers the potential impacts, both positive and negative, of Watford Borough Council's Cemetery Review 2015 – specifically the areas highlighted for immediate consideration and action.

This Analysis will, therefore, be updated as the review progresses

Overview of Cemetery Service

Watford Borough Council currently manages and maintains four cemeteries in the borough on behalf of local residents. These are:

- North Watford Cemetery:
- Vicarage Road Cemetery and
- 2 closed cemeteries (All Saint's Cemetery and St Mary's Church Grounds – grounds maintenance only).

North Watford Cemetery is the only site with space available for new graves, although this availability is estimated to be limited to around 7-9 years, depending on future demand.

The day to day management of the service (bookings, liaison with Funeral Directors, records maintenance, community engagement) is managed by an on-site Cemetery Manager who also lives on site at North Watford Cemetery. The grounds maintenance and cemetery operations element (such as grave preparation) has been managed by the council's strategic partner, Veolia, since it was outsourced in 2013.

Whilst the service has long been an integral part of the town, it is an area of the council's work where there has been limited knowledge in terms of customer perceptions, including the bereaved, funeral directors and cemetery visitors. Additionally, there is clearly a need to explore a range of emerging issues and to better understand current and future requirements to ensure that the council is well placed to deliver an effective and efficient service that meets the needs of local people and the Watford community.

Overview of Cemetery Review

A comprehensive review of the council's cemetery service was agreed as part of the council's work programme for 2015 (spanning the end of the 2014/15 financial year, with reporting of initial findings set for autumn 2015).

In February 2015, the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM) was appointed to support the review of the council's service. The ICCM provides policy and best practice guidance to burial and cremation authorities and is, therefore, an experienced and knowledgeable resource for the council to work with on the review. It can provide appropriate challenge, sign post best practice and consider where improvements could enhance the service and the resident customer experience.

Parameters to the Review

In February 2015, the parameters for the review were agreed as:

Management

- Staffing and Cover issues
- Relationship with West Herts Crematorium (WHC)
- Hours of opening
- The visitor experience
- ICT and Records Management
- Lone working policy
- Income opportunities
- Updating of Regulations for Management of Cemeteries
- Muslim and other faith Burials (weekend burials)

Perception

- Consultation and Engagement – identifying service demands
- Benchmarking
- Marketing of Cemeteries

Infrastructure and Environment

- Quality of the grounds and cemetery as a green space
- Building infrastructure
- Growth and expansion opportunities – the need for space and Green Burials

Initial Review findings

The ICCM delivered an initial draft report in August 2015. This is an extensive exploration of the current cemetery service and identifies a number of key issues that need to be developed into short, medium and long term actions.

The recommendation at this stage, given the complexity of the review and the breadth of actions arising from its findings, is to take identified actions forward through a detailed Cemetery Strategy and action plan. This will be subject to an Equality Impact Analysis, which will build on the findings and recommendations from this Analysis.

Whilst the Cemetery Strategy and action plan will incorporate the majority of the review's findings and recommendations for the future, there were a number of significant areas identified that require immediate consideration and action.

These areas are to be considered by Watford BC's Cabinet in September 2015.

Focus of the Equality Impact Analysis

This EIA, therefore, considers the potential equality related impacts, both positive and negative of the immediate areas raised for consideration and action on the people in the groups or with the characteristics protected in the Equalities Act 2010

1. Age
2. Disability
3. Gender Reassignment
4. Pregnancy and maternity
5. Race
6. Religion or belief
7. Sex (gender)
8. Sexual Orientation
9. Marriage and Civil Partnership

1. What we know about the Watford population

Watford is an extremely diverse borough. Understanding our population helps ensure the needs of local people and communities are taken into account during the Cemetery Review. Outlined below are some of the key data and information that supports our understanding of the Watford community.

<p>Population</p>	<p>The size of Watford's population at the time of the census in 2011 was 90,300. This is around a 13% increase in population since the last census in 2001 when the population was 79,726.</p> <p>The current mid-year estimate (2014 revised) puts the population at 95,500.</p> <p>Watford's numerical population growth of 1,769 persons between mid 2013 and mid 2014 was made up of the following:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excess births over deaths +862 persons • Net internal in-migration +318 persons • Net international in-migration +590 persons • Other -1 person • <i>Total</i> +1,769 persons <p>This marks a major change from mid 2012 to mid 2013 population growth in which net internal in-migration was the biggest component in Watford's population growth. What it means for the borough is that its attraction for a diverse range of the population continues to be a big draw and, ultimately, adds to town's overall diversity.</p>
<p>Population density</p>	<p>The population density for Watford is around 4,300 people per square kilometre. This makes it the most densely populated district in England and Wales. However, in comparison with some</p>

	<p>metropolitan boroughs, particularly those in and around the outskirts of London, the density is relatively low.</p> <p>Since 2013, Watford's popularity as a place to live has, if anything increased. All indications are that its appeal continues to extend beyond the borough and it attracts new residents because of its excellent transport links, proximity to London and high levels of employment opportunities. The town also benefits from a good range of facilities, entertainment and leisure venues and a strong social fabric – including its range of voluntary and community groups and organisations.</p> <p>The rise in population and population density undoubtedly leads to an increase in demand for services within the borough. Whilst some of these demands can be accommodated relatively easily, those that require the use of land / space – such as housing and cemeteries – are more difficult for the borough to accommodate. The council's work on Local Plan 2 is exploring a range of options for the development of the borough, including provision for cemetery space.</p>
<p>Age bands</p>	<p>Watford continues to have a relatively young population - particularly in comparison to the rest of Hertfordshire.</p> <p>The largest populations by age band in Watford are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25-29 (8,000) • 30-34 (8,100) • the numbers in each successive age-band fall progressively until there are estimated to be 1,600 who are 85+. <p>The median age in Watford is 35 - no change since 2001. This is the lowest median age in Hertfordshire and is the fifth lowest median age in the Eastern region (47 local authority areas in total). The median age for the UK is 39.</p> <p>Watford has the fourth highest percentage population of 0-4 year olds in the Eastern region and the sixth highest 0-14 year olds. In comparison, Watford has the third lowest percentage population of 65+ in the region.</p>
<p>Households</p>	<p>The average household size in Watford is 2.4. This is average for the region.</p> <p>Number of households The ONS data, based on the census, says that there were 36,681 households in Watford at the time of the Census; as of March 31 2015 is the figure was 38,482.</p> <p>Watford had the fourth highest percentage change in households - +14.6% - in the Eastern region from 2001 to 2011.</p> <p>Household Composition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most frequent household = single people aged under pensionable age. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grown from 17.5% in 2001 to 21.1% in 2011 (overtaken married couples with children)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lone parents - significant rise in the number and % of lone parents (from 4.9% in 2001 to 7.2% in 2011) • One person pensioner households – declined in both numbers and percentage (from 12.2% 2001 to 10.0% in 2011) <p>Household tenure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Privately rented housing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increased from 3,170 homes in 2001 to 7,371 homes in 2011, from 9.8% to 20.1% of the housing stock • Homes owned outright: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • decreased from 26.1% to 24.4% • Homes being purchased with a mortgage: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • decreased from 46.1% to 37.2% • Social housing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • remained static as % of the total housing stock (16.3% in both 2001 and 2011) yet it has increased in number from 5,266 in 2001 to 5,987 in 2011
Projections	<p>The ONS interim 2012-based subnational population projections are an indication of the future trends in population over the next 10 years.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watford’s population is projected to be 103,000 by 2021 • Births are projected to be double deaths each year
Sex	<p>Watford has a balanced male / female population.</p>
Ethnicity	<p>The White British population has decreased from 2001 to 2011 and is now 62% of the Watford population.</p> <p>All ethnic categories except for White British and White Irish have increased over the time period, with notable percentage increase in White Other, Indian, Pakistani and Black African. Other white is the largest non-White British ethnic group in Watford (7.7%) followed by Pakistani (6.7%). Of the Watford Pakistani community, we know that the significant majority are Muslim and of these the majority are Sunni Muslims – see religion below.</p> <p>Recent data indicates that this trend continues.</p>
Religion	<p>54% of the Watford population identified themselves as Christian in the 2011 Census, 21% stated they had ‘no religion, and just under 10% identified themselves as Muslim.</p> <p>The Muslim population requires burials for the deceased and for these to be undertaken as soon as possible after death.</p>

2. What we know from engagement

The review has been supported by engagement with a range of stakeholders:

- Funeral Directors and Memorial Mason
- The Muslim community
- The Gypsy and Traveller community
- Watford Borough Council members
- Wider Watford community

This engagement confirmed a number of the issues / concerns / proposals for improvement identified in the ICCM review. An overview of the actions identified from the feedback is attached (Appendix I). It also helped confirm the areas in the ICCM report, which require immediate action

Does what we know about the Watford population and feedback from engagement indicate if there are areas in the Review which need to be addressed as a priority

The overview of the Watford community and engagement feedback indicate potential emerging areas the Cemetery review. Whilst the Cemetery Strategy will address these in their entirety, the areas for immediate action are highlighted below. These are being presented to Cabinet in September 2015:

Priority areas for action

1. Introduction of a weekend and bank holiday burial service

This area is covered in detail within the ICCM review and also featured as a major focus of the engagement with both the Muslim community and Watford Borough Council members.

In addition, the council received a petition with over 2,000 signatures in June 2015 calling for weekend and bank holiday burials in Watford cemeteries and for consideration to be given to space issues within the council cemeteries.

Limited provision on a Saturday has been available to meet the requirements for those Watford residents and Watford community groups who require burials to be carried out as soon as possible after death for religious or cultural reasons – in Watford this is primarily the Muslim community. However, Saturday burials are not an established part of the service and cannot, therefore, be guaranteed when required by the community. This is because current staffing resources (both Watford BC and Veolia) are set at levels to provide sufficient Monday to Friday service cover. Saturday cover is accommodated if staff are available and prepared to work outside of contracted hours.

The review was, therefore, tasked with finding a sustainable solution that meets the needs for an extended service for the Muslim community. This extended service would be required for Saturday, Sunday and bank holiday burials. A review of burial requests over recent years does not identify requests from any other community group for this service.

Demand for Muslim burials overall

As part of identifying options for the delivery of a weekend / bank holiday service for the Watford Muslim community, the review considered the recent number of Muslim burials undertaken to gauge the possible extent of demand. This is detailed below with some analysis of the figures for additional context. The figures are for residents and non-residents.

Year	No. of Full Burials	No. of Muslim Burials	No. of Muslim Burials on a Saturday*	No. of Muslim Burials on a Monday**
2010	175	38	4	3
2011	144	28	2	4
2012	152	26	0	4
2013	169	39	2	2
2014	166	41	1	5
2015	122	35	0	5

* This figure does not represent all requests received for Saturday burials just those that the current service was able to accommodate

** Monday burials could indicate a death over the weekend whilst the service is closed

Whilst the demand is not high in terms of numbers, the council acknowledges the impact on the Muslim community of not having a guaranteed response to requests and that demand might be higher when an extended service is introduced.

RECOMMENDATION FROM REVIEW

Commissioning the Gardens of Peace charity to provide the service for Watford cemeteries

This is a registered Muslim charity, which, as well as running its own Muslim cemetery in Ilford, provides a weekend service for St Albans Council. The council hands responsibility to Gardens of Peace to provide burials for the Muslim community (the community liaise with Gardens of Peace directly when a need arises) at weekends. An additional fee is charged by the Gardens of Peace, which is paid on top of the burial fee charged by the council. St Albans Council has not had to call on the service on many occasions since it was instigated three years ago but its experience of Gardens of Peace is good.

This option has a number of benefits including:

- the experience of the providers and their understanding of religious /cultural and statutory requirements

- it would be relatively quick to action and bring into operation
- it requires no additional resource / investment from Watford BC

2. Preserving burial space in Watford cemeteries

The council's Local Plan recognises that cemetery space within Watford is limited (North Watford cemetery is the only site available for new graves). This reflects the national picture, where a number of local authorities are facing a similar problem to Watford in terms of space running out but little or no remaining open space on which to site a new cemetery. As there are no sites within Watford that could meet long term demand with the current rates of burial, it is recommended that policies (as outlined in the ICCM report) are explored that will make the best use of available space.

Although there is no statutory requirement for the council to provide cemetery space, there is, nevertheless, a need to ensure that there is sufficient infrastructure, including cemeteries, as part of the plan making process. With the proposed amendments to policies being explored as referred to below, it is recommended that forecasts for available burial space to 2031 are re-profiled. Adjoining districts will also be contacted to test availability elsewhere. With this additional work, there should be no impact on the potential soundness of Local Plan 2.

RECOMMENDATION FROM REVIEW

Explore limiting burials to Watford residents only

The Watford cemetery service is provided for the benefit of Watford residents. The cemetery service is, however, open to anyone (albeit the cost of burials for non-residents is higher than that for residents). Over the years, the council has been willing to provide this service for people who live outside the borough but with the issue of available space running out within 7-9 years and, currently, no definitive option for where a new cemetery could be located, the proposal of limiting burials to Watford residents is now being explored. To implement this, officers will be required to explore an appropriate policy for approval. Within this policy, there would need to be flexibility for exceptional cases (for example, a proven local connection such as a partner buried within Watford) where discretion would be applied to a non-resident's request. The policy would also need to set out any financial implications of changes to current policy.

It is proposed that the explorations of a policy on limiting burials to Watford residents only forms part of a wider policy that covers all identified measures to preserve / make the most of current burial space within Watford cemeteries. This would include a full audit of space availability and how space is currently designated. This policy would need to be presented to Cabinet for approval. At this stage this Equality Impact Analysis will be updated to consider the impact of the policy put forward.

3. Memorial regulations

The current regulations relating to memorials are out of date and hinder the consistent and effective application of an acceptable height and width for memorials that meet the needs of the bereaved.

RECOMMENDATION FROM REVIEW

Five foot is now a standard height for memorials and it is proposed to set this as the new maximum height for Watford cemeteries. This increased height is important to certain groups within the community. In terms of width, this needs to remain at 3 foot for a single grave and up to a maximum of 7 foot for a double grave. All memorials must be erected by a professional memorial mason.

If approval is given for the revised memorial dimensions, the associated new regulations will be implemented immediately and apply to the erection of all new memorials; it will not be applied retrospectively. However, in order to avoid the past situation when little, or no, enforcement was undertaken when memorials were erected that did not comply with regulations, these new regulations will be enforced fairly and consistently. A policy on enforcement will be developed.

4. Staff cover and office hours

The current cemetery service in terms of day to day management is reliant on one member of council staff – the cemetery manager. As outlined in the ICCM report the cemetery manager works a 37 hour week and also occasionally works on Saturdays. When the cemetery manager is on leave, attending training or is unexpectedly ill, cover is provided by a Veolia employee who is undergoing training via the ICCM. This cover is generally effective but comes at an additional cost to the council and relies on the Veolia member of staff being available at short, medium and long term notice.

Cover has also recently been provided by West Herts Crematorium as part of a Service Level Agreement but, again, cannot always be guaranteed.

The current level of staff resource means that the service has limited resilience and the quality of the service is compromised in areas such as office cover, which is not available if the cemetery manager is conducting a burial or is engaged in other cemetery business away from the office.

RECOMMENDATION FROM REVIEW

It is proposed that staff cover is reviewed to ensure improved resilience and customer experience of the service, including changes to office opening hours.

How will the council ensure equality is promoted by the priority areas of action from the Cemetery Review 2015

Under the Equality Act 2010, three areas need to be considered when analysing the equality impact of the Cemetery Review 2015:

1. **eliminate** discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act
2. **advance** equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it
3. **foster** good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not

1. Positive impacts

The priority areas identified within the Review support the needs of people with the protected characteristics as set out in the Equality Act 2010. Within the proposed priorities people in the protected characteristics are supported in the following ways:

- **Weekend and Bank Holiday Burials**

Watford has a large Muslim population. This population has religious and cultural reasons for requiring burials to take place as soon as possible after death. The recommendation of the Cemetery Review is to address this need and seek an organisation that is experienced in delivering this service and that will meet the requirements of the borough's Muslim community.

This will have a positive impact on the Muslim community. It is an issue that the community has raised with the council and has requested that the council find an effective, workable solution.

Whilst the majority of other faiths and those of no religion do not have a requirement for burial to take place as soon as possible after death, this recommendation would alleviate pressure on the service on a Monday, potentially allowing the wider community more choice of burial days at the start of the week. Overall, the impact of weekend and bank holiday burials for the majority of the wider community is neither positive nor negative as the service provided overall remains unaffected. Engagement with funeral directors and residents, whilst not extensive, did not highlight a demand for weekend and bank holiday burials and discussions also identified that those wishing to have a religious representative from the Christian faith present at a burial might find this an issue at weekends – Sundays in particular.

- **Memorial regulations**

The change to the size of memorials will benefit the whole community as the regulations will apply to all those looking to erect a memorial for a loved one. However, the issue is of particular concern to the Gypsy and Traveller community who raised it with the council (i.e. the current regulations do not allow for memorials of a height that they find acceptable) and it is believed other faiths / communities also prefer to have the opportunity to erect higher memorials.

The enforcement policy on memorials will be subject to further analysis to ascertain impact.

- **Staff cover and office hours**

Offering opening hours that are more conducive to the working day should benefit the whole community as will greater service resilience as there will be dedicated, experienced staff available for greater periods of time.

2. Negative impacts

As outlined above, there will be positive impacts for the Muslim community as an important religious / cultural requirement will be met through an extended service. The evidence from the cemetery service is that this extended service has not been requested from other groups within the community and for many faiths / those who state they have no religion burial as soon as possible after death is not viewed in the same way. The cemetery service provided will not be reduced to accommodate weekend and bank holiday burials – and will potentially be improved in areas such as office opening hours – so has not worsened overall for the significant majority of the population.

3. Unknown impacts

Limiting burials to Watford residents only

The review outlines that burial space in Watford, given current provision, is limited. The current recommendation is to explore developing a policy that will preserve this space for as long as possible so that all residents – across all protected characteristics – have access to burial space for as long as possible. This policy might include limiting burials to Watford residents only but no detailed work has yet been done to explore this option.. At this stage, without further information and analysis the impacts are unknown (such as a detailed understanding of the number of burials that are undertaken each year for non-Watford residents). A key aspect of the equality impact analysis would be exploring the justification for any change to current policy.

As the review progresses this EIA will be updated

Monitoring and evaluating of the Cemetery Review 2015

The equality impacts identified through this EIA will be evaluated through regular monitoring by the Parks and Streets Client Team and the Cemetery Manger who will be expected to keep up to date records of burials – both requests and those conducted.

A SLA will be developed with Gardens of Peace, if this option is approved, to provide the extended burials service. This will also be monitored through the Client Team and Cemetery Manager.

Overall conclusion

The Cemetery Review includes a number of proposed priorities which, if not taken forward, would have negative impacts on service users – particularly in relation to weekend and bank holiday burials and memorial regulations. The recommendations in these areas, if taken forward, will, in contrast, have positive impacts.

Whilst the analysis acknowledges that the extended service is provided for the Muslim community who have religious / cultural requirements for burial as soon as possible after death, it concludes that there is no loss of provision for those where burial is not required as soon as possible after death and that, overall, there are more positive than negative impacts from progressing the recommendation.

However, it is acknowledged that further work needs to be done on the review, including the delivery of a Cemetery Strategy and action plan and this analysis will need to be reviewed in light of this as well as the decisions of Cabinet on 7 September 2015.

This EIA has been approved by:

Lesley Palumbo Date 25 August 2015

Head of Corporate Strategy and Client Services

Summary of potential positive and negative impacts on protected characteristics

Positive Impact	Protected characteristics	Ways to ensure the positive impact
Provide an extended burial service to the Muslim community	Ethnicity Religion	Commission Gardens of Peace to provide this service and monitor effectiveness through a robust SLA. Review with community after initial period of delivery.
Allow for taller memorials to be erected	Ethnicity All	Change regulations to allow for 5ft memorials
Provide improved staff cover and change to office hours	All	Review current arrangements and undertake necessary consultation with staff.

Appendix I

Cemetery Review: Actions from Engagement

As of 24 July 2015

The following are the actions arising from the engagement to date:

- Funeral Directors and Memorial Masons
- Muslim community (x 2)
- Gypsy and traveller community
- Members
- Community

Ref	Action	Arising from	By when: (short / medium / long term)* <i>See end of document for timescales</i>
01	Review cemetery office hours	Funeral Directors and Memorial Masons Muslim community	Short
02	Explore option of online booking – more transactional on the website	Funeral Directors and Memorial Masons Muslim community	Long
03	Review of cemetery information / communications – improve how it is advertised – including website	Funeral Directors and Memorial Masons Muslim community	Short (to include changes approved in Sept)
04	Introduce new regulations on memorials for consistency and safety <i>NB height and width issue</i>	Funeral Directors and Memorial Masons Gypsy and Travellers	Short
05	Explore introduction of an annual meeting for those local Funeral Directors / Memorial Masons with link to Watford cemeteries	Funeral Directors and Memorial Masons	Short

Ref	Action	Arising from	By when: (short / medium / long term)
06	<p>Benchmark against what other areas provide (including prices / costs). It was explained this was being done as part of the review and the elements raised in relation to facilitating weekend and Bank Holiday burials would certainly be included. Representatives suggested the following being followed up:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carpenders Park • Amersham • Chesham (allow community to help with burials) • Luton • High Wycombe • Three Rivers • St Albans 	<p>Muslim community</p> <p>Councillors</p>	Short
07	Explore an 'on call' option for weekend and Bank Holidays	<p>Muslim community</p> <p>Councillors</p>	Short
08	<p>Explore setting aside time slots at weekends and Bank Holidays for burials. There is no need for the service to be 24/7 but what is being requested are times when burials could be achieved. The optimum time for burials for the community would be 12 – 3pm (this allows for burial prayers after 12 noon prayers)</p>	<p>Muslim community</p> <p>Councillors</p> <p>Community</p>	Short
09	Explore scope to train up members of the community to help provide cover – reducing the need for stand-by. This was done in Chesham.	<p>Muslim community</p> <p>Councillors</p>	Short
10	Identify the additional cost of an enhanced / extended service	<p>Muslim community</p> <p>Councillors</p>	Short
11	Consider only offering weekend and Bank Holiday burials to Watford residents	<p>Muslim community</p> <p>Councillors</p>	Short
12	Undertake a detailed analysis of the capacity of the Muslim sections at North Watford Cemetery as part of an overall review of space	<p>Muslim community</p> <p>Councillors</p>	Short

Ref	Action	Arising from	By when: (short / medium / long term)
	remaining within NW cemetery		
13	Explore if there are solutions to the water supply issue for the Muslim section	Muslim community	Short
14	Ensure consistency of the registration for plots that have been reserved (when this was permitted)	Muslim community	Short
15	Consider whether there are any suitable sites outside the borough for cemetery provision (e.g. Link Road / Langlebury)	Muslim community Councillors Community	Medium
16	Re-examine cutting down the trees to expand North Watford Cemetery	Muslim community Community	Medium
17	Identify, if available, pockets of land that could be used (examples were given of land around North Watford mosque / Harebreaks – around the APG)	Muslim community Community	Medium
18	Explore any land held by other public sector bodies in the borough that could be used for a new cemetery	Muslim community Community	Medium

Timescales for action:

Short: August 2015 to March 2016

Medium: April 2016 to October 2016

Long: November 2016 to March 2017

*PART A

Report to: Cabinet
Date of meeting: 7th September 2015
Report of: Head of Corporate Strategy & Client Services
Title: Voluntary and Community Sector Commissioning Framework
2016-2019

1.0 **SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The council recognises that the voluntary and community sector has an important and legitimate role in providing services within the borough which provide many positive benefits for those who live, work and visit Watford.

The Commissioning Framework is the council's mechanism that sets out the priorities for a range of leisure and community services to be delivered by commissioned voluntary and third sector organisations between 2016-2019 on behalf of the council.

The aim of the Framework is to ensure a robust approach to commissioning the voluntary and community sector to deliver services in areas considered to be district council responsibility and based on evidence of current or emerging need(s) within Watford.

The current Commissioning Framework is due to expire on 31st March 2016

- 1.2 The Commissioning Framework is set in the context of current budget pressures and cuts to the public sector. The development of the Framework provides an opportunity to assess whether the priorities are still the right priorities for Watford in terms of whether they are appropriate for a district council to fund. At present there is no requirement for additional savings to be made from the voluntary and community sector budget; although commissioned organisations will be required to provide evidence on how they are working to achieve future longer term financial sustainability.
- 1.3 The development of the next three year Commissioning Framework has now concluded and the purpose of this report is to confirm 1) the commissioning priorities from 2016 and 2) key areas of focus within the stated priorities.

This report:

- Presents the final draft of the Voluntary and Community Sector Commissioning Framework 2016-2019 (**Appendix A**) document for approval
- Summarises the work and consultation undertaken by elected members, partners, service users and officers to identify the commissioning priorities and areas of focus for the next three years
- Outlines next steps and milestones e.g. development of Service Level Agreements (SLA) and service specifications

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 Cabinet are recommended to:

2.2 Approve the Voluntary and Community Sector Commissioning Framework 2016-2019 priorities and areas of focus as identified in Section 3.6 of this report

2.3 Delegate responsibility to the Head of Corporate Strategy & Client Services in consultation with the Portfolio Holder to implement the next steps and key milestones as described in Section 3.7 to ensure services are in place from 1st April 2016, subject to council approval of the Budget 2016/17

Contact Officer:

For further information on this report please contact: Chris Fennell, Corporate, Leisure & Community - Client Section Head (Telephone extension 8317, Email: chris.fennell@watford.gov.uk)

Report approved by: Lesley Palumbo, Head of Corporate Strategy & Client Services .

3.0 DETAILED PROPOSAL

3.1 Introduction

Watford has a large and active voluntary sector with organisations providing a diverse range of services often to those who are most vulnerable. The Voluntary and Community Sector Commissioning Framework 2016-2019 is the mechanism for allocating funding to a number of voluntary and third sector organisations to deliver a range of leisure and community service priorities on behalf of the council.

The council has a long standing and positive working relationship with the local voluntary and third sector organisations and it deploys a significant proportion of its budget to support a number of them in a variety of ways. The council intends to continue supporting the sector recognising that they are sometimes best placed to deliver key services to local residents.

3.1.2 The new Commissioning Framework is designed to support the delivery of the council's Vision and Corporate Plan, in particular 'promoting an active, cohesive and well informed community', although it is also expected that it would contribute to 'making Watford a better place to live' and 'to provide the strategic lead for Watford's sustainable economic growth'. New service specifications will make much clearer the commissioned objectives against the corporate plan and the Town's objectives. Each service's performance and outcomes secured against the current framework have been reviewed in this context.

3.2 **Community Centres Task Group Recommendations**

3.2.1 A cross party task group was established to support the development of the community centres element of the new Commissioning Framework and held a series of meetings in May 2015. A report on the work of the task group is listed in the background papers.

The task group proposed the following recommendations in relation to individual community centres:

3.2.2 **Centrepoint Community Centre:** That the council continue to manage the centre on an interim basis within the allocated budget envelope whilst further discussions take place with regard to the future of the facility, allowing for the following:

- Any impact from the WBC Property Review to be considered.
- The outcomes from the Watford Community Housing Trust's Community Options Study to be considered.
- Partnership opportunities around future management of the building to be explored.

3.2.3 **Holywell Community Centre:** That the council continue to fund the centre for three years to provide stability, allowing for any opportunities arising from the Sports Facility Strategy to be considered and enable Watford and Three Rivers Trust to maximise income potential through the hall hire for the following proposed activities:

- Charitable fundraising events
- Business events and conferences
- Private hires including wedding receptions
- Health and wellbeing activities that target evidenced health issues in local area

3.2.4 **Leavesden Green Community Centre:** That the council continues to fund the centre for two years up to April 2107. Watford Community Housing Trust (WCHT) subsequently continuing their long lease (99 years) on the condition they use the building for community activities with such a commitment embedded into the lease as a Community Use Agreement.

That WCHT market activities at the centre to both WCHT residents and the wider community.

3.2.5 **Meriden Community Centre:** That the council continues to fund the facility for three years whilst redevelopment of the site is completed and that the Watford Football Sports and Education Trust (WFC Trust) be required to submit a comprehensive business plan with evidence of moving towards becoming self-sustaining from April 2019.

3.2.6 **Orbital Community Centre:** That the council continues to fund the facility for three years to provide stability, enabling the YMCA to consider redevelopment and funding opportunities that will help them to become self sustaining.

That the centre explore community development opportunities with the influx of new residents as a result of the new WCHT housing development and proactively engage

with the new community residing at the new development on the site of the former Lincoln Court.

- 3.2.7 **West Watford Community Association (WWCA):** That the council continues to fund the centre for three years whilst WWCA explore opportunities for income generation and future alternative premises/partnerships.

3.3 **General Recommendations**

The Task Group considered that the centres should be commissioned to support the needs of their individual communities, fostering a sense of community spirit and cohesion. They proposed that community centres provide a range of centre activities that address evidenced need in their ward in one or more the following areas:

- Public health focusing on mental health and wellbeing
- Support and skills building towards gaining employment
- Youth focused activities
- Activities for older people
- Support with budget and debt issues
- Activities for people with disabilities

That all six community centres increase their marketing and publicity activity. Focus to be placed on the council's current communication resources e.g. About Watford and social media opportunities.

These objectives will be built into the service specifications.

3.4 **Development of Commissioning Framework priorities**

- 3.4.1 The new Commissioning Framework priorities were agreed through a process involving:

- Understanding Herts Country Council obligations as lead funder and commissioning body for education, social care support, public health and community health related services, domestic violence, housing related support etc.
- Consultation with voluntary sector organisations about emerging needs (e.g. Welfare Reform Act impacts resulting in greater demand for advice services in the borough)
- Recommendations from a cross party member task group
- Emerging national and local priorities which would be a district council responsibility
- Outcome of the Equality Impact Analysis

3.5 **Voluntary and Community Sector Consultation**

During July / August 2015, a consultation was undertaken with Watford's Voluntary and Community Sector. A survey was sent to the third sector organisations asking for their views on the voluntary and community sector environment in the town.

61 responses were received to the survey. In terms of the voluntary and community

sector overall the following were the top 3 support services seen as important for the sector:

1. Start up advice
2. Governance advice
3. Advice on charity issues

In terms of the organisations themselves, the following were the top 3 services seen by service users as important:

1. Funding search / sourcing
2. Funding applications / bids help
3. Opening up links to other organisations in the voluntary and community sector / advising on changes and new initiatives relating to the voluntary and community sector (joint)

3.6 Conclusions

As a result of adopting the third Voluntary and Community Sector Commissioning Framework the services detailed below will continue to be provided to residents for a period up to April 2019 but will be subject to the availability of funding during that period as set out in the council's Medium Term Financial Strategy and annual budget setting process.

The quality of services commissioned by the council will be monitored and should the services be considered below the quality expected or the need for the service reduce then the Service Level Agreement (SLA) with the organisations commissioned will enable the council to de-commission or reduce funding as appropriate.

The funding for the Commissioning Framework will be met through existing resources and will be a standstill budget for the period 2016-2019. The current budget envelope for 2016/17 is £980,270 and opportunities for efficiencies will be identified..

The services to be commissioned are:

- Infrastructure support to the voluntary and community sector – delivered by Watford and Three Rivers Trust (W3RT)
- Mobility scooter and wheel chair services – delivered by Watford Shopmobility
- Advice services – delivered by Watford Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)
- Arts and culture services – delivered by Watford Palace Theatre
- Small Grants Fund – administered by the WBC Client Services Team

The authority also provides a management grant to support the following council owned community centres across the borough:

- Holywell community centre – managed by W3RT
- Orbital community centre – managed by YMCA
- Leavesden Green community centre – managed by Watford Community Housing Trust
- Meriden community centre – managed by Watford Football Club Sports and Education Trust (WFC Trust)

- West Watford Community Association
- Centrepont community centre – currently managed in-house by WBC. (see section 3.2 of this report - recommendations identified from cross party task group)

3.7 Next steps

- 3.7.1 • 7th September 2015 - Cabinet approves the Voluntary and Community Sector Commissioning Framework 2016-2019 (Attached as Appendix A)
- 3.7.2 • October – March 2016 implementation phase including:
 - Preparation of individual SLAs
 - Preparation of service specifications and lease documents as appropriate
 - Finalise budgets and funding allocation
 - Finalise lease arrangements as appropriate

4.0 IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Financial

- 4.1.1 The Shared Director of Finance comments that the baseline funding for this programme will be contained within the current budget for this area of activity.

The budget will be subject to the council's annual budget setting process and any requirements to make savings or provide growth will be dealt with as part of this process..

4.2 Legal Issues (Monitoring Officer)

- 4.2.1 The Head of Democracy and Governance comments that the council has a wide variety of legal powers that are available for it to provide both financial and physical assistance to the voluntary sector to enable them to undertake their functions. The priorities identified within the Commissioning Framework are all covered by these powers.

The council must have due regard to the Equality Impact Analysis and the effect of the framework on those with protected characteristics and any mitigation before adopting the framework as a new policy.

4.3 Equalities

- 4.3.1 Watford Borough Council is committed to equality and diversity as an employer, service provider and as a strategic partner.

An Equality Impact Analysis (EIA) has been undertaken for the new Commissioning Framework and the full report will be published on the internet. The assessment has considered if there are identified emerging needs that are currently not met through the proposed priorities and focus areas and if these needs are already being addressed or not.

If emerging needs are identified during the period of the Commissioning Framework, consideration will have to be given as to whether these are a district council commissioning responsibility. If it is considered a District Council responsibility, further assessment will need to be undertaken with regard to:

- Alignment with the council's corporate objectives
- Whether council funding is required in order to commission the services

If the above criteria are met, the process will require a separate report identifying the commissioning requirements to be taken forward for approval with appropriate funding identified either from savings within the programme or a requirement for a growth bid.

No immediate issues have been identified from the EIA. Looking to the future the impact of changes within the Welfare Reform Act may present a future need by local residents that may not have been identified at this time but will be monitored over the period of the Commissioning Framework.

4.4 Potential Risks

Potential Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Overall score
Priorities and focus areas not agreed by Cabinet	1	4	4
Failure to deliver project next steps and milestones within agreed timeframe	2	4	8
Future funding for the Commissioning Framework not available beyond 2017	2	4	8
Equality Impact Analysis identifies emerging need that is a WBC responsibility which is not covered by the priorities or focus areas	1	4	4
<p>The Voluntary and Community Commissioning Framework delivers a range of high profile services to local residents, failure to deliver the priorities and focus area would present a reputation risk to the organisation.</p> <p>In order to minimise this potential risk a detailed risk assessment and monitoring programme will be produced and form an integral part of the implementation of the new Commissioning Framework, service specifications and individual SLAs.</p>			

4.5 Staffing

4.5.1 There are no changes to staffing arrangements identified through the adoption of this Commissioning Framework. Any changes that may occur during the period of the framework as a result of the identification of emerging needs or service issues relating to individual SLA's will be addressed on an individual service basis at the time.

4.6 Accommodation

4.6.1 There are no changes identified in this report relating to accommodation

4.7 **Community Safety**

- 4.7.1 The positive activities resulting from the services provided by many of the commissioned services particularly in relation to youth activities will contribute to a safer environment.

4.8 **Sustainability**

- 4.8.1 The proposals in this report accord with the council's approach on sustainable procurement to consider the social and economic impacts of the procurement or commission. Small firms, voluntary and community organisations and social enterprises are innovative and add value with an important role in the local economy and contribution to social cohesion.

Appendices

- A - Voluntary and Community Sector Commissioning Framework 2016-2019

Background Papers

- Project Initiation Document – Voluntary Sector Commissioning Framework 2016-2019, 8th January 2015 (not for publication as the document contains financial information relating to Watford Borough Council and other groups – Part 1, Schedule 12A, paragraph 3)
- Voluntary Sector Commissioning Framework (Community Centres) Task Group Final Report, including 12th and 26th May 2015 Task Group minutes
- Equalities Impact Analysis (EIA), August 2015

“The following background papers were used in the preparation of this report. If you wish to inspect or take copies of the background papers, please contact the officer named on the front page of the report.”



Voluntary and Community Sector DRAFT COMMISSIONING FRAMEWORK (2016-2019)

Leisure and Community Services



Commissioning Framework 2016-2019

This is the third Watford Borough Council Commissioning Framework for the funding of leisure and community services delivered by voluntary sector organisations.

As with the previous Commissioning Frameworks, Watford Borough Council is committed to supporting a vibrant and engaged voluntary sector which can deliver quality and value for money services that benefit those who live, work and visit Watford. The voluntary sector in Watford is a key contributor to making Watford a better place to live for its residents and is recognised as being best placed to deliver some services at a local level supporting excluded, new or vulnerable communities.

The council is also committed to working in partnership with the voluntary sector as demonstrated in the Watford Compact (Appendix A).

Why a Commissioning Framework approach?

The purpose of this Commissioning Framework is to ensure a robust approach to commissioning the voluntary and community sector to deliver services that are considered a District Council funding responsibility and address evidenced current or emerging need(s) within Watford.

Additionally the commissioning of specific priorities are intended to support the delivery of the council's corporate vision and objectives detailed in the Corporate Plan 2015-2019 available to view on the council's website., in particular:

- Promoting an active, cohesive and well informed community
- Making Watford a better place to live
- Providing the strategic lead for Watford's sustainable economic growth

What does the council currently commission?

The council's current Commissioning Framework (2013-2016) commissioned the delivery of the following priorities:

- Infrastructure support to the voluntary and community sector
- Advice service provision
- Arts and culture
- Enabling people with a physical mobility problem to access the town centre
- Community centre provision
- Small Grants Fund
- Sport



What are the proposed commissioning priorities for 2016-2019 and how were they identified?

The development of the new Commissioning Framework provided an opportunity for the council to review its current priorities and assess:

- what it should continue to fund and;
- whether the current priorities were still the right priorities for Watford in the context of being appropriate for a District Council to fund within a limited budget envelope (and potential future savings being required from the voluntary sector funding budget).

Council officers and members considered a range of evidence relating to Watford including:

- Key demographic information including census and public health ward information
- Aspirations of the council's economic growth programme and how the voluntary sector can contribute to achieving this
- Impacts and outcomes of council reviews including a Property Review of all council property assets
- Discussions with voluntary sector organisations
- Findings from the Equality Impact Analysis

In addition a separate cross member Task Group was asked to look specifically at community centre provision.

Establishing the future commissioning priorities also needed to consider;

- The focus of service delivery within the priorities to deliver maximum effectiveness, quality and value for money and contribute to the council's objectives
- The extent to which council investment was required and how organisations were working towards future sustainability

Commissioning priorities for 2016 - 2019

The council has proposed that the current priorities continue to be commissioned for a further three years as they are considered to be a District Council responsibility and continue to align with the council's future objectives. The exception is Sport where commissioning will be addressed through other mechanisms including the implementation of the council's Sports Facilities Strategy.

The commissioning priorities are:

- **Infrastructure support to the voluntary and community sector**
It is proposed that Watford and Three Rivers Trust (W3RT) be commissioned to deliver this service given their extensive networks across the voluntary, statutory and business sectors.



The focus of service delivery will be to strengthen the voluntary sector in Watford and enable it to thrive, ensuring that it has the best possible opportunity of delivering quality, effective and value for money services to service users.

- **Advice services**

It is proposed that Watford Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) be commissioned to deliver a generic advice service provision. It is considered that the CAB currently has the capacity and capability to deliver a comprehensive advice service to the diverse and changing communities of Watford, working with the council to address and respond to any legislative or policy changes that may impact on service users.

- **Mobility scooter services**

It is proposed that Shopmobility be commissioned to deliver a mobility scooter service that allows those with physical mobility problems to access businesses and services in the town centre. It is considered that Shopmobility has the necessary infrastructure in place to deliver this service.

- **Arts and culture**

The cultural offer for Watford is a key council objective to make Watford a better place to live and create economic growth. It is proposed that Watford Palace Theatre be commissioned to deliver arts and culture services through a range of theatre activities. It is considered that Watford Palace Theatre is a key contributor to delivering to the council's cultural vision.

- **Community centre provision**

The member Task Group considered evidence relating to the current community centres including demographic information. It recommended that community centre provision remains a commissioning priority on the basis that all the currently commissioned community centres are located in areas of multiple deprivation.

The community centres are:

Community Centre	Commissioned organisation
Holywell community centre	W3RT
Orbital community centre	YMCA
Leavesden community centre	Watford Community Housing Trust
Meriden community centre	Watford Football Club Sports and Education Trust
West Watford community centre	West Watford Community Association
Centrepoint Community Centre	Managed by WBC whilst further review undertaken



The Task Group considered that the centres should be commissioned to support the needs of their individual communities, fostering a sense of community spirit and cohesion. They proposed that community centres provide a range of centre activities that address evidenced need in their ward in one or more the following areas:

- Public health focusing on mental health and wellbeing
- Support and skills building towards gaining employment
- Youth focused activities
- Activities for older people
- Support with budget and debt issues
- Activities for people with disabilities

Small Grants Fund

It is proposed that the council continues to administer a Small Grants Fund for a further three years to provide grants to a maximum of £2,000 for equipment and/or one off projects.

Equality Impact Analysis

An equality impact analysis has been developed to establish whether there are any emerging needs that are not addressed through the proposed commissioning priorities. If there are emerging needs identified during the period of the Commissioning Framework, that are not currently met, consideration will be given as to whether these are a District Council responsibility, align with the council’s corporate objectives and whether council funding is required in order to commission the service.

Next steps - timetable and implementation

The following table details the process for finalising the Commissioning Framework and implementation for the Commissioning Framework to be in place from 1st April 2016.

Milestone	Timeline
Commissioning priorities approved at Portfolio Holder’s meeting	1 st June 2015
Final draft of Commissioning Framework for approval at Cabinet	7 th September 2015
Implementation phase including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation of Service Level Agreements • Preparation of service specifications and lease documents as appropriate • Finalising budgets and funding allocation • Finalising lease arrangements as appropriate 	October – March 2016



Watford Compact 2014

Watford Compact 2014 – a cross sector partnership

This is a voluntary agreement between different organisations designed to strengthen local relationships and improve outcomes for the local community. Organisations signing up to this compact may come from the public, private or voluntary sectors – or from organisations that have a foot in two or more sectors.

Recognition, respect and partnership

All signatories to this document:

- agree to work in partnership to improve outcomes for stakeholders, customers and the local community;
- recognise and respect the roles of each sector;
- understand that a successful community must have effective, confident organisations in each sector.

The basics

Signatories agree to work within the principles of Corporate Social Responsibility defined by ISO 26000:

- Accountability
We are answerable to those affected by our decisions and activities, as well as to society in general for our overall impact.
- Transparency
We will disclose (in a clear, accurate manner and to a reasonable and sufficient degree) our policies, decisions, and activities, including known and likely impacts.
- Ethical behaviour
Our decisions and activities will reflect our commitment to honesty, equity, and integrity.
- Respect for stakeholders
We will take into account the rights and interests of all stakeholders including owners, members, customers, constituents, employees, neighbours, other individuals or groups may also have rights, claims, or specific interests that should be taken into account.
- Respect for the rule of law
We will ensure that all our employees, volunteers, agents and stakeholders understand our commitment to comply with applicable laws and regulations.
- Respect for international standards of behaviour
We will ensure that all our employees, volunteers, agents and stakeholders understand our commitment not to benefit from unethical behaviour, even where this behaviour is legal.
- Respect for human rights
In all circumstances we will respect and foster rights set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and elsewhere in the International Bill of Human Rights.



Good governance

- We will publish an annual report on our work.
- We will demonstrate our commitment to good governance by working within or toward an appropriate quality assurance standard.
- We will monitor and evaluate our work and secure regular feedback from our stakeholders.
- We will join or recognise representational and trade bodies such as the Watford and West Herts Chamber of Commerce and W3RT CVS.
- We will be active within appropriate broader local partnerships such as sector forums dealing (for example, with culture, technology, or education).

Good practise

- Consultation and collaboration
We will consult customers, members, constituents, stakeholders wherever possible, contribute to the consultations of others, and work collaboratively where a common interest is identified.
- Environment
We recognise that natural resources are limited and the natural environment is precious, and will take action to reduce consumption, increase recycling, and protect the environment.
- Equalities
We will promote equality and remove discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, marital status, pregnancy or parenthood, race, religious belief or non-belief, sex, sexual orientation or gender re-assignment.
- Public health
We will promote good public health, including good mental health, to our employees and stakeholders.
- Employment
We will observe good practise in recruitment and employment, and will particularly look to provide opportunities for local people who are young or disadvantaged.
- Volunteering
Where appropriate we will provide opportunities for volunteers and encourage paid staff to volunteer in the local community.
- Charity
We will support local charity by contributing to fundraising or encouraging our staff to contribute.
- Watford
Within the law and competitive practise, we will try to recruit suppliers, contractors and employees from within the Watford community.

The public sector - lead signatory: Watford Borough Council

Public sector organisations derive their legitimacy from popular consent and democratic accountability and are responsible for policy development, regulation and the rule of law, and the delivery of statutory services. Public sector signatories agree to adhere to the national Compact.



The private sector - lead signatory: Watford and West Herts Chamber of Commerce

Private sector organisations are accountable to their private owners and through regulation and the rule of law; they underpin the economy by producing goods and services, generating trade, creating jobs and wealth, and paying taxes.

The voluntary sector - lead signatory: W3RT CVS

Voluntary sector organisations are accountable through their trustees and members and through regulation and the rule of law; they challenge injustice, preserve culture, highlight and address needs by providing goods and services, and provide a platform for marginalised and under-represented groups. Voluntary sector signatories agree to adhere to the national Compact.

Status

This is not a legally binding agreement and implies no legal commitment. We acknowledge the right of each signatory to determine its own policies and to act accordingly. If any organisation decides it cannot meet the standards set by this Compact, it can remove its name from the list of signatories. Where a complaint is received that a signatory organisation is not meeting the standards set by this Compact, its name can be removed from the list of signatories by unanimous agreement of the three lead signatories (subject always to the right of the organisation to respond to the complaint received).





*PART A

Report to: Cabinet
Date of meeting: 7th September 2015
Report of: Head of Regeneration and Development
Title: Economic Development Strategy

1.0 **SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The 2010 Economic Development Strategy has been revised. This report includes a review of the performance of the Strategy (2010-2015), the new Economic Development Strategy 2015-2020 and a supporting Action Plan to 2018.
- 1.2 The review of the 2010 Action Plan provides an update on project related activity as well as a review of Headline Indicators/KPI's as defined in the 2010-2015 Economic Development Strategy.

The over-riding objective of the Economic Development Strategy 2015-2020 is to maintain, develop and grow the town's economic development activity, to deliver a prosperous economy for Watford and to ensure that as a town we create sufficient opportunities for local people to maximise their economic prosperity and potential. The strategy draws on evidence incorporated from a range of sources both within the Council and provided by the town's key private and 3rd Sector stakeholders, however it is primarily informed by its companion document, the Watford Economic Growth and Delivery Assessment.

Watford's Local Plan Core Strategy is the principal spatial plan for the Borough and it sets out the vision and framework by which the town will grow and develop to 2031 and articulates how Watford Borough Council will lead and realise the vision. The Economic Development Strategy is one of the enabling strategies to deliver the Core Strategy and both align with the Council's Corporate Plan Strategic Priority 2 'to provide the Strategic lead for Watford's sustainable economic growth.'

The 2015 – 2018 Action Plan takes the 2015-2020 Economic Development Strategy into a "smart" format for monitoring and review.

2.0 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 To note progress made against the 2010 Action Plan.
- 2.2 To agree the 2015 – 2020 Economic Development Strategy.
- 2.3 To agree the 2015 – 2018 Action Plan.

Contact Officer:

For further information on this report please contact:
Andrew Gibson, Economic Development Manager
telephone extension: 8286
email: andrew.gibson@watford.gov.uk

Report approved by: Head of Regeneration and Development

3.0 DETAILED PROPOSAL

3.1 In the previous Economic Development Strategy the following 5 priorities were set out:

- Priority 1 – The Sustainable Growth of Watford
- Priority 2 – Engaging with and Supporting the Business Community
- Priority 3 – Inward Investment and Business Retention
- Priority 4 – Ensuring that Watford has a Skills Base to Support a World Class
.....Economy
- Priority 5 – Strengthening Local Supply Chains and Securing Local Employment

These were incorporated into an action plan with set activities for each.

3.2 The document at Annex A shows performance against the plan. Most of the actions have been carried out and where desired outcomes have not been achieved, the reasons have been clearly articulated. Some of the outstanding actions are now time expired, however some will be carried forward into the Action Plan for 2015-2018.

3.3 In developing the strategy consultation was carried out with key stakeholders, both internal and external, including online consultation. These have been incorporated into the revised strategy.

3.4 Watford, as a town, is in a very different place than it was in 2010. At that time we were still in an economic recession, whereas we are currently experiencing something of a property and investment boom.

3.6 Watford has a young and growing population. 33.8% of the population are between 25 and 44, compared with the England average of 27.5%. There are approximately 3500 business within the Borough, across a wide range of sectors. Business start ups are above average, which evidences an entrepreneurial culture, however, the town still appears to have challenges in terms of its 5 year business survival rate, being lower than both regional and national averages.

3.7 Watford's population is growing rapidly and is expected to grow further. Recent evidence also suggests a significant uplift in the level of projected business/employment demand in the town, however this is heavily constrained by the Borough's ability to deliver sufficient fit for purpose business space. The primary challenge for Watford is the lack of space and land to accommodate demand for housing and jobs and the increasingly difficult choices which will need to be made as to how we deploy the relatively limited amount of land available in a way that supports our strategic objectives.

- 3.8 The town has comparatively very low unemployment – which further demonstrates the vibrancy of its local economy. Watford is characterised as being a net-importer of labour. Between 2001 and 2011 however, Watford has become a large exporter of labour as the number of in-commuters has remained relatively static whilst the number of residents working elsewhere has increased by 18%. Between 2001 and 2011, the volume of residents travelling to London for work increased by some 25%. The number of in-commuting workers originating from London also increased by 13% over this time, highlighting the growing economic and spatial connectivity with the capital.
- 3.9 The town has an ambitious regeneration agenda and much has been delivered already. A review of the progress and successes in the delivery of major projects is included in the Strategy.
- 3.10 To continue to improve the economic prospects of the town, the following revised priorities have been established:
- Priority 1 – Sustainable Growth of Watford and its Economy
 - Priority 2 – Transport and Digital Connectivity
 - Priority 3 – Inward Investment and Business Retention
 - Priority 4 – Innovation and Enterprise
 - Priority 5 – Employability and Skills
- 3.11 As before, the strategy includes specific actions to deliver these priorities. These are set out in the Action Plan 2015 – 2018 which is at Appendix 2.
- 3.12 The success and progress of the Economic Development Strategy will be reviewed as part of the Council’s Annual Monitoring Report. The whole strategy will be refreshed and reviewed for 2020.

4.0 **IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 **Financial**

- 4.1.1 The Shared Director of Finance comments that any financial implications which follow on from the strategy will be considered as part of the Council’s budget setting process.

4.2 **Legal Issues** (Monitoring Officer)

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

4.3 **Equalities**

- 4.3.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been undertaken – no negative impacts.

The Economic Development Strategy is one of the enabling strategies to deliver the Core Strategy and both align with the Council’s Corporate Plan Strategic Priority 2 ‘to provide the Strategic lead for Watford’s sustainable economic growth.’ Both the Core Strategy and Council’s Corporate Plan are also subject to their own Equalities Impact Assessments.

4.4 Potential Risks

Potential Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Overall score
<i>Major Projects not delivered</i>	2	4	8
<i>Funding for new transport infrastructure projects not available</i>	2	3	6
<i>Failure to attract and retain businesses</i>	1	4	4
<i>Failure to secure funding to support wider business support programme, including provision of business incubator space</i>	2	3	6
<i>Watford Skillsmakers Board does not progress</i>	2	3	6

4.5 Staffing

4.5.1 Strategy to delivered within existing resources.

4.6 Accommodation

4.6.1 Na.

4.7 Community Safety

4.7.1 Na.

4.8 Sustainability

4.8.1 The Strategy seeks to promote and deliver Sustainable Economic Growth.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Watford Borough Council Economic Development Action Plan 2010-2015 – 5 Year Review

Appendix 2: Watford Borough Council Economic Development Action Plan 2015 – 2018

Appendix 3: Draft Economic Development Strategy

Background Papers

- [Watford Economic Growth and Delivery Assessment, November 2014](#)

The background paper shown above was used in the preparation of this report. If you wish to inspect or take copies of the background papers, please contact the officer named on the front page of the report. or go to the web page.

File Reference

- none

Appendix 1

Watford Borough Council Economic Development Action Plan 2010-2015 – 5 Year Review

Summary

The WBC Economic Development Action Plan (2010) identified and articulated the actions that Watford Borough Council would aim to undertake in the coming years to implement the vision and objectives of the Watford Economic Development Strategy 2010-2015.

The 2010 Strategy recognised that in the immediate aftermath and rebalancing of the local economy following the global financial crisis in 2008, in some cases it could be difficult to set meaningful long term targets as the impacts of recession mature and evolve. In some instance the target was simply to attempt to retain some key aspects of the local economy at their current standing i.e limiting negative impact rather than aspiring for improvement.

There have also been some fundamental changes to our partnership landscape over the past number of years. The General Election in 2010 and resulting Comprehensive Review in Autumn 2010 saw a move away from Regional Development Agencies and the introduction of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP's). In Watford's case, this saw the closure of the East of England Development Agency (EEDA) and the establishment of Hertfordshire LEP. Hertfordshire Works, the economic partnership for Hertfordshire, was subsequently dissolved into the Hertfordshire LEP.

As well as changes to the partner landscape, the Coalitions Governments desire to cut red tape, free business from bureaucracy and create an environment in which enterprise can flourish has seen a series of wider reforms, particularly in relation to service delivery partners and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO's). With regard to business, Business Link, a national service providing free business and signposting advice, has been downsized to a purely online resource.

As this review will seek to demonstrate, Watford has continued to strive to achieve the highest standards in a very constrained environment and with the support of our numerous partners and stakeholders, we have delivered much of what we set out to do. Where we haven't, we have set out the reason why.

Economic Development Strategy Priority	Priority 1 – The Sustainable Growth of Watford			
Strategic Alignment	WBC Corporate Plan objective 3 - Enhance the towns sustainability WBC Corporate Plan objective 4 - Enhance the towns economic prosperity and potential One Watford – A well-planned town with homes to suit all needs Hertfordshire Works Economic Development Strategy – Providing quality locations and infrastructure Hertfordshire Works Economic Development Strategy – Creating vibrant towns and vibrant communities Hertfordshire Forward – Safer and stronger communities Hertfordshire Forward – Housing, affordable housing and quality neighbourhoods Hertfordshire Forward – Transport and access Hertfordshire Forward – Promoting sustainable development			
Activities	Performance Outputs	Lead Partner	External Partners	Progress Update - 2015
Charter Place Redevelopment	Initial consultation to be held with key stakeholders within the business community.	London & Regional and Watford Borough Council.	Watford Chamber of Commerce, Watford Merchants Association, Business Advisory Group, other town centre stakeholders	Long-term lease secured with Intu Planning permission secured in 2014 Compulsory Purchase Order granted 2015 Development commencing in Autumn 2015
Croxley Rail Link	Continued involvement in Project Board and completion of feasibility work on the potential retention of Watford Metropolitan Station	Hertfordshire County Council & London Underground Ltd	Network Rail, Watford Borough Council, Three Rivers District Council	Transport & Works Act Order secured 2013 Final Funding approval secured March 2015 Project Transfer to London Underground Ltd August 2015 Construction commencing Autumn 2015
Watford Specialist Events Market	Delivery of first Events market and development of ongoing programme of events.	Watford Borough Council	Hertfordshire Works - Vibrant Towns Group (to which funding bid was made)	Specialist events markets delivered Also supported the delivery of community markets i.e Queens Road Summer Market New Watford Mark delivered
Watford Town Centre Footfall counting infrastructure	Delivery of footfall counting infrastructure	Watford Borough Council	Watford For You, Merchants Association, Safer Watford Partnership and other town centre stakeholders	Contract awarded to Springboard Footfall Counting infrastructure installed Q1 2015
Queens Road Neighbourhood Action Zone	Implementation of range of initiatives to support designated neighbourhood renewal area and ensure learning for future initiatives.	QRAG, Queens Road Traders Association & Watford Borough Council	Hertfordshire County Council, Queens Road Action Group (QRAG), Queens Road Traders Association	Neighbourhood Programme delivered
Local Investment Plan (LIP)	Production of IDP to ensure Watford is perfectly placed to bid for any future funding streams expected to require a	Watford Borough Council	Hertfordshire County Council, Hertfordshire Works or any subsequent Local Enterprise	Completed 2013 Due for Review early 2016 as part of Local Plan

	robust and integrated schedule of delivery.		Partnership (LEP).	Part2
PPS4 (Planning Policy Statement 4) town centre health check and benchmarking reporting template	Development and completion of PPS4 complaint town centre health-check and benchmarking against other competing centres	Watford Borough Council	Hertfordshire County Council, Vibrant Towns Sub-Group of Hertfordshire Works	PPS4 revoked as part of NPPF Town Centre Partnership formed, supported by Town centre Manager with responsibility for developing specific Town Centre Strategy, reporting key KPI's to TCP Board.
Economic Development Strategy Priority	Priority 2 – Engaging with and Supporting the Business Community			
Strategic Alignment	WBC Corporate Plan Objective 3 – Enhance the towns sustainability WBC Corporate Plan Objective 4 – Enhance the towns economic prosperity and potential One Watford – A well-planned town with homes to suit all needs One Watford – A prosperous and educated town Hertfordshire Works Economic Development Strategy – Providing quality locations and infrastructure Hertfordshire Works Economic Development Strategy – Creating vibrant towns and vibrant communities Hertfordshire Forward – Transport and access Hertfordshire Forward – Promoting sustainable development			
Activities	Performance Outputs	Lead Partner	External Partners	Progress Update - 2015
Watford Business Advisory Group (BAG)	Continued engagement with the private sector through this network and diversifying its membership to include key sectors of influence in the town.	Watford Borough Council & Watford Chamber of Commerce	Key private sector stakeholders, Hertfordshire Works, Countywide Business Advisory Group	Ongoing
Watford Myincubator	Delivery and operation of a fully equipped pre-start business incubator at WENTA's existing facility in Colne Way	Watford Borough Council	WENTA & The East of England Development Agency (EEDA)	Delivered 2010 MyIncubator Ventures (MIV) Free online face-to-face business support delivered for Watford residents – April 2015
Business Support - Ensuring Watford Businesses can access a range of public sector support initiatives to encourage economic growth and resilience.	Arranging regular meetings with key delivery partners to ensure best practice relating to customer service and raising awareness of offerings through regular information channels and networking with business.	Watford Borough Council	Business Link, Wenta, HEDOG, Hertfordshire Works, Watford Chamber of Commerce, other districts and private sector providers.	Comprehensive Business engagement programme delivered, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major Project briefings • Going for Growth Conferences delivered • Watford For You Business pages, providing free advice and signposting • Free Public Sector Procurement workshops delivered for local businesses

Promoting Green Business	Promoting sustainable business through ongoing programmes such as 'cut your carbon cash flow' and Watford Commuter. Also ensuring that businesses can exploit other funding streams and initiative to reduce their environmental impact.	Watford Borough Council	One Watford, Carbon Trust, Business Link, Hertfordshire County Council, Energy Saving Trust, Salix	Green Deal for Business Initiative - delivered Signposting for advice and guidance on green business initiatives
Partnership working – continued partnership working with key stakeholders relating to the local and sub-regional economy.	Support and input into key partnerships within Watford and Hertfordshire (e.g. BAG, Watford Chamber of Commerce, Watford For You, Safer Watford etc.)	Watford Borough Council	Hertfordshire County council, Hertfordshire Works, Hertfordshire Forward	WBC support and engagement with new governance and economic partnership arrangements i.e Hertfordshire LEP
Supporting Local Traders Associations	Attending any formal/informal business meetings in the town and ensuring that local business is aware of support that may be available.	Watford Borough Council	Business Link, Federation of Small Business, Chamber of Commerce, Merchants Association, Local Traders	Ongoing
Economic Development Strategy Priority	Priority 3 – Inward Investment & Business Retention			
Strategic Alignment	<p>WBC Corporate Plan objective 3 – Enhance the towns sustainability WBC Corporate Plan objective 4 – Enhance the towns economic prosperity and potential WBC Corporate Plan objective 5 – Supporting individuals and the community One Watford – A prosperous and educated town Hertfordshire Works Economic Development Strategy – Creating a vibrant low carbon economy Hertfordshire Works Economic Development Strategy – Stimulating enterprise, innovation and inward investment Hertfordshire Forward – Jobs Prosperity and Skills Hertfordshire Forward – Safer and stronger communities Hertfordshire Forward – Promoting Sustainable development</p>			
Activities	Performance Outputs	Lead Partner	External Partners	Progress Update - 2015
Inward Investment Manager	Increasing existing 20 hour per week contract to a full time position	Watford For You	Watford Borough Council, Watford Chamber of Commerce, One Watford, Business Advisory Group (BAG)	Full time Inward Investment Manager delivered
Watford For You Website	Purchase and delivery of dedicated Watford For your Business URL's and ongoing SEO campaign	Watford For You	Watford Borough Council, Watford Chamber of Commerce, One Watford, Business Advisory Group (BAG)	Completed www.watfordforyou.org/business/
Inward Investment Pack	Development of an information pack to assist businesses potentially investing in the town, available as a	Watford For You	Watford Borough Council, Watford Chamber of Commerce, One Watford,	Relocation advice and guidance provided in downloadable form on Watford For You website

	downloadable PDF from WFY website.		Business Advisory Group (BAG)	Countywide promotional material prepared for MIPIM UK 2014 and 2015
Creative/Media Sector Inward Investment Event	Delivery of a sector specific inward investment event around the creative media sector.	Watford For You	Watford Borough Council, Watford Chamber of Commerce, University of Hertfordshire, Hertfordshire Works	Watford Symposium 2045 held in 2014
PING (Pharmaceuticals Interest Network Group)	Facilitation of networking event between a number of Watford's major pharma related companies	Watford For You	Watford Borough Council, Watford Chamber of Commerce and Private sector partners	Ongoing Annual PING Seminar
CING (Creative Interest Network group)	Facilitation of networking event between a number of key creative sector companies in the town	Watford For you	Watford Borough Council, Watford Chamber of Commerce and Private sector partners	Ongoing
Developing Partnership Agreements	Continuing to develop formal agreements with private sector partners to help develop a coherent local network of support and expertise in promoting the inward investment agenda.	Watford For You	Watford Borough Council, Watford Chamber of Commerce and Private sector partners	Ongoing
Economic Development Strategy Priority	Priority 4 – Ensuring that Watford has a Skills Base to Support a World Class Economy			
Strategic Alignment	<p>WBC Corporate Plan objective 3 – Enhance the towns sustainability WBC Corporate Plan objective 4 – Enhance the towns economic prosperity and potential WBC Corporate Plan objective 5 – Supporting individuals and the community One Watford – A prosperous and educated town One Watford – A well informed community where everybody can contribute Hertfordshire Works Economic Development Strategy – Stimulating enterprise, innovation and inward investment Hertfordshire Works Economic Development Strategy – Developing a well-skilled workforce Hertfordshire Forward – Jobs Prosperity and Skills Hertfordshire Forward – Safer and Stronger Communities</p>			
Activities	Performance Outputs	Lead Partner	External Partners	Progress Update - 2015
Skills for Business Audit	Skills Audit focusing on employers and required skills shortages and current difficulties in employing locally	Watford Borough Council	One Watford, Watford For You, education providers, Jobcentre Plus, CVS, Business Advisory Group	Ongoing – Skillsmakers Board Evidence Commission
West Hertfordshire College	Showcasing the new West Hertfordshire College complex to local		Business Advisory Group and	Ongoing

	business and encouraging local business commercialisation and use of premises as well as supporting the college's overall integration with the local private sector.	West Hertfordshire College & Watford Borough Council	other private sector partners	
Promotion of Knowledge Transfer Partnership's to local businesses in partnership with the University of Hertfordshire	Facilitation and communication of KTP's at local business event.	University of Hertfordshire	Watford Borough Council, Watford For You, One Watford	Ongoing
Watford For You Website	Delivery of Watford For Your Skills section with information and signposting to appropriate facilities and providers.	Watford For You	Watford Borough Council, local education providers, CVS and other key stakeholders.	Not achieved – funding not available Promotional material to be developed by Skillsmakers Board
Provision of additional School Places	Supporting feasibility work around the identified need for additional school places within the Borough and identifying potential sites through the LDF.	Watford Borough Council & Hertfordshire County Council	One Watford, Watford For You and other key stakeholders	Regular meetings with HCC to jointly plan and secure increased schools provision Allocation of Schools Sites in Local Plan Part 2 New School provision secured at Ascot Road and Lanchester House
Informal Adult Learning	Contributing to the development of a Countywide Action Plan following realignment of funding streams subject to CSR.	Hertfordshire County Council	Watford Borough Council, other Hertfordshire Districts, education providers, CVS and other key stakeholders	Not achieved Significant reduction in funding for 19year+ education
Economic Development Strategy Priority	Priority 5 – Strengthening Local Supply Chains and Securing Local Employment			
Strategic Alignment	WBC Corporate Plan objective 3 – Enhance the towns sustainability WBC Corporate Plan objective 4 – Enhance the towns economic prosperity and potential WBC Corporate Plan objective 5 – Supporting individuals and the community One Watford – A Prosperous and Educated town One Watford – A well-informed community where everybody can contribute Hertfordshire Works Economic Development Strategy – Creating a vibrant, low carbon economy Hertfordshire Works Economic Development Strategy – Creating vibrant towns and Vibrant communities Hertfordshire Forward – Jobs Prosperity and Skills Hertfordshire Forward – Safer and Stronger Communities			
Activities	Performance Outputs	Lead Partner	External Partners	Progress Update - 2015
Promoting local public sector procurement opportunities Local Supplier Portal and encouraging LSP partners take similar approach	Increase in number of local companies registered on procurement database and increase in number of public contracts procured locally	Watford Borough Council	Watford Chamber of Commerce and other private sector businesses, as well as other LSP partners, Ready	Worked with HCC to deliver Suply Hertfordshire promotional material and rund joint events in Watford.

			For Winners Partnership (HCC)	Small workshops also arranged at the request of local businesses and networking organisations
Jobcentre Plus Supporting the promotion of Watford Jobcentre Plus and encouraging businesses to advertise and source employment locally.	Facilitate engagement between private sector and JCP as well as encouraging their presence at future inward investment and business support initiatives.	Jobcentre Plus	Watford Borough Council, CV, Watford Chamber of Commerce and other private sector stakeholders.	Ongoing
Watford Borough Council, leading by example	Development proposals/initiatives where the council have a pivotal role will lead by example in terms of supporting and developing the local supply chain e.g Watford Health Campus	Watford Borough Council	Jobcentre Plus, CVS, Watford Chamber of Commerce	Ongoing

Review of Headline Indicators (KPI's) from Economic Development Strategy 2010

SMART Target / Indicator	Baseline 2010	Target 2015	Achieved in 2015	Comments
Increase in employee jobs	51,500	54,000	56,800 (2014)	Between 2001 and 2005, Watford experienced a loss of 9,250 jobs, with large sector losses recorded in health, telecoms and finance. While the Borough has seen continual employment growth since this period, the level of employment still remains

				<p>below that attained during the early 2000's when workforce jobs peaked at 61,370.</p> <p>The towns performance over the past 5 years has been impressive given the wider national and indeed global economic context. Watford has continued to attract employers seeking low cost accommodation solutions within easy access to London. The towns retail function has also continued to perform strongly, continuing to create move jobs locally.</p> <p>Delivery of Watford's Major Development projects is projected to create just over 9,000 additional jobs which will exceed pre-2001 employment levels.</p>
Increase in number of self employed	4,800 (8.9%)	10%	8,500 (13.5%)	<p>Self employment has proved a popular route for large numbers of individuals, across all sectors, affected by the recession. As demonstrated, self employment in Watford has almost doubled over the past 5 years. This reinforces the need for ongoing business advice for small and micro business with a particular focus on growing our wide range of sole traders to become employers of the future.</p>
Reduction in economic inactivity	10,500 (19.5%)	17%	10,000 (15.9%)	<p>While economic inactivity has decreased marginally, the towns population has grown rapidly over the last 5 years, significantly reducing the proportion of economically inactive residents.</p>
Decrease in residents employed in major group 8-9	9,500 (22.5%)	18%	Dataset no longer available	<p>While comparable evidence is unavailable, data continues to suggest a slight mismatch in terms of skills levels associated with in and out commuters to and from Watford, with out-commuters more likely to be employed within higher skilled occupations than in-commuters. Residents that both live and</p>

				work in Watford are still more likely to be in lower level occupations or self employment. This is no uncommon for an outer London location given the ‘pull’ effect of central London on highly skilled labour.
Increase in residents qualified to level 1	77.60%	80%	88.5%	Watford has saw a particular increase in residents skilled to NVQ Level 4. This is in large part due to the Borough being a popular location for first time buyers or young families unable to afford London property prices.
Increase in residents qualified to level 2	66.00%	70%	75.8%	
Increase in residents qualified to level 3	49.60%	55%	60.9%	
Increase in residents qualified to level 4	29.70%	35%	42.2%	<p>There is also evidence of improvement at the lower end of the skills spectrum, with significant improvement in Level 1 attainment. The redeveloped West Herts College has now been in operation for a number of years, with increased provision both in terms of both the range of courses available and the number of intakes per annum.</p> <p>Despite a peak in unemployment in 2010, at just over 4%, local unemployment is back down to around 1.5%. This suggests a local labour market which is highly constrained, with businesses often having to upskill local residents to meet their business needs.</p>
Increase in F/T gross weekly wage (residence)	£571.40	£590	£597.80	<p>It is apparent that while both resident and employee wages have increased marginally over the past f years, when considering the impact of inflation, it would not suggest a significant improvement in disposable income for either residents or employees. This reflect national circumstances.</p> <p>Interestingly, however, it would appear than the gap between resident and employee wages is beginning to close in Watford.</p>
Increase in F/T gross weekly wage (workplace)	£506.90	£520	£529.70	

				Two likely explanations for this are; increasingly higher skilled jobs being available in Watford and increases in the number of people working in London in higher skilled occupations but choosing to live or rent in Watford.
Reduction in unemployment rate	3%	2%	1.5%	Unemployment in Watford peaked in 2010, however has reduced steadily over the past number of years. Unemployment in Watford is now down to its pre-recession level of around 1.5%. This is comparatively very low and sometimes referred to as frictional unemployment i.e a business considering moving to the town may be concerned at the minimal level of local labour to chose from.
Reduction in number of key benefit claimants	6,350 (11.3%)	10%	4,270 (6.9%)	Significant reduction in the number of key benefit claimants of almost a third. This is also in the context of a significantly growing population which demonstrates Watford ability to attract economically active migrants either working in wider SW Herts or London.
Increased jobs density	1.04	1.10	0.9	Watford continues to provide significant levels of employment and is characterised by being a net-importer of labour, providing large numbers of jobs for residents of surrounding Boroughs, including Dacorum, Hertsmere and Three Rivers. It is apparent, however, that the Borough's employment growth is being outpaced by population growth, resulting in a decreasing jobs density.
Increased business survival rate	3.30%	3.50%	Dataset unavailable	While comparable data is unavailable, other sources of evidence suggest the Watford continues to perform less well with regard to business survival rates, with 43% of new start-ups surviving at least 5 years. This compares with 44% across Hertfordshire, 46% across the eastern region and 44% across

				the UK as a whole.
Increase in small business showing employment growth	13.97%	14.50%	Dataset no longer available	
Increased total GVA	£2182M	£2300M	£25100	While employment levels of the town are not yet back to their 2001 level, the towns GVA has now surpassed its peak in 2001. This is also reinforced by rising GVA per worker (below) demonstrating that productivity of local companies has improved significantly over the past 5 years.
Increased GVA per head (residence)	£26,450	£28,000	Dataset no longer available	
Increased GVA per employee (workplace)	£38,500	£39,500	£44,160 (2014)	As stated above, significantly increased GVA per worker demonstrating significant improvements in efficiency/output per worker. This could be the result of investments in processes or working practices, streamlining the businesses wider operations etc
Increased proportion of employees in knowledge based sectors	55.50%	60%	Dataset no longer available	
Increased office occupancy (floorspace)	74.20%	85%	96%	While headline indicators would suggest higher levels of office occupancy, a review of vacant Grade A office space ie modern, fit for purpose business space, the actual vacancy level is as low as 4%. Market commentary would suggest that a natural vacancy level of 8%-10% is required to allow adequate market churn and renewal. Watford's office market is being heavily constrained by lack of supply.
Increased industrial occupancy (floorspace)	88.10%	90%	92.5%	Watford's industrial market is very strong with locations close to Junction 5 of the M1 being particularly sought after. Uptake is largely driven by existing local occupiers such as Sigma Pharmaceuticals, DDD Ltd. And Prism Power. The industrial market is also considered to undersupplied, with particular

				demand for smaller units of up to 450-500sqm.
Increased town centre retail occupancy (floorspace)	91.50%	93%	95%+ (excluding vacant possession in Charter Place)	<p>Watford town centre is very much in a transitional phase following the public realm works to the top of the town and with the gradual closure of units within Charter Place subject to the forthcoming Intu redevelopment. The Council, in Partnership with the Town Centre Partnership and with the support of our Commercial Agents Forum has created and maintains an active vacant unit list for all town centre property – this has been used extensively to help refine our response to general enquiries and to ensure issues which are impeding the ability of certain units to secure occupiers to be discussed and understood. Anecdotal evidence also suggest that the majority of units currently vacant are in negotiation or under offer which is a very positive indicator. Potential concerns arising are around the ability of new market entrants, particularly smaller businesses and independent retailers to establish themselves in Watford Town Centre.</p>

Appendix 2

Watford Borough Council Economic Development Action Plan 2015 – 2018

Introduction

This Economic Development Action Plan identifies and articulates the actions that Watford Borough Council aim to undertake to implement the vision and objectives of the Watford Economic Development Strategy.

This Action Plan will be continually reviewed and updated to ensure that it is kept current with what the local populous, both residents and businesses, want and need. The Action Plan will also take into account prevailing economic and social issues that arise, including global and national economic turbulence, policy change and social need.

The Action Plan will also allow Watford Borough Council to undertake all measures to achieve outcomes required by the Borough Council, this includes: bidding for opportunistic grant funds, minor project implementation due to public demand and requests, and resource targeting. Before undertaking any project, the Council will ensure that the project fits with the key priorities as identified through the Economic Assessment and Economic Development Strategy as well as all other Council Corporate procedures and Strategies.

The new accompanying Action Plan also states the proposed timetable for delivery; it must be noted, however, that where Watford Borough Council is working in partnership, the timetable is indicative due to the reliance on other partners in either the private, public or third sector. Watford Borough Council will therefore ensure that if a project is delayed or fails to be achieved, a reasons for this will be categorically stated.

The key investment priorities identified within the Watford Borough Council Economic Development Strategy are as follows:

- 1) The Sustainable Growth of Watford & its Economy**
- 2) Transport and Digital Connectivity**
- 3) Inward Investment and Business Retention**
- 4) Innovation & Enterprise**
- 5) Employability & Skills**

Economic Development Strategy Priority	Priority 1 – The Sustainable Growth of Watford & its Economy			
Strategic Alignment	WBC Corporate Plan CP1 Making Watford a better place to live WBC Corporate Plan CP2 To provide the strategic lea for Watford's sustainable economic growth One Watford – A well-planned town with homes to suit all needs Hertfordshire LEP Priority 1 – Maintaining global excellence in science & technology Hertfordshire LEP Priority 2 – Harnessing our relationships with London (& elsewhere) Hertfordshire LEP Priority 3 – Re-invigorating our places for the 21 st Century Hertfordshire LEP Priority 4 – Foundations for Growth			
Activities	Performance Outputs	Timetable	Lead Partner	External Partners
Adopt Local Plan part 2 to establish a clear strategic framework for the town's sustainable growth to 2031	Adoption of Plan Effectiveness of policies measured through AMR	Feb 2016	WBC	HCC LEP EA
Deliver the redevelopment of Charter Place as an extension to the Intu Centre	Approved scheme is delivered.	Spring 2019	INTU	Watford Borough Council, HCC
Deliver redevelopment of land around Watford Junction Station – SPA2 of the adopted Core Strategy	Adoption of Local Plan Part 2 including Site Allocations Revised Development Brief Develop Planning Performance Agreement	Feb 2016	Watford Borough Council	HSBC (Pensions), Network Rail, HCC, London Midland, Waterford Park, LEP
Deliver the redevelopment of Watford Health Campus – SPA3 of the adopted Core Strategy	Submission of planning application for Industrial Zone South with delivery in 2016 Submission of reserved matters applications for the Central Zone and Lakeside Zone	Feb 2016	LABV	Watford Borough Council Kier
Deliver the redevelopment of land in the Lower High Street – SPA4 of the adopted Core Strategy	Develop a brief to facilitate the redevelopment of the area.	2017	Watford Borough Council	Other landowners and partners to be determined
Secure physical and environmental improvements to the Dome Roundabout – SPA5 of the Core Strategy	Delivery of Cow Lane cycleway Investigate regeneration potential of Mirror Printers	2018	Watford Borough Council	Other landowners and partners to be determined
Deliver redevelopment of remainder of Royal mail sorting Office at Ascot Road – Part of SPA6 of the adopted Core Strategy	Develop Planning Performance Agreement	December 2015	Watford Borough Council	HCC, Orion Land and Leisure, NR, LUL

Deliver the regeneration of Watford Business Park	Secure redevelopment of 18 Caxton Way Redevelopment of Zone A Secure long-term partner for redevelopment and management of Business Park	Spring 2016	Watford Borough Council	Greenhills, Threadneedle
Secure the regeneration of outdated office sites in Clarendon Road	Consider the extension of Article 4 Direction Work with delivery partners to secure regeneration of sites Develop Supplementary Planning Guidance	Spring 2016	Watford Borough Council	Developers forum Other landowners and partners to be determined
Support the Town Centre BID	Yes vote BID Established	October 2015	TCP	WBC
Work on Local Plan 3 – the next review of the Local Plan	Complete SHMA/ FEMA with other SW Herts Districts	Spring 2016	Dacorum Borough council and Hertsmere Borough Council	Watford Borough Council, Three Rivers District Council
Economic Development Strategy Priority	Priority 2 – Transport and Digital Connectivity			
Strategic Alignment	WBC Corporate Plan CP1 Making Watford a better place to live WBC Corporate Plan CP2 To provide the strategic lead for Watford's sustainable economic growth One Watford – A well-planned town with homes to suit all needs One Watford – A prosperous and educated town Hertfordshire LEP Priority 1 – Maintaining global excellence in science & technology Hertfordshire LEP Priority 2 – Harnessing our relationships with London (& elsewhere) Hertfordshire LEP Priority 3 – Re-invigorating our places for the 21 st Century Hertfordshire LEP Priority 4 – Foundations for Growth			
Activities	Performance Outputs	Timetable	Lead Partner	External Partners
Metropolitan Line Extension to Watford	Support the delivery of the Met Line Extension to Watford through involvement in Watford Regeneration Board	Jan 2020	London Underground Ltd	Network Rail, Watford Borough Council, Three Rivers District Council, TfL, HCC

Lobby for improved frequency in commuter and inter-city rail services	Support HCC Rail Strategy	December 2015	HCC	Watford Borough Council, NR, London Midland, Virgin, Watford and SW Herts Chamber of Commerce, LEP
Support proposals for Cross rail Services to Tring by 2026	Lobby Crossrail	Ongoing	Crossrail	Watford Borough Council, Dacorum Borough Council, HCC, NR, Watford and SW Herts Chamber of Commerce, LEP
Lobby for and support proposals for capacity improvements to Junction 5 of the M1	Support HCC in development of Transport Vision to 2050 Lobby Highways England	Ongoing	HCC	Watford Borough Council, Watford and SW Herts Chamber of Commerce, LEP
Lobby for and supporting proposals to improve service frequency and quality of Abbey Line Services	Support HCC Rail Strategy	Ongoing	NR	Watford Borough Council, HCC, LEP, Franchisee, Community Rail Partnership, AbFly, St Albans District Council
Ensuring coordinated delivery of major development projects to ensure minimal disruption to the local road network during construction	Work on Watford is Open for Business Campaign Promote good network management	Ongoing	Herts County Council	Watford Borough Council, TCP, , Watford and SW Herts Chamber of Commerce,
Work with HCC to develop Urban Transport Plan	Engage with HCC and Dacorum Borough Council in the development of the plan	TBA	HCC	Watford Borough Council, Dacorum Borough Council, local stakeholders
Implement Parking Strategy	Timescales and milestone set out in Strategy	Ongoing	Watford Borough Council	All road users
Investigate the feasibility of a new access from WBP to Tolpits Lane	Feasibility study undertaken	TBA	Watford Borough Council	Three Rivers District Council, HCC, Business Park Tenants, Local Residents
Maintain and update the Council's Infrastructure Delivery Plan	Plan updated	Ongoing	Watford Borough Council	All infrastructure providers
Deliver Town Centre WiFi	WiFi delivered	December 2015	TechWiFi	Watford Borough Council, HCC
Improve network of electric charging points across the Borough	New charging points delivered. Next planned are Woodside Leisure Centre and Lower High street	Spring 2016	Watford Borough Council	HCC, Evalu8 and Electric Blue

Roll out Intelligent Transport Systems	ITS rolled out	Ongoing	HCC	WBC, Transport Operators
Improve Town Centre Car Parks	Satellite Car parks upgraded Improve routes to car parks from town centre Improved management of spaces to meet needs of broader range of users	Spring 2019	CitiParks and INTU	Watford Borough Council, HCC, TCP
Economic Development Strategy Priority	Priority 3 – Inward Investment & Business Retention			
Strategic Alignment	WBC Corporate Plan CP1 Making Watford a better place to live WBC Corporate Plan CP2 To provide the strategic lead for Watford's sustainable economic growth WBC Corporate Plan objective 5 – Supporting individuals and the community One Watford – A prosperous and educated town Hertfordshire LEP Priority 1 – Maintaining global excellence in science & technology Hertfordshire LEP Priority 2 – Harnessing our relationships with London (& elsewhere) Hertfordshire LEP Priority 3 – Re-invigorating our places for the 21 st Century Hertfordshire LEP Priority 4 – Foundations for Growth			
Activities	Performance Outputs	Timetable	Lead Partner	External Partners
Develop Watford Brand	Watford brand developed	TBA	Watford Borough Council	TCP, WFC, LABV
Improve Watford For You Website	Website updated Move to BID	October 2015	Watford For You	Watford Borough Council, One Watford, SW Herts and Watford chamber of Commerce
Inward Investment Pack	Development of an information pack to assist businesses potentially investing in the town, available as a downloadable PDF from WFY website.	March 2016	Watford Borough Council	Watford Chamber of Commerce, One Watford, Business Advisory Group (BAG), Watford for You
PING (Pharmaceuticals Interest Network Group)	Facilitation of networking event between a number of Watford's major pharma related companies	Ongoing	Watford For You	Watford Borough Council, Watford Chamber of Commerce and Private sector partners including Mathew Arnold Baldwin
CING (Creative Interest Network group)	Facilitation of networking event between a number of key creative sector companies in the town	Ongoing	Watford For you	Watford Borough Council, Watford Chamber of Commerce and Private sector partners
Create combined Business Events Calendar	Work with key stakeholders to ensure the cohesive delivery of event, arts and heritage events in the Town	Spring 2016	Watford Borough Council	Watford for You, TCP, Palace Theatre, events organisers, Watford Chamber of Commerce and Private sector partners

Create a Business Engagement/ Communications Strategy	Create a Watford Business Charter outlining the Council's commitment to working with business and providing advice and signposting to relevant council services	December 2016	Watford Borough Council	LEP, Herts Better Regulators Forum, Watford Chamber of Commerce, BAG and Private sector partners
Create a Watford Employer Task Force	Implement Watford Skill Makers Board Strategy Board have formed and are engaging with major employers. Strategy to be produced	TBA	Watford Skill Makers Board	One Watford, Watford for You, TCP, Palace Theatre, events organisers, Watford Chamber of Commerce and Private sector partners
Developing Partnership Agreements	Continuing to develop formal agreements with private sector partners to help develop a coherent local network of support and expertise in promoting the inward investment agenda.	Ongoing	Watford Borough Council	Watford Chamber of Commerce and Private sector partners
Economic Development Strategy Priority	Priority 4 – Innovation and Enterprise			
Strategic Alignment	<p>WBC Corporate Plan CP1 Making Watford a better place to live WBC Corporate Plan CP2 To provide the strategic lead for Watford's sustainable economic growth WBC Corporate Plan CP3 Promoting an active, cohesive and well informed town One Watford – A prosperous and educated town One Watford – A well informed community where everybody can contribute Hertfordshire LEP Priority 1 – Maintaining global excellence in science & technology Hertfordshire LEP Priority 2 – Harnessing our relationships with London (& elsewhere) Hertfordshire LEP Priority 3 – Re-invigorating our places for the 21st Century Hertfordshire LEP Priority 4 – Foundations for Growth</p>			
Activities	Performance Outputs	Timetable	Lead Partner	External Partners
Support Wenta in development of Watford Business Technology Centre	Develop Business Plan and identify a site	TBA	Wenta	Watford Borough Council, SW Herts and Watford Chamber of Commerce
Work with key partners to encourage enterprise through support for small businesses and land for the development of new premises	Measure number of new business start ups Secure intensification of use of commercial land	Ongoing	Wenta	Watford Borough Council , SW Herts and Watford Chamber of Commerce Business Advisory Group and other private sector partners
Support business by addressing their skills and training challenges and support voluntary and community sectors to deliver quality services	Providing advice and support	Ongoing	Watford Borough Council	W3RT

Develop a strategy to increase the number of knowledge based jobs within the town	Knowledge based strategy developed Monitor number of jobs within this sector	TBA	Watford Borough Council	LEP, South West Herts and Watford Chamber of Commerce
Embed support for the promotion and development of innovation skills	Work with Hertfordshire's growth programmes - The Growth Hub, University of Herts, LEP, Green Triangle, UKTI, Growth Accelerator	Ongoing	Watford Borough Council	The Growth Hub, University of Herts, LEP, Green Triangle, UKTI, Growth Accelerator
Develop business engagement programme to establish working relationships and collaboration with primary and small business that will be tomorrow's employers	Produce a communications strategy	Spring 2016	Watford Borough Council	LEP, South West Herts and Watford Chamber of Commerce
Continue to identify key issues impacting business and working collaboratively to find solutions	Continue to engage with business via sector working groups and Big Business Connect	Ongoing	Watford Borough Council	Private sector partners
Economic Development Strategy Priority	Priority 5 – Employability and Skills			
Strategic Alignment	WBC Corporate Plan CP1 Making Watford a better place to live WBC Corporate Plan CP2 To provide the strategic lead for Watford's sustainable economic growth WBC Corporate Plan CP3 Promoting an active, cohesive and well informed town One Watford – A Prosperous and Educated town One Watford – A well-informed community where everybody can contribute Hertfordshire LEP Priority 1 – Maintaining global excellence in science & technology Hertfordshire LEP Priority 2 – Harnessing our relationships with London (& elsewhere) Hertfordshire LEP Priority 3 – Re-invigorating our places for the 21 st Century Hertfordshire LEP Priority 4 – Foundations for Growth			
Activities	Performance Outputs	Timetable	Lead Partner	External Partners
Support the Local Skills Board	Develop Skills Strategy	Ongoing	West Herts College	Hertfordshire LEP, Job Centre Plus, Oakland's College, local skills providers and local businesses
Support the LEP	Delivery around its Herts-wide Skills Strategy	Ongoing	Hertfordshire LEP	Local delivery partners including schools and colleges and local businesses
Ensure the new jobs created through the Major Development Projects are made available to local suitably qualified people	Development proposals/initiatives where the council have a pivotal role will lead by example in terms of supporting and developing the local supply chain e.g. Watford Health Campus	Ongoing	Watford Borough Council	Private Sector partners such as Kier, Jobcentre Plus, CVS, Watford Chamber of Commerce

Improve access to training to enable individual's to obtain the necessary skills for sustainable employment	Implement Watford Skill Makers Board Strategy Board have formed and are engaging with major employers. Strategy to be produced	TBA	West Herts College	Watford Borough Council, private sector partners
Identify need within local communities and facilitate access to skills to meet the gaps in the local labour market	Implement Watford Skill Makers Board Strategy Board have formed and are engaging with major employers. Strategy to be produced	TBA	West Herts College	Watford Borough Council, private sector partners
Increase the number of people in apprenticeships and work experience placements	Implement Watford Skill Makers Board Strategy Board have formed and are engaging with major employers. Strategy to be produced	TBA	West Herts College	Watford Borough Council, private sector partners
Support for local skills providers to address demand	Facilitate engagement between private sector and JCP as well as encouraging their presence at future inward investment and business support initiatives.	Ongoing	Jobcentre Plus	Watford Borough Council, CV, Watford Chamber of Commerce and other private sector stakeholders.
Local housing provision to support local employment agenda	Deliver housing in accordance with Local Plan targets Deliver range of housing in accordance with Local Plan policies Implement the Housing Strategy	Ongoing	Watford Borough Council	Private house builders, Registered Providers, Watford Community Housing Trust
Local procurement supported through the Social Value Act and within development projects	Continued promotion of public sector procurement	Ongoing	Watford Borough Council	Private sector partners
Support adequate school provision with HCC	Regular meetings with HCC to discuss school provision Allocation of school sites in Local Plan Part 2 Consideration of school on Farm terrace allotments Work with partners to deliver school as part of Watford Junction redevelopment	Ongoing	HCC	Watford Borough Council, LABC, NR, private sector partners

Watford Borough Council Economic Development Strategy

2015-2020



Executive Summary

Watford's history is deeply rooted in its advantageous location, the strength of its local economy and its relationship with London. Historically, Watford has always been a strong location for business and industry, with an economic historic going back as far as the 1800s. Today, the town remains a successful commercial hub and is a desirable place in which to live, work and enjoy leisure time.

The town has, however, had its challenges over the decades. The demise of print and traditional manufacturing in the 60s, 70s and 80s required a rejuvenation of the town's local economy. Whilst transport connectivity and proximity to London have been the town's key catalyst to grow as an office, business and retailing centre, the town is still working to tackle the legacy of its industrial past through the reuse of brownfield sites and ensuring we deliver sufficient infrastructure to support future growth. Our proximity to the nation's capital, and its continual growth as a major world city, offers both challenges and opportunities for Watford. By planning positively for change, we can ensure growth happens in a way that is coordinated and works for our existing residents and businesses, but also for our residents and employers of the future.

Our successes over the past 10 years and the major developments now underway, or commencing in 2015, demonstrate that we are serious about taking Watford forward into the 21st Century and ensuring Watford works for everyone. It hasn't been an easy ride over the past years throughout what was probably the worst recession to affect our national economy in 60 years, but through hard work and the commitment of our partners and stakeholders, Watford has fared exceptionally well through the recession and is now in a very strong place commercially as the economy really picks up speed.

At 8.4 square miles we are a very small Borough, but we punch above our weight! With over 95,000 residents and more than 3,500 businesses employing in excess of 57,000 people, our Borough's opportunities will inevitably be constrained simply by the lack of available land. It is therefore critically important that we work with our neighbouring authorities and other key stakeholders to look at opportunities to accommodate some of Watford's projected economic success beyond our boundaries.

A strong local economy relies on a range of critical factors, most notably good transport links, good commercial space and the supply of a capable local workforce able to create successful businesses for the future. Watford's attractiveness, both as a place to do business and as a place to live means we are increasingly having to make difficult choices about how we should use the limited amount of land available. Housing and Employment are equally important. Whilst this strategy seeks to tackle challenges across a wide spectrum of issues, a particular focus has been given to how we reinvigorate Watford's employment market. The specific challenges in terms of delivering housing, and in particular, affordable housing provision, are discussed in the Watford Housing Strategy 2015-2020. www.watford.gov.uk

It's a great time to be a Watfordian and people are now beginning to see evidence of the town's accelerating progress. We have worked extensively to involve as many people as possible in developing our new Economic Strategy: residents, business, investors and wider stakeholders. We would like to thank everyone whose views and comments received have helped us shape our plans.

We very much value our relations with partner organisations, and we look forward to working with them to turn this Economic Development Strategy into action.

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Setting The Scene

Context of this Document

This document sets out the Economic Development Strategy for Watford. The over-riding objective of the Strategy is to maintain, develop and grow the town's economic development activity, to deliver a prosperous economy for Watford and to ensure that as a town we create sufficient opportunities for local people to maximise their economic prosperity and potential. The strategy draws on evidence incorporated from a range of sources both within the Council and provided by the town's key private and 3rd Sector stakeholders, however it is primarily informed by its companion document, the Watford Economic Growth and Delivery Assessment.

Watford's Local Plan Core Strategy is the principal spatial plan for the Borough and it sets out the vision and framework by which the town will grow and develop to 2031 and articulates how Watford Borough Council will lead and realise the vision. The Economic Development Strategy is one of the enabling strategies to deliver the Core Strategy and both align with the Council's Corporate Plan Strategic Priority 2 'to provide the Strategic lead for Watford's sustainable economic growth.'

Watford in Context

Location & Transport



Watford is the largest town in Hertfordshire and the only non-metropolitan borough completely contained within the M25. The town benefits from excellent transport links, with the London Underground and Overground, West Coast Mainline, M1 and M25 all linking the borough with the rest of Hertfordshire, Greater London and the Midlands, as well as providing easy access to Heathrow, Luton and Stansted airports. It is a commercial and retail hub at the centre of a sub-region serving approximately 500,000 people within a 20 minute travel time, and 5,000,000 within 45 minute travel time.

Population

The Census 2011 shows that Watford has a comparatively young population when compared with the Eastern and national averages. This reflects the borough's attractiveness for young professionals both already living and employed in the town itself as well as those working in London. Watford is attractive to first time house buyers working in London who are unable to afford London property prices.

	<i>Watford</i>	<i>East of England</i>	<i>England</i>
0-4 years old	7.50%	6.20%	6.30%
5-14 years old	11.90%	11.50%	11.40%
15-24 years old	12.20%	12.20%	13.10%
25-44 years old	33.80%	26.50%	27.50%
45-59 years old	17.90%	19.80%	19.40%
60+ years old	16.80%	23.90%	22.30%

Source: Nomis

Business Demography and Enterprise

Historically, Watford has always been a strong location for business and industry, with an economic history going back as far as the 1800s. Today, the town remains a successful commercial hub and is a desirable place in which to live, work and enjoy leisure time.

The town is currently home to around 3500 businesses with a good mix of company size and sector, with many international HQs and a higher than average start-up success rate, and a range of businesses in between. There is representation from financial and professional services sectors, pharmaceutical, health sciences, creative media, manufacturing and retail and leisure industries, amongst many others.

Watford has a slightly lower proportion of small firms employing between 0 and 9 workers than in Hertfordshire and the UK. However, it does accommodate a somewhat higher proportion of large firms employing at least 100 workers when compared to the Hertfordshire, Eastern and National averages. This demonstrates the town's ability to attract major employers seeking a lower cost alternative to London.

The Borough supports high levels of business start-up rates, with 93 new VAT registered businesses per 10,000 working age inhabitants in 2010, which is much higher than county, regional and national averages. These indicators suggest good levels of entrepreneurship. However, Watford performs less well in terms of business survival rates, with 43% of new start ups surviving at least five years which is lower than county, regional and national averages.

Housing

The Office for National Statistics predicts significant population growth in Watford between 2014 and 2020. Growth will be particularly pronounced among children and young people and those in the 40s and 50s age groups. Watford remains an attractive destination for in-migration from other boroughs because of employment opportunities at all levels, cultural and leisure facilities, and its role as a transport hub. While 20% of the Borough is classified as 'Green Belt' this is largely made up of the towns parks and open spaces, including Cassiobury Park. The housing sites which generally become available are relatively small, so the potential for large scale development within the borough boundary is extremely

limited. The draft Strategic Housing Market Assessment estimates that the requirement for annual affordable housing supply is three times greater than current actual supply.

Watford Town Centre

Watford's town centre has attracted visitors to enjoy its broad retail offer and vibrant night time economy for decades, and recent initiatives such as the public realm enhancements, New Watford Market and comprehensive events programme have enabled the High Street to fare comparatively well during a challenging period for town centres across the UK. The forthcoming £150m redevelopment of Charter Place, due for completion in 2017, also demonstrates the town centre's continued attractiveness to the market as one of the premier retailing destinations nationally.

Commuting Patterns

Watford is characterised as being a net-importer of labour, with a net inflow of around 4,000 workers or approximately 9% of the workforce. Increasingly however, Watford has become a larger exporter of labour as the number of in-commuting workers has remained relatively static whilst the number of residents working elsewhere has increased by 18%. Between 2001 and 2011, the volume of residents travelling to London for work increased by some 25%, with a high share of these persons employed in such central London Boroughs as Westminster, Camden and Islington. The number of in-commuting workers originating from London also increased by 13% over this time, highlighting the growing economic and spatial connectivity with the capital.

Earnings

Resident wages in Watford (£598 per week) are higher than the East of England (£539) and national (£520) averages in 2014. However, wage levels for workplace jobs within Watford (£530) are 11% lower than resident wages. This suggests that residents are commuting to higher paid jobs outside the Borough, particularly in Central London.

Employment

Watford recorded 56,800 workforce jobs in 2014, representing an increase of 16.1% from its 1991 level. This growth in workforce jobs was higher than in the UK average of 14.6%. Between 2001 and 2005, Watford experienced a loss of 9,250 jobs, with large sector losses recorded in health, telecoms and finance. While the Borough has seen continual employment growth since this period of job losses, the level of employment still remains below that attained during the early 2000s when workforce jobs peaked at 61,370. The Borough at present is steadily increasing the level of workforce jobs by approximately 550 per annum. As discussed later in this document, this will increase significantly through the delivery of the Major Development Projects.

Revised economic forecasts for the sub-region also suggest a significant step change in the level of commercial growth expected in Watford, however the Borough's ability to cater or accommodate this projected growth will be heavily constrained by the lack of developable land and, in the medium to longer term, a potential shortage of local labour.

Unemployment

Claimant unemployment rose by 146% in Watford over 2008 - 2010, reflecting the onset of the recession. This relatively high level of claimant unemployment remained this way through 2010-2012, before falling quite sharply in 2013. By May 2015, claimant

unemployment reached a new six-year low of 1.5%. Unemployment levels in Watford have historically been comparable to the regional average, but lower than the national average.

The Labour Market

The economic activity rate in Watford at 88.9% is higher than both the regional and national averages. In itself, this suggests that limited capacity exists to expand local labour supply from current residents. The remaining 11.1% of the working age resident population are classed as economically inactive, comprising students, temporary and long-term sick, retired and those looking after family/home.

Commercial Space

Employment space across the borough has been eroded over the last 9 years¹, with several factors accelerating the loss of employment space, particularly in disparate areas unprotected by policy which tend to support local employment. A recent study referred to an "acute shortage of available employment land" within the town.² There is also recognition of the challenge to address national housing pressures, particularly in such a spatially constrained borough where demands for housing and employment land effectively compete. However, recognition of these challenges presents Watford with an opportunity to intervene, in order to protect local employment and introduce measures to deliver the sustainable growth of its employment base and workforce.

Knowledge Based Industries

Knowledge based industries are those sectors where value-added is derived from the accumulation of knowledge, often fostered through innovative actions and the increasing use of technology. While Watford is well represented in knowledge-based activities compared with the region and nationally, it is less well represented compared with other areas in the sub-region. This may reflect the fact that Watford is home to a greater share of larger employers (many of which operate in knowledge-based industries) compared with other authorities in the sub-region that are characterised as having a greater SME business base.

Creative Industries

The creative economy in Watford is considered to be relatively underdeveloped given the proximity of the local economy to London, and the commercial and lifestyle benefits this offers. The Watford Cultural Plan indicates that whilst the future development of creative industries in Watford will be starting at a lower baseline, there is "considerable scope to bring the sector up to and beyond the national and South East average." The development of Warner Bros Studios, Leavesden (which falls on the boundary with Three Rivers District) in 2012 could act as a catalyst for the growth of creative businesses in Watford.

Using the latest Inter Departmental Business Register (IDBR) data, it is estimated that approximately 280 businesses within Watford are operating within creative industries, which support around 1,680 creative jobs in the local economy. The highest shares of jobs in these creative sectors are found in IT & computer services (49%), publishing (24%), music & performing arts (8%), advertising & marketing (6%), and media (6%).

¹ Watford Economic Growth and Delivery Assessment September 2014

² Watford Economic Growth and Delivery Assessment September 2014

The Natural & Historic Environment

Watford has a wealth of natural and built heritage. The Council manages over 300 hectares of public open spaces. Six of the town's parks have been awarded prestigious Green Flags, in recognition of their quality, whilst Cassiobury Park was voted 4th most popular park nationally in 2014. Green infrastructure provides easy access to the surrounding countryside, with recent investments in strategic cycle and walking routes such as the Grand Union Canal, Ebury Way and Abbey Way. While making Watford a more attractive place to live and visit, these green assets also support the town's leisure offer and help encourage inward investment.

The town has over 300 nationally and locally listed buildings. These include buildings designed by architects of global importance, such as Sir George Gilbert Scott, Erno Goldfinger, Richard Seifert and Alison & Peter Smithson. The Grade I Listed, Holy Rood Catholic Church, was designed by John Francis Bentley, who was the architect for Westminster Cathedral, while the oldest building in the town is St Mary's Church, which is also Grade 1 Listed. The Council places strong emphasis on using heritage assets as drivers for place-sensitive development and has ten conservation areas. The Watford Conservation Areas Management Plan was short listed this year for the Royal Town Planning Institute Award for Excellence in Planning for Built Heritage.

Watford's Major Development Projects

The major development projects outlined in the 2010 Economic Development Strategy are coming to fruition. In excess of £1.5bn of investment is happening, with both public and private funding to bring forward new employment and housing spaces for the residents of Watford. The Metropolitan Line Extension to Watford is a key transport infrastructure project which catalyses other developments through the green credentials it brings, increased sustainability and positive impact on commercial viability of nearby sites. Significant scale regeneration is happening within the Town Centre, Watford Health Campus, Watford Business Park and at Ascot Road, and is planned for Watford Junction. Major infrastructure regeneration is key to unlocking local growth and there is strong support for Watford's growth plans at both a regional and national level – The Metropolitan Line Extension to Watford is listed in the UK Government's 2014 National Infrastructure Plan and Watford is key to delivery within Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership's (LEP) M1/M25 Growth Area, leveraging maximum investment from its economically significant rail and strategic road networks.

Why does Watford need to promote economic development & regeneration?

Historically, Watford has always been a strong location for business and industry.

However, the town has significant challenges if it wants to retain and improve its reputation as an attractive place for business.

The demise of print and traditional manufacturing has left brownfield sites in need of regeneration.

Some infrastructure is obsolete or under pressure and needs investment and upgrading.

The town's desire for innovation and reinvigoration did however lead to the development of a small number of somewhat unsympathetic 60's and 70's architecture which has a heavy reliance on the use of concrete. This resulted in the loss of some of the town's heritage assets and the construction of some buildings and infrastructure which is now in need of upgrading and in some cases, total redevelopment.

Strong leadership and governance along with a genuine commitment to partnership working is now allowing Watford to strive forward in a way not seen for many years. The combined effect of ongoing and committed major public infrastructure investment alongside major private sector investment means Watford has gathered significant investment momentum

This success has already been recognised by key stakeholders, including Hertfordshire LEP:

'The process of reinvestment in Watford is ongoing but it is a major success story'

The Journey so far.....

Much has already been achieved in delivering urban regeneration and economic development in Watford over the past decade. These successes include:

Delivered

- ✓ More than 3,400 homes delivered since 2006
- ✓ More than 4,680 jobs delivered since 2006
- ✓ 3 new primary schools secured
- ✓ Redevelopment of West Herts College, £75m, completed 2009
- ✓ Redevelopment of Central and Woodside Leisure Centres - £18.9m, completed 2009
- ✓ Colosseum Redevelopment - £6.6m, completed 2009
- ✓ New Watford Market - £3m, completed 2014
- ✓ Town Centre Public realm enhancements, £4.3m investment in the High Street Parade, completed 2014

- ✓ Watford Community Housing Trust established in 2007. This gave Watford access to funding not available to the Council and by 2012 the Trust had fulfilled its transfer promise, spending £66m to bring all the stock up to the statutory Decent Homes Standard as well as a £9m Better Communities Fund created at transfer which it has spent on wider community benefits - e.g. Community Hubs, estate improvements, leisure equipment, employment and training - across the Borough.
- ✓ Allotment Improvement Programme - £810k, completed 2015

Underway

- Watford Health Campus, a major mixed use development with our partners Kier valued at £270m, commenced May 2015
- Watford Business Park, a long term phased regeneration of Watford Business Park, commenced in 2015

Committed

- £284.4m extension and diversion of the Metropolitan Line to Watford junction creating two new tube stations, Cassiobridge and Watford - Vicarage Road, commencing 2015
- Charter Place, £110m investment in the town's primary shopping precinct, with a further £40m investment by retailers and leisure operators, commencing 2015
- Cassiobury Park Improvement Programme, £6.6m, commencing 2015
- Free Town Centre and Community Centre Wifi access, implementing Autumn 2015

Watford's Major Development Projects:

Smart Growth – the Role of Watford Major Infrastructure and Regeneration Schemes

Major infrastructure regeneration is often the key to delivering sustainable development, which is why the Metropolitan Line Extension Link was a critical enabling project in unlocking Watford's future economic potential. The town strives to achieve 'smart growth,' meaning that the major development projects are linked and complement each other, so that the cumulative benefits are far greater than those of each individual project. The projects represent a step change in the town's development, delivering significant new economic, social and environmental benefits to Watford's residents, ranging from improved access to transport and employment opportunities for deprived communities, to expanding the retail and leisure offer in the town centre, to creating new employment spaces and therefore new jobs for local people. As a programme, the major development projects deliver a mixed composition of new employment and residential spaces, as well as servicing accommodation, including education, leisure and health facilities that are suited to the wider long-term needs of the town.

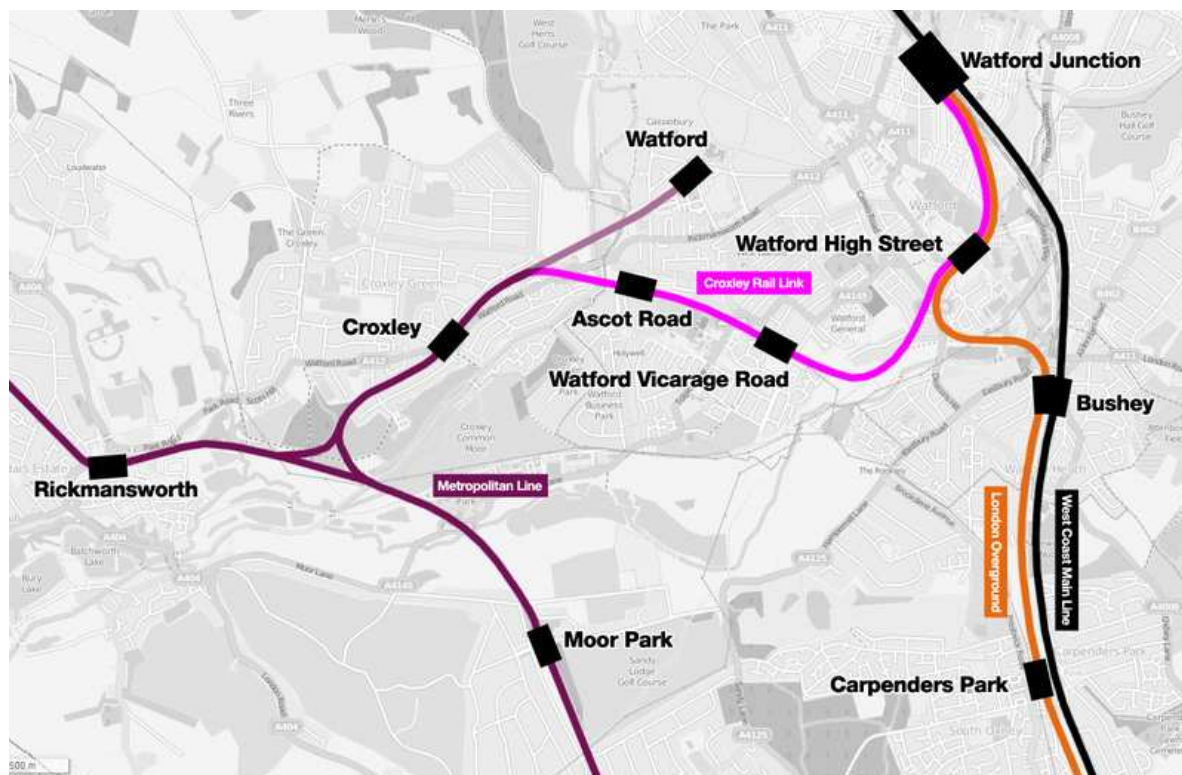
Herts LEP Strategic Economic Plan outlines their commitment to working with the Council to achieve maximum economic impacts linked to the major development projects happening across Watford. These are recognised as significant infrastructure and brownfield regeneration schemes that will bring forward new spaces for much needed residential and commercial developments. The towns 'smart growth' approach will underpin the developments and ensure sustainability in the growth of Watford's local economy over time.

The Croxley Rail Link/ Metropolitan Line Extension to Watford

The Metropolitan Line Extension is a £284.4m investment to extend the Watford Branch of the Metropolitan Tube Line to Watford Junction via Watford High Street. Two new stations are being created, at Ascot Road – Cassiobridge Station – which will serve Ascot Road and Watford and Croxley Business Parks, and at Vicarage Road, serving Watford Health Campus and the hospital, Watford Football Club, as well as the residential areas of West Watford. The extended line will come into Watford High Street Station, linking the town centre, and into Watford Junction, enhancing this regional transport hub. The town will have excellent tube connectivity with 4 stations in the Borough.

Hertfordshire LEP SEP's 'game changer 2' is investing in infrastructure, and The Metropolitan Line Extension is outlined as the highest priority. Due for completion in 2018, this is deemed a "transformational regeneration project" which will "stimulate investment in a range of complex brownfield sites across Watford."³ The Metropolitan Line Extension is a clear example of sound development and 'smart growth', as it is the thread that links Watford's major development projects together. It not only provides physical connectivity between them, it also positively impacts the surrounding land values and addresses sustainability and green travel issues that enable smart growth. It is a catalyst in unlocking the viability of other development schemes across the town, resulting in new employment and residential spaces being created and existing ones refreshed so that Watford can continue to attract and retain good quality employers and secure local jobs for the long term. The Metropolitan Line Extension is also a committed scheme in the Governments National Infrastructure Plan 2014, demonstrating the scheme's strategic importance both locally, regionally and nationally.

³ Hertfordshire LEP Strategic Economic Plan March 2014



Benefits of the Metropolitan Line Extension to Watford

- Approximately 2,700 net additional households will fall within an 800m catchment area of a station
- Improved East-West public transport connection for Watford and Croxley Green
- Will provide an important public transport link for patients and employees of the existing hospital and planned Watford Health Campus
- Supports economic development in Watford by providing first class transport links to business and retail centres
- Provides an Underground rail link to central London for all of Watford's residents and will supplement existing passenger services from Watford Junction and Watford High Street. On completion of the proposed rail link up to 12 trains an hour will link the town with London



Cassiobridge Station



Watford - Vicarage Road Station

Ascot Road

This 2 hectare site is adjacent to the new Cassiobridge Tube station, due to open in 2018, and was previously home to a Royal Mail depot. It is part of a broader 13 acre mixed-use development site which also encompasses a new Morrison's supermarket and Ascot Road Free School. The Metropolitan Line Extension connectivity transforms this site from one limited to industrial or warehousing use, to a site suitable for high-quality office space or a wider mixed use scheme. With a capital investment in excess of £100m, this offers excellent potential for a major HQ office building, being located directly next to a London tube station and at the gateway to the Watford and Croxley Business Parks. Whether occupied by a single business or multiple tenants, this scheme creates a significant capacity of new, contemporary employment space, which will attract employers to the town and has the potential to support significant job creation. The recent EGDA study referred to Ascot Road as "a good employment site," due to its proximity to Watford and Croxley Business Parks, transport connectivity and employment capacity. Whilst the freehold is owned by the Council, we are working with leaseholder, Orion Land and Leisure, to bring forward this exciting gateway development.

Watford Business Park

Watford Business Park, within Special Policy Area (SPA) 6 covering the Western Gateway, comprises around 26.3 hectares in the South-West of Watford, currently supporting over 100 businesses and employing in the region of 1,200 jobs. Whilst it is a major employment area, a significant proportion of the existing properties are over 50 years old, of poor specification and are deteriorating. The supporting road and communication infrastructure is also outdated.

WBC is the freeholder, and most buildings were sold off with long ground leases during the 1950s and 1960s with little service or estate management provision. The leases have between 42 and 111 years remaining and this fragmented leasehold structure has proved a significant barrier to new investment. Existing property and land uses are also disjointed, comprising a mix of car dealerships and trade counters alongside major employers such as Beko and Prism Power. Improved transport connectivity delivered by The Metropolitan Line Extension and the new Cassiobridge Station significantly elevates the strategic importance of this site, and boosts the case for redevelopment of the business park as a 21st Century employment destination. However, without a significant rationalisation of landholdings and uses there is a risk that this strategic site may fail to secure new businesses and the employment offer could deteriorate further.

WBC is working in partnership with Greenhill's Asset Management who successfully manage the adjacent Croxley Green Business Park on behalf of Threadneedle Investments, to deliver the Strategic Masterplan and Regeneration Initiative for the site into which Herts LEP invested £1.5m in December 2013. Initial work has identified potential for phased redevelopment, on a site by site, opportunistic basis over a 15 year period. Intensification of the sites will provide more employment capacity, as existing land use is currently inefficient at 1 job per 76sq.m. compared to 1 job per 22sq.m in Croxley Green Business Park⁴. Preliminary assessment suggests that development values of initial phases could be in excess of £100m and have the potential to create over 1,300 jobs. In early 2015, the Council, with the support of Hertfordshire LEP, began buying leases and assembling a range of development opportunities. The Council hopes to be on site with a new light industrial scheme by early 2016.

Watford Health Campus

The regeneration of this 29 hectare brownfield site surrounding Watford General Hospital and Watford Football Club has been a long term strategic objective for the town. The Watford Health Campus scheme brings together the public and private sector to transform this area over the next 15-20 years, creating new and improved access to the site via the construction of the new Link and Access road from Dalton Way and an attractive new community, delivering new jobs, homes, public and green open spaces and community facilities.

Watford Health Campus' location adjacent to Watford General Hospital presents a once in a lifetime opportunity for future development of the hospital site. The circa £270m project will bring forward 750 new homes, including 35% affordable, and significant new business and employment opportunities with new commercial and industrial spaces and capacity for up to 1,300 new jobs.



⁴ Watford Economic Growth and Delivery Assessment (EGDA) September 2014

Better access and modern infrastructure will reduce congestion and improve access to the site. The new Vicarage Road tube station created as part of the Metropolitan Line Extension will provide good transport links for hospital users, football fans, residents and businesses occupying the Health Campus, as well as for the wider community in West Watford. New cycle and pedestrian routes will also be created through the site, improving permeability of West Watford as a whole. Community green open spaces are planned, and shops and community facilities are designed to build a lively neighbourhood centre.

Hertfordshire LEP have contributed £6m Growing Places Funding towards the scheme, and £7m of Department of Health funding has helped secure delivery of the new road infrastructure linking the hospital to the wider region. While funding is yet to be secured, Watford is also likely to see a £350m-£400m redevelopment of the hospital's clinical facilities over the coming years, to deliver improved health services for residents across wider South West Herts.

Watford Junction Interchange Re-development

The redevelopment of the area surrounding Watford Junction presents an unprecedented opportunity for the town to deliver significant new housing and employment capacity, and is critical to meeting both employment and residential targets as defined in the adopted Core Strategy. The regeneration scheme will deliver a high-density mixed-use development as well as leverage a significantly enhanced transport interchange, 1,800 new homes, employment space to support around 2,300 new jobs, as well as retail and leisure spaces and community facilities. Again the Metropolitan Line Extension to Watford Junction has been a catalyst for redevelopment as it improves access to the site and increases the flow of passengers through Watford Junction transport interchange.

This is a complex scheme with a number of obstacles to overcome in making the development fully viable. New infrastructure is required in the form of an access road and a pedestrian bridge, multiple landowners bring land assembly challenges, remediation work is complex, and working across the West Coast Mainline creates physical construction challenges. Provision for a new school will also be required to support the growing local population. However, the benefit this redevelopment will bring to the town is unparalleled in both economic and social terms, because of the scale of new employment and housing capacity, and it also presents an opportunity to boost perceptions of visitors and investors of by transforming this key strategic gateway to the town.



When the Metropolitan Line Extension opens in 2018, the station is expected to cater for an additional 1.6m users per annum on top of the 6.9m users per annum currently. With Crossrail services earmarked for Watford Junction in 2026 as well as the potential to reintroduce Bakerloo Line services, the Council are working closely with London Underground Ltd and Network Rail, as well as neighbouring private sector landowners to ensure significant capacity improvements can be delivered.

The total development value of this scheme is likely to be in excess of £600m over a 15 year period. A phased approach will be undertaken, with the first phase deliverable as early as 2017/18. Achieving a strong transport and commercial centre at Watford Junction is essential in enabling the town to provide the employment and housing spaces needed to secure its economic future.

Town Centre

Watford town centre has always been a successful retail destination, anchored by what was the Harlequin centre, now Intu Watford, and was ranked 37 in the national retail index in 2008⁵. It plays a pivotal role in driving forward the local economy and providing our 95,000+ residents and 500,000 people living within 20 minutes of Watford with a thriving sub-regional centre which meets their needs in terms of retail, business, social, leisure and cultural activities. However, Watford's national retail rank slipped to 41 in 2009 and 45 in 2013⁶. The town centre was highlighted as a priority area for development in 2010 ED strategy, which noted the changing nature of retailing, the challenges being faced by High Street decline nationally, and strong competition from nearby retail centres. The priority set out to re-establish Watford as a successful and vibrant regional retail destination, with a thriving High Street alongside as one of the biggest indoor shopping centres in the UK.

⁵ Javelin Venuescore 2009

⁶ Javelin Venuescore 2013-14

The £150m+ redevelopment of Charter Place and expansion of Intu Watford, expected to be completed by Autumn 2017, will attract new major brands to the town, create over 1200 new jobs, and enable Watford to compete successfully for regional retail spend. Intu regional director Rebecca Ryman stated that the scheme will “transform the town” and considerably boost retail rankings, placing Watford “firmly in the top 20”. The redevelopment will also bring a multi-screen cinema and other improved leisure facilities into the town centre. This will build more diversity in recognition of the need to balance retail and leisure offerings, and provide linkage between daytime and night time economies which will encourage longer dwell time and enable families to enjoy a more rounded town centre experience.



Significant public realm works were completed in 2013/2014, with over £8m invested in the redevelopment of The Parade, creation of the Met Quarter restaurant area and the New Watford Market, as well as several smaller schemes. Further improvements are planned for other areas along the High Street. The Parade redevelopment included creation of new events spaces, and has resulted in a more European style café culture which has encouraged new restaurants and coffee shops to open, all bringing more vibrancy to the town and contributing to the positive link between the town's day and night time offers.

There is wide recognition of the positive impact of culture on local economies. The growing role of culture in Watford town centre, again identified in the 2010 strategy, has progressed significantly with the annual Imagine Watford Festival launching in 2011 and a year long Big Events Programme launched in June 2014. The cultural programme is being delivered in partnership with stakeholders across the town and will be carried forward by the Town Centre Partnership (formed September 2013 as discussed on Page 16).

Major Development Projects – Impact Summary

Project	Timeframe	Gross Development Value	Total Direct Jobs – excluding indirect and induced jobs	Long Term Impact (Direct GVA per annum)
Croxley Rail Link/ Metropolitan Line Extension to Watford	Opening 2018	£284.4m	NA	£300m+ per annum (wider economic benefit, CRL Business Case)
Watford Town Centre	Charter Place Complete Autumn 2017	£150m+	2,220	£23.9m GVA per annum
	New Watford Market, completed 2014	£2.6m		
	Public realm enhancements, completed 2014	£4.3m		
Ascot Road/ Cassiobridge Development Site	Completed 2017	£100m+	3,020	£130.8m GVA per annum
Watford Business Park	2015-2025	£100m+	1,110	£47.8m GVA per annum
Watford Health Campus	2015-2025	£270m	1,280	£41.4m GVA per annum
Watford Junction redevelopment	Phase 1 - 2017-2020 Future phases to 2030	£600m+	1,910	£86.2m GVA per annum

Watford Town Centre Partnership and proposed Business Improvement District

The Town Centre Partnership (TCP) is the catalyst to ensuring maximum benefit is derived from recent investments and securing the town centres sustainable future. In 2014 WBC recruited a Town Centre Manager and used £100k High Street Innovation Fund, awarded by government following the 2011 Mary Portas report, as a fund for the TCP to evidence early delivery and to support the TCP in its aspirations to develop into a Business Improvement District (BID) in 2016.

BID's are a proven business model, there are now over 200 BIDs operating across the country. There is recognition that a BID would bring a level of sustainability to future funding, over and above that provided by the council and other stakeholders, over the 5 year BID term. BIDs put the decision making about spend into the hands of those private sector businesses in the BID area (the levy payers), that will derive most benefit from future investments.

The Town Centre Partnership will go to BID ballot in October 2015 with a view to commencing the BID in April 2016.

The BID area is defined, and primarily focused on the town centre and civic quarter. If successful at ballot it is estimated that over the 5 year term of the BID an additional £3m will be invested in the town centre.

While the Town Centre Strategy 2013 explores the current challenges and opportunities facing the town centre in more detail, the BID Business Plan outlines activities that a future BID will deliver in order to secure long term sustainability for the town.

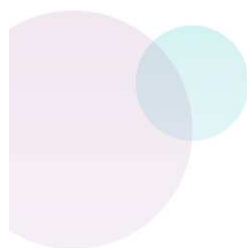
The three areas of delivery the Watford BID will focus on are:

- Enhancing the look and feel of the town
- Promotion, marketing and events
- Working together to secure the future of the town

Watford's town centre strategy and redevelopment is also supported by Hertfordshire LEP's Priority 3 're-invigorating our places', which suggests that successful town centres play a key part in delivering economic growth and sustainability.

Recent investments such as the public realm enhancements and market relocation have helped catalyse private sector investment in the town centre. The vacancy rate in Watford town centre has decreased significantly throughout 2014 and following recent dialogue with local agents, approximately 80% of the vacant units in Watford, including units which have been vacant for a number of years, are now under offer and progressing towards occupation. While some of these new High Street tenants are existing tenants displaced by the forthcoming Charter Place redevelopment, many are new entrants to Watford.

These investments and those proposed over the next two years are changing Watford's standing nationally and the way the town is being perceived. Watford is Hertfordshire's largest town centre and acts as a regional centre. In November 2014 Watford was named the third hottest town in the Hot 100 Retail Towns List compiled by CACI, with the projected 10 year consumer growth predicted to be 100%. Additional investment in events and marketing is further enhancing the towns reputation as place to invest in and to visit.



Watford's Economy – S.W.O.T Analysis

Strengths

- Location – excellent access to strategic road network and national rail connections
- Resilience of the local economy through recent recessionary times
- Diverse employment base – breadth of sectors operating in the town
- Breadth of size and scale of businesses – international HQ's and start-ups
- Large working age population
- Skilled local workforce
- High start-up survival rate
- High levels of in-commuting
- High demand for commercial / industrial premises
- Vibrant and safe Night Time Economy (NTE)
- Active local business community and strong partnership working
- Regional retail hub and strong and expanding town centre offer
- Stable political environment, with strong track record of delivery

Weaknesses

- Lack of developable land to support growth
- Declining containment rate – job creation growth rates slower than working age population growth rates
- Recent losses of employment land to alternative uses
- Shortage of high quality, fit-for purpose office space
- Constraint of existing commercial space – demand forecast to outpace supply
- Localised congestion at peak times
- Support for growth and start-up businesses is constrained
- Pockets of deprivation
- Some constraints in the local labour market

Opportunities

- Further exploit the towns locational USP
- Working with neighbouring authorities to identify any potential for growth needs to be met outside of the borough
- Maximise the economic impact of the major development projects
- Re-energise the local commercial property market by kick-starting commercial development
- Resist loss of future employment space and identify any new sites or those suitable for intensification
- More sustainable commuting and travel through transport infrastructure investments
- Town centre Business Improvement District (BID)
- Improve broadband connectivity and speeds
- Fresh approach to skills matching locally, working with West Herts College and Job Centre Plus
- Business support – extend incubation capacity to meet demand and more specific support for growth businesses
- Building on successes of existing business engagement agenda, including successful sector-led cluster groups

Threats

- Insufficient new employment space coming forward in development pipeline
- Further loss of existing employment land through competing residential land values
- Not being able to provide the right spaces and places to attract future employers and enable local businesses to grow
- External perceptions of the town and its overall offer
- The ability to provide sufficient affordable housing for low income workers
- Continued competition from other retail and employment centres
- Growth of local skills gap as Watford homes a growing skilled population that commutes out – cannot meet the needs of local employers from local labour market

Watford's Priorities

Priority 1) Sustainable Growth of Watford and its Economy

Key Issues:

- Striking the balance between competing pressures for residential and commercial development, and optimising the limited number of development sites in the town to better deliver sustainable economic growth
- Reinforcing the foundations for long term sustainable growth through delivery of new transport and social infrastructure, alleviating existing congestion and delivering new capacity to support growth
- Achieving 'smart growth' through delivery of the major development projects, which have the ability to bring a step change in both economic and social benefits

Watford's Functional Economic Market Area (FEMA)

Watford's Functional Economic Market Area (FEMA) is wide, reaching across Greater London and into Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire, as well as across wider Hertfordshire. The borough remains a net-importer of labour - its location and reputation as an employment hub mean the town can attract and retain high quality employers that provide employment for populations across neighbouring districts and counties, accessing Watford via good transport links. Based on recent census data, the town supports employment for up to 2,000 residents from St Albans district, between 2,000 and 5,000 residents from each of Hertsmeire and Dacorum districts and over 5,000 from Three Rivers. Thousands of workers also commute both in and out of Watford from Greater London each day⁷. Whilst being an attractive destination for workers, Watford also has a duty to support its own residents' employment needs, but the decline in the self-containment rate between 2001-2011⁸ suggests this is proving increasingly challenging.

The Trajectory for Sustainable Growth

The limited availability of developable land is a primary challenge for Watford as the borough is so tightly restricted by its administrative boundaries. Bringing forward strategies to meet both housing and employment needs requires balanced and supporting approaches, and there is growing recognition that difficult choices will need to be made over the allocation of sites for both uses. Good progress has been made towards housing targets, with 3,300 of the planned 6,500 homes having been delivered by 2014 (period 2006-2031).

Whilst progress has also been made towards the employment target defined in the adopted Core Strategy (7,000 additional jobs to 2031), it's important to note that these targets were set at a point in time when national economic confidence was much lower.

In line with this thinking, and in light of a more positive economic outlook nationally, recent government policy has placed responsibility on local authorities to assess future economic development needs within the Borough objectively in line with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and supporting Planning Practice Guidance (PPG).

⁷ Watford Economic Growth and Delivery Assessment (EGDA) September 2014

⁸ Watford Economic Growth and Delivery Assessment (EGDA) September 2014

The recently completed Economic Growth and Delivery Assessment (EGDA) sets out a range of potential economic scenarios for future employment space requirements.

All scenarios tested under the EGDA, bar the past development rates scenario, anticipate a substantial additional requirement for employment floorspace, and in particular, office floorspace. The past development rates scenario is not considered a sustainable one to plan for as past development rates are likely to have been constrained by losses of space and supply side factors and would effectively represent an acceptance that the Borough's standing as a major M25 employment centre would be eroded. This approach would not be in line with national policy nor the Council's own aspirations to deliver sustainable economic growth.

These new projections are not intended to replace those set out in the Core Strategy, but to ensure this strategy takes into account the most recent evidence at time of writing. The projections do, however, highlight the Borough's need to protect, improve and indeed increase our stock of high quality commercial accommodation.

Delivering New Employment Space to 2031

In light of these revised economic projections, it's important to understand the Borough's likely ability or propensity to deliver against this opportunity. The EGDA goes on to state that "the borough's employment potential remains constrained by a number of factors." These can be summarised as:

- High land values restrict the viability of commercial development and favour residential schemes
- Total office space in Watford decreased by 6% between 2000 and 2012, whilst it increased by 15% across the East of England as a whole.
- Total industrial space in Watford decreased by 11% during the same period, whilst increasing by 4% across the wider region.
- Minimal new office space has come forward over the last decade
- Permitted Development Rights continue to threaten unprotected employment spaces
- The spatial constraints of the borough results in different uses replacing each other rather than bringing forward net new capacity
- Mismatch between jobs available (high proportion of service-related jobs) and highly qualified professional resident workforce, many of whom commute out of Watford for higher paid employment

It is important that these issues are understood and addressed if Watford is to ensure it is delivering sustainable local economic development, particularly the need for the Borough to increase the supply of new and improved employment space. This will require an adjustment to current policy approach, as discussed below.

Balancing Land Uses

The factors outlined earlier demonstrate the implications of a shortage of space on the town's employment potential. For Watford to maintain its position as a regional economic centre, delivering employment not only for its own residents but for a significant number of residents from neighbouring authorities, a fine balance needs to be struck between the competing land uses of residential and employment.

The borough also needs to strive to provide spaces for supporting services for the growing population, to meet demand for schools, local centres, green spaces and community facilities. Whilst Watford endeavours to optimise land utilisation within its boundaries, dialogue is also needed with neighbouring authorities under the Duty To Cooperate, to

consider how best to provide the sites to support demand from the population across the sub-region.

Central to both the challenge and opportunity in Watford are land values. Watford is a desirable location both to live and to work, so demand is high, yet space is constrained. This results in higher land values, which makes residential development more viable than office or industrial development in the short term. Whilst local commercial property agents suggest there is growing investor confidence in the town, there is still latent uncertainty which is restricting funding for new commercial developments. However, recent evidence suggests that demand is very high and supply tighter than headline figures indicate, so it is possible that within the near future this tight supply will push values to the level where new commercial development can occur⁹.

As things stand, the lack of new commercial development in the town over the last two decades has led to a stalling in the office market. Growing businesses are struggling to find the accommodation they need within the town as they expand, and natural churn is not happening because many businesses want to stay in Watford but have to remain in outdated premises due to the lack of alternative space. This has resulted in some Watford employers paying high rents for sub-standard properties. Many new leases were signed during the peak of the early 2000s, so there is likely to be a wave of lease breaks coming within the next few years. Proposed changes to the energy performance ratings of commercial buildings in 2017/18 also have the potential to further impede the attractiveness on Watford existing commercial stock. This trigger point will lead to employers re-evaluating their premises and location choices, and the town needs to be able to offer sufficient capacity of fit-for-purpose accommodation to secure this employment for the long-term.

In parallel, there has been an erosion of existing commercial space. As an historic industrial town, Watford's employment sites are dispersed across the borough. Some areas can be logically packaged and protected as employment spaces through policy, as was done through the Core Strategy and Local Plan, but 52% of 'B Class' jobs (office, commercial, industrial) are within employment space that is spread across small sites outside of the core employment areas¹⁰. This space typically provides employment for local residents, and is the most likely to be targeted for conversion to non-commercial uses.

Engagement with the property market through the recently formed Watford Developers' Forum provides a channel to communicate with developers and landowners around current evidence and local market trends, and will help build confidence in the town's potential. However at the same time, a level of intervention may be required to kick start the commercial market, in order to demonstrate the viability of commercial developments and act as a catalyst for private sector investment to create new commercial capacity in the town.

Accommodating Positive Growth

Watford's Major Development Projects created an ambitious yet achievable framework for development across the town. Following many years of under investment, these bring a unique opportunity for the town to re-establish itself as a regional economic hub, secure a sustainable future, and enable the creation of new commercial spaces. This increased supply should ease the pressure on land values, encouraging redevelopment of existing commercial spaces and further new development. These projects are the foundations for achieving both the employment and housing targets set out in the Core Strategy.

⁹ Watford Economic Growth and Delivery Assessment (EGDA) September 2014

¹⁰ Watford Economic Growth and Delivery Assessment (EGDA) September 2014

The trajectory for growth outlined in 2006 was robust. Yet both the local and national economy has changed significantly over the last 9 years. Local population growth has accelerated far faster than projected by the ONS; the growth in Watford's working age population has been significant and is forecast to increase further. It is prudent to take account of new evidence as it emerges and adapt evolving strategies accordingly. The 2014 Watford EGDA suggested that even taking into account all of the new employment capacity planned for through the Major Development Projects, Watford will still have a shortage in capacity of both commercial and industrial space¹¹.

Within the context of accommodating a positive floorspace requirement for both office and industrial uses over the plan period, the EGDA outlines a number of (but not mutually exclusive) options for the Council to consider, both as part of its ongoing site allocations work, through Local Plan Part 2, and wider policy formulation.

- Major Development Projects
Assess the allocation of employment space within the major development projects and identify any scope to increase capacity, or intensify development
- Resist loss of employment space in the future
There has been “significant loss of employment spaces over the last decade”¹², so sites should be reviewed and new policy protection introduced where appropriate. Also the Article 4 Direction on Clarendon Road could be extended to other employment areas.
- Allocate new employment sites
The Watford EGDA recognises that “as a tightly constrained and under-bounded borough, new development sites are limited”. However, all new potential for both employment and housing within the borough needs to be identified and assessed. Any new employment sites should seek to benefit from Watford's strong transport links and be located close to established employment areas where possible to capitalise upon critical mass and cluster effects as well as existing amenities and facilities.
- Intensification of existing sites
Better utilisation of the existing office and industrial stock could be achieved through gradual redevelopment of individual plots. In major employment areas policy could attempt to reduce encroachment of non ‘B-Class’ uses which tend to produce lower intensity of job creation.
- Assume (and plan for) needs to be met elsewhere (outside the Borough)
Duty to Cooperate arrangements could enable consideration of how needs could be displaced to adjoining local authority areas that fall within the borough's functional economic market area (FEMA).

Planning for the long-term sustainable future of the town requires vision beyond the major development projects. Refreshment and re-invigoration of the town needs to be an ongoing process if sustainability is to be achieved in Watford's growth and resilience secured in its economy. A continual process of monitoring and improvement will keep the towns offer fresh for visitors, residents and businesses and in doing this, the next wave of private sector led development projects will emerge. Sustainability runs through all of the priorities in this

¹¹ Watford Economic Growth and Delivery Assessment 2014

¹² Watford EGDA 2014

strategy, which are interlinked, and all contribute to delivering long term sustainable economic wellbeing for the borough.

Growth Beyond Watford Boundaries

As Watford continues to grow, its opportunities to accommodate growth in a sustainable way will become increasingly restricted through the lack of availability of sites for sustainable housing and employment development.

As a consequence, WBC will explore opportunities to deliver growth opportunities through ongoing dialogue with neighbouring authorities and other impacted authorities.

Priority 1 - Actions

- a) Final Adoption of the Council Local Plan Part 1 (Core Strategy) and Part 2 (Detailed Development Policies) establishing a clear strategic framework for the towns sustainable growth to 2031.**
 - -Improving Policy protection for existing employment sites
 - -identifying existing employment sites suitable for upgrading/intensification
 - -identifying, allocating and protecting the limited opportunities available for new employment sites
- b) Supporting the ongoing delivery of Watford's committed Major Development Projects, including the Metropolitan Line Extension to Watford.**
- c) Working with key partners and stakeholders to bring forward Watford's next wave of Major Development Projects, including Watford Junction, Lower High Street Retail Park and the wider area around the Dome Roundabout.**
- d) Accelerate and where appropriate, consider intensification of individual Major Development Project to help accommodate Watford's projected future need, both for commercial and residential uses.**
- e) Consider potential expansion of Watford's Article 4 Direction, protecting key employment areas and sites from conversion to residential uses via Permitted Development Rights (PDR).**
- f) Working with key stakeholders and neighbouring landowners to rationalise landholdings in Watford Business Park to enable new investment in and upgrading of outdated commercial stock.**
- g) Commission a detailed assessment of the viability of commercial development in Clarendon Road compared to other commercial areas, and also into wider blockages in the office and industrial markets across the Borough.**
- h) Continued sector engagement with local property market through the Watford Developers' Forum.**
- i) Support for the TCP and its proposed progression to a BID as the engine for future development of the town centre.**

- j) Working with key stakeholders and neighbouring local authorities to identify and deliver opportunities to accommodate Watford's projected economic and housing growth beyond Watford boundaries.**
- Support the delivery of strategic housing and employment sites beyond Watford's boundary.
 - To explore with key stakeholders and other impacted adjacent authorities' opportunities for joint capacity building to deliver physical regeneration opportunities.
 - Actively support ongoing joint evidence base commissioning e.g. South West Herts FEMA and SHMA Studies
 - To actively explore with key stakeholders and central government the need for a boundary review for Watford, better allowing the town to control its economic destiny.

Priority 2) Transport and Digital Connectivity

Key issues:

- Maximising Watford’s location strengths and reinforcing the towns role as a regional transport hub for London and South West Hertfordshire
- Planning for and delivering improvements to transport infrastructure and services in order to continue to attract investment and secure high-quality long-term employment
- Supporting sustainable travel through local, regional and national transport connections, and delivering improved access to employment, leisure and community services

The Role of Transport in Local Economies

Watford’s location and transport infrastructure continues to be one of its primary assets. Transport and connectivity has a direct impact on an area’s economic competitiveness as it facilitates the free flow of goods, services and people. This strategy considers the impact of current schemes, but also points to the next wave of transport and infrastructure projects needed to sustain the borough over the longer term.

Transport investments unlock local economic growth in many ways:



Sustainable Transport Infrastructure to Support Future Growth

Watford was the first district in Hertfordshire to justify a specific Growth and Transport Plan (GTP), largely in recognition of the urban nature of the borough and growing evidence to suggest that where green and sustainable forms of transport are introduced, modal shift occurs and local people start to use them. The role of the town as a sub-regional transport

hub also requires that bespoke infrastructure planning is undertaken. The 2014 GTP considers the impact of the current major development projects, but also provides initial scope to support future investments, and links into Hertfordshire LEP's Strategic Economic Plan (SEP). It seeks to ease constraints and increase capacity on all transport modes, particularly on road and rail networks which are used by the majority of commuters. In a spatially constrained borough which is part of a highly congested region, improvements in transport infrastructure are a positive investment in the long-term sustainability of the local economy.

The 'smart growth' approach interlinks investments in transport infrastructure and development of employment spaces. Major employers expect to be located on strategic sites that are close to transport hubs. Where there is a cluster of company headquarters, as there is in Watford, the nature of their operations means that they draw skills from a wide catchment and visit other sites nationally, and internationally, therefore strategic transport connections are needed to support this. This impacts how sites are allocated, as the sites with the best access to good transport infrastructure will attract and retain good employers, whilst sites outside the immediate vicinity of a transport connection may be more suited to residential uses. This highlights that it is not simply about having the number of sites for employment, sites also need to be in the right location in terms of transport connectivity to achieve the full employment potential.

M1/M25 Growth Area

Hertfordshire LEP considers investing around transport hubs as the key to unlocking local economic growth, setting out three growth areas in its SEP, each linked to major road and rail arteries. Watford is at the heart of the LEP's M1/M25 growth area. Whilst transport links are deemed good, the region experiences heavy congestion, particularly on its road networks and on mainline rail routes into London Euston. Herts LEP refer to "the chronic congestion facing much of the county"¹³ partly as a result of Hertfordshire claiming "2% of the national population, 1.3% of the land and nearly 3% of all national vehicle miles"¹⁴. Significant population growth and the lack of investment over recent years have helped build the case for new infrastructure projects to support future economic growth within the region.

The Metropolitan Line Extension to Watford is the primary infrastructure investment for Hertfordshire LEP over coming years as it delivers the wide scale economic benefits discussed previously in this document. Whilst the Metropolitan Line is already a core part of Watford's existing transport infrastructure, the extension gives Watford's business and employment areas far greater accessibility to labour and services both locally, and from a wider catchment. The extended link will also open up transport interchanges, commuter routes and travel choices at a neighbourhood level, across the region, into London and nationally.

Improvements in congestion will be realised through increased travel choices for local communities – a journey from Croxley Green to Watford Junction will take 12 minutes – and residents will have greater transport access to employment, but also to health, education and leisure services. When completed in 2018 the link will deliver improved access to a wide range of economic opportunities across the borough.

Links with London

Being inside the M25 and with strong transport links, the town offers an excellent location for businesses requiring close proximity to London, but without the overheads a London location

¹³ Hertfordshire LEP Strategic Economic Plan March 2014

¹⁴ Hertfordshire LEP Strategic Economic Plan March 2014

commands. Hertfordshire LEP outlines its ambitions around 'Harnessing our relationships with London'¹⁵ and Watford is perfectly placed to do this. The existing transport network enables 47% of working Watford residents to commute into Greater London and around 27% of those employed in Watford commute in from London, enabling great cross fertilisation of skills and knowledge between the two centres. Watford benefits from a wide range of businesses re-locating outside of London as they grow, bringing a wealth of diverse employers into the town.

Good transport links encourage inward investment, but they also enable local skilled workers to commute out to other areas. A factor in the decline of Watford's self-containment rate is the increasing number of high-skilled workers commuting out of the borough for higher-paid work. But also over the same period the number of in-commuting workers originating from London has increased by 13%, highlighting the growing economic and spatial connectivity between Watford and the capital. The implications of this are discussed further in the Employability and Skills chapter.

Watford Junction

Watford Junction is the gateway for London commuting, and also for sub-regional and regional commuting. It is a key enabler to Watford's role as a regional employer. The station currently provides an interchange for West Coast Mainline and Virgin train services into London Euston and out across the Midlands towards the North West, connections to Gatwick airport and Clapham Junction, London Overground services and local train connections to St Albans and the Chilterns. From 2018 it will also connect with the London Underground Metropolitan Line through the Metropolitan Line Extension.

The strategic importance of Watford Junction is increasing, linked with the impact of the major development projects. It acts as the entrance to the town for workers, business and leisure visitors, and facilitates the flow of investment. It is the point at which many people form first impressions of Watford. A recent capacity study suggesting that the 6.9m people travelling through this interchange is forecast to increase organically, but also that the Metropolitan Line Extension will bring an additional 1.6m people per annum through the station by 2018. Emerging proposals on Bakerloo Line services running to Watford Junction and Crossrail Services running to Tring by 2026 will also drive the need for capacity and interchange improvements at Watford Junction.

There is already overcrowding at peak times so increased patronage will result in additional pressure on the existing facilities and services. Enhancements to the station itself are essential in supporting this forecast growth in capacity and to cater for the needs of the town and its commuters over coming decades. In line with a 'smart growth' approach, regeneration is linked to surrounding schemes, and transformation of this interchange in turn improves the viability of adjacent land, making the location increasingly attractive as an employment location. An improved interchange would also provide an opportunity to improve permeability through the site and into the existing Imperial Way/Colonial Way employment area, significantly improving its pedestrian and cycle access from the station itself.

As discussed in the previous chapter, regeneration of the wider site is critical in meeting Watford's employment and housing targets. Hertfordshire LEP has stated its commitment to working with Watford Borough Council to achieve maximum economic benefit from the developments related to Watford Junction.

¹⁵ Hertfordshire LEP Strategic Economic Plan March 2014

Improved Services

The government is consulting on the Rail Utilisation Strategy which considers a broad range of UK wide rail improvement programmes and rail services, including schemes like HS2 and Cross Rail. Some of these have the potential to impact on Watford Junction. Any impact from other schemes needs to deliver net additional capacity to support future economic growth, and not lead to displacement of existing services. Another consideration is the pressure to increase the movement of freight by rail in order to alleviate road congestion. If this were to compromise Watford's inter-city or commuter rail connections it, could potentially inhibit local growth.

Some of this current constraint is a legacy from the 2008 timetable changes which reduced the number of trains stopping at Watford Junction. There have recently been some positive increases with Southern Services delivering more capacity in 2014 and London Overground trains increasing the number of carriages. These measures attempt to maximise potential from existing infrastructure, but new infrastructure is required to support future need. This strategically important interchange must have sufficient services and capacity to support the growing local and regional economy.

Watford's Transport Investments

The Metropolitan Line Extension and comprehensive redevelopment of Watford Junction are the two most significant investments in transport infrastructure to support growth; however, there are several other schemes detailed in the 2014 GTP, at various stages of planning and feasibility, which will support growth in the local economy by improving accessibility and reducing congestion.

The next wave of transport schemes to support growth

M1 Junction 5 – Major Highway Maintenance

This scheme will improve signalling and provide additional capacity at this key motorway interchange. Improving connectivity here would help unlock economic growth in many of the ways discussed at the beginning of this chapter, and will also influence the town's ability to attract and retain international businesses due to improved access to the major airports.

Watford Junction: Colonial Way Link Road

A key element to unlocking the potential of the Watford Junction regeneration scheme is this link road. It would connect the A4008 at Stephenson Way (which links to the M1 J5) and the A412 St Albans Road, including crossing over the St Albans branch line.

Watford Health Campus Link Road

The new link and access road will open up the Health Campus site and create a bus-only link to Willow Lane. This will connect Wighenall Road and Dalton Way, providing access to the M1. The primary purpose is to provide better strategic access to the Watford General Hospital, enabling it to service a wider population across the region, but it will also provide access to new homes and businesses and alleviate congestion around the local area.

Western Gateway: Tolpits Lane Link Road

Watford Business Park is currently only accessible from the North of the site. This scheme would open up access from the South, alleviating congestion at the current access points, including Rickmansworth Road, and improving current constraints on vehicular flows in and out of the park. It would help deliver productivity gains and cost reductions to businesses in Watford and Croxley business parks. This road is linked to delivery of the overall Watford Business Park regeneration project discussed in the last chapter and again demonstrates 'smart growth' with transport investments supporting sustainable redevelopment of employment spaces.

Abbey Line Upgrade

A feasibility study is being undertaken to assess various improvement options for the rail line connecting Watford and St Albans. These include rationalisation of stations including potential for a new station near to the Dome roundabout, conversion to light rail and connecting to Euston post 2026. The study also assesses conversion to guided bus and extending the line into St Albans city and Watford town centres.

Dome Roundabout

This busy interchange experiences heavy congestion at peak times, particularly on the A41 and A412. A number of improvement options are currently being considered.

Local road junction improvement schemes

There are a range of schemes proposed to improve capacities and flows of traffic around many of the town's major road arteries and junctions. These include several along both the A411 and A412, maintenance of the A41, improvements around Bushey Arches, and at road junctions between Eastbury Road / Brookdene Avenue, Vicarage Road / Wigenhall and the A41 / Hartspring Lane.

Improvements in transport help connect employers to the labour market, but also give local people better access to leisure opportunities so that spend is reinvested in the local amenities rather than in competing centres. Enhancements in local travel amenities such as bus services, cycle routes and pedestrian areas all contribute to improvements in access to amenities for local communities, and provide critical connectivity particularly in the parts of Watford where up to 40% of residents do not have access to a car¹⁶.

The Watford Urban Futures Transport Package, supported by Hertfordshire LEP provided funding for Watford Business Park pedestrian and cycle access enhancements, and for low cost travel alternatives to access key areas of growth and employment in Watford. The influence of local transport on inward investment should not be underestimated – employers are highly influenced by how easy it is for their staff to get to work because this affects their ability to attract the required levels of skills into their businesses. If journeys to work are too difficult, they will not be able to recruit and retain the staff they need to operate, and this will ultimately determine where they locate. Ensuring appropriate travel-to-work schemes are in place is a key component in retaining good local employment. These can be varied, but could include park and share schemes, or priority bus and business routes, as well as improved cycle and pedestrian access.

Better transport links encourage inward investment, support business retention and enable workers to access employment, all of which help contribute to the local economy and

¹⁶ 2011 ONS car ownership data

improve containment rates, which then in turn, reduce congestion. The linkage between these factors is what helps build local sustainability.

The Digital Agenda

The internet and wider digital connectivity agenda is fast becoming the essential infrastructure of the 21st Century. Digital connectivity is revolutionary in terms of how people live, work, play and interact – it is therefore crucial that Watford provides modern, accessible digital infrastructure to ensure the town remains a competitive place to do business and supports a dynamic and connected local workforce.

As well as supporting the towns economic agenda, enhance digital connectivity will also help support the wider social and environmental agenda, providing improved access to services for local residents and allowing better management of our transport network.

Emerging Actions

Strategic Transport Improvements

- a) The Metropolitan Line Extension to Watford - Working with key delivery partners including London Underground Ltd and Hertfordshire County Council to deliver this 'game-changing' infrastructure investment for Watford and SW Hertfordshire.**
 - Working with key partners to specify and monitor delivery programme, including coordinating deliver with adjoining Major Development Projects.
 - Specifying and monitoring service levels (timetabling) as well as considering and promoting outer running of commuter services to/from Amersham and re-extending the Bakerloo Line to Watford.
 - Working with partners to help coordinate the complex funding relationship and developer contributions and managing cash flow.
- a) Delivering the Watford Junction Vision.**
 - continuing to work with key partners, including Network Rail, HCC as Transport Authority and applicable Train Operating Companies, to monitor ongoing and increasing capacity challenges at Watford Junction.
 - Working with Network Rail and key adjoining landowners to bring forward proposals for a major mixed use regeneration scheme, leveraging significant investment into station interchange facilities.
- b) Lobbying for improved frequency in commuter and inter-city, as well as Virgin Fast services, stopping at Watford Junction, supporting Watford's role as a major regional commercial and retail centre, as well as providing alternative routes into North West London via the extended Metropolitan Line from 2018/19 onwards.**
- c) Engaging with and supporting proposals for Crossrail Services to/from Watford Junction from 2026.**
- d) Lobbying for and supporting proposals for capacity improvements to Junction 5 of the M1.**
- e) Lobbying for and supporting proposals to improve service frequency and quality of Abbey Flyer services to St Albans.**

Local Transport Improvements

- f) Ensuring the coordinated delivery of the towns major development projects to ensure minimal disruption to the local transport network during construction phases via the Watford Network Management Group.**
- g) Completion of Local Sustainable Transport Plan, delivering improved local transport choices including bus, cycle and pedestrian improvements and upgrades.**
- h) Working with key stakeholders including the Town Centre Partnership, to develop and implement the Parking Strategy for Watford Borough Council.**
- i) Undertake a joint feasibility study with HCC and Three Rivers District Council on proposals for an access road from Tolpits Lane directly into Watford Business Park/Western Gateway.**
- j) Maintain and Update the Council Infrastructure Delivery Plan.**

The Digital Agenda

- a) Work in partnership with InTechnology WiFi PLC to deliver the town centre concession for WiFi across the Town Centre and community centres.**
- b) Work with HCC, Evalu8 and Electric Blue to improve the network of electric and rapid electric charging points across the Borough.**
- c) Work with HCC on further roll out of the Intelligent Transport Systems Strategy and improvements to transport management across the Borough.**
- d) Work with Intu and CitiParks to improve the look and feel of town centre car parks.**
- e) Work with CitiParks, Town Centre Partnership and West Herts Chamber of Commerce to tailor the car park offer to better meet the needs of users, in particular the business community.**

Priority 3) Inward Investment and Business Retention

Key Issues:

- Making sure Watford has the right places and spaces to retain and attract Watford's current and future employers
- Improved promotion of the town as a place to do business
- Ensuring Watford has the right services and processes to embrace business investment in the town

Watford's ability to attract good employers and ensure they remain within the borough, providing long-term appropriately skilled employment for local people, will affect sustainability in the local economy. In order to do this, the right business accommodation needs to be available. Watford has been successful in securing a number of major employers from across a range of business sectors, and in nurturing and growing a strong SME base. However, recent evidence has suggested there has been a decline in both the quality and quantity of commercial and industrial space in Watford, in contrast to the wider regional trend¹⁷. This could affect the town's ability to compete to attract good employers in the future, despite its locational strengths. Once businesses are located in the borough, the right environment needs to be created to promote and support growth, in order that they remain in Watford and provide long-term employment.

Watford's Employment Spaces

Watford has seven main commercial and industrial employment areas: Clarendon Road / Station Road, Watford Business Park, Ascot Road, Colonial Way / Imperial Way, Greycaine Road / Odhams Industrial Estate, Sandown Road and Fishers / Wiggshall Road which will become part of the Watford Health Campus employment area. These areas account for around 48% of 'B Class' jobs (office, commercial, industrial) and 24% of total jobs in the borough. The remaining 52% of B Class jobs is spread across smaller disparate sites which span the borough. Recent evidence suggests that there continues to be high demand, but that there is insufficient supply of good quality spaces, as outlined in Priority 1. Outside of B Class jobs, retail is the dominant employment sector, supporting significant local and regional employment in the town centre and is forecast to bring forward substantial additional employment potential through the Charter Place redevelopment, with up to 1200 new jobs in the retail, leisure and food and drinks sectors.

Industrial Market

Watford is home to a diverse range of businesses involved in a wide spectrum of industrial activities, and several specialist manufacturers are based in the borough including DDD Ltd, Prism Power, Sigma Pharmaceuticals, Siemens and Teledyne TSS. Demand is high due to Watford's M1/M25 location, and the vacancy rate has remained comparatively low at around 7.5% for some time¹⁸. However, this persistently low rate has had the adverse effect of preventing the churn, intensification and upgrading of existing sites that would be expected to take place within a normal market environment. Therefore many of Watford's industrial sites are dated and poorly specified, with businesses remaining in properties longer than they might otherwise because of the lack of alternative accommodation. This does however evidence Watford's strengths as an employment location, as businesses are often prepared

¹⁷ Watford Economic Growth and Delivery Assessment (2014)

¹⁸ Watford Economic Growth and Delivery Assessment (2014)

to pay similar rents to neighbouring areas for what in reality is sub-standard premises, in order to remain in the town.

Local agents suggest that a continued lack of supply will severely impede Watford's future economic growth potential¹⁹. New industrial sites are sorely needed in order to decant existing businesses and allow redevelopment and reconfiguration of older sites to better meet future need. However, this requires new development land to come forward which is highly constrained. Whilst some new capacity will be delivered through the major development projects such as Watford Health Campus and Watford Business Park, without a significant step change in policy it will be difficult to protect against further loss of employment space. If losses continue the net result may be that no new capacity is created in the town despite the major development projects, and the gap between Watford's ability to create jobs and growth in its working age population continues to deepen, putting further pressure on commuting, congestion and local labour markets, and undermining the towns aspiration of retaining and indeed strengthening its role as a regional employment hub.

Office Market

Clarendon Road is Watford's prime office location. The office stock here is a mixture of relatively new high quality offices and older secondary space. Major employers KPMG, TJJ Europe and FIS Global are located on Clarendon Road, whilst other big employers including HSBC, Hilton Worldwide, Majestic Wine and Weatherspoons are located in employment areas across the town. Property agents suggest that the office market has improved recently and there is a growing investor confidence in the town.²⁰

However, a residual market uncertainty has resulted in minimal new office space being developed over recent years, and there is still a significant challenging in funding office developments, undermining the short term viability of bringing forward new schemes. Vacancy rates are around 15% (down from 24% in 2010), but more detailed analysis shows that this drops to only 4.1% when considering vacancy of high-quality space²¹. This constraint in the office market is resulting in similar problems to those in the industrial market, where many businesses find themselves locked into outdated premises due to lack of alternative space. Market feedback suggests that growth businesses struggle to find new premises to accommodate their expansion locally, and so are inclined to move outside of the borough. Again, the lack of new space coming forward is restricting the necessary churn in the market which would ordinarily allow upgrading or intensification of existing sites. There is growing evidence of a level of market failure in the local commercial property market, particularly with regard to office development.²².

High land values present both opportunities and challenges, but could lead to further erosion of Watford's existing office stock, particularly where older premises are below short term viability for organic commercial redevelopment and residential development is more feasible. If sites are bought at a value which only makes residential viability possible, commercial redevelopment will be significantly compromised. The Council introduced an Article 4 Direction on Clarendon Road in order to protect the office accommodation from switching to residential use, but these pressures are being felt across the borough, particularly if premises stand vacant for any period of time. The recent EGDA assessment suggested that it is possible that the tight supply may push rental values to a level where development is viable if sufficient land can be made available to accommodate growth. Headline rental

¹⁹ Watford Economic Growth and Delivery Assessment (2014)

²⁰ Watford EGDA 2014

²¹ Watford EGDA 2014

²² Watford EGDA 2014

values on Clarendon Road are currently £20-£22 per sqft²³ and market feedback suggests that values of £25+ per sqft would be the trigger point for organic commercial redevelopment. In parallel to this, market feedback also suggests that if a new block were to come forward on Clarendon Road this could break the market deadlock by providing genuine Grade A development, setting a new rental benchmark in Clarendon Road and unlocking significant latent demand.

Hertfordshire LEP is committed to working with WBC to achieve “maximum economic impacts”²⁴ linked to Watford’s major development projects. In order to do this, pre-existing issues in the commercial market need to be addressed, and then appropriate levels of employment space need to be delivered through these schemes. Even with protection of existing sites and delivery of new spaces through the major development projects, forecasts indicate that there will still be a shortage of capacity in the commercial market if jobs are to be created in line with working age population growth. Therefore, and as stated under Priority 1, dialogue is also needed with neighbouring districts to consider how new employment and residential space is provided for local people in the sub-region in the longer-term.

The wider context of this is the growing body of evidence suggesting that if adequate space cannot be provided in the Watford area, it is often the case that the businesses will tend to focus their search on other regional centres such as Milton Keynes, Slough, Maidenhead or Reading – this potentially represents not only lost economic opportunity to Watford, but to the wider sub-region. Securing Watford’s employment position is therefore strongly in the interests of the wider sub-region due to the large volume of residents from neighbouring districts that are employed in the Watford economy.²⁵

It is also worth noting that in practice the employment area in which Watford operates extends beyond its boundaries. Immediately beyond Watford’s boundary are a number of industrial estates, including several developments on Tolpits Lane and also on Otterspool Way. There are commercial office locations at Croxley Green Business Park and also at Leavesden, all of which are seen as Watford locations by many businesses – for this reason, it can often be the case that Watford’s wider role is underplayed. This reinforces Watford’s strategic role in the heart of this economic sub-region.

Promoting Watford

Watford’s historical strengths as an employment, retail and transport hub has created a reputation for the town as a good place for business to locate. There is an opportunity, however, to extend and enhance the marketing and promotion of Watford as a regional hub, but also profiling the town’s major development projects and wider quality of life offering.

Watford has always experienced strong success with companies seeking relocation from London, and this will continue as firms look for the cost efficiencies to be gained from a strong edge of London commercial and transport hub. However the towns appeal extends beyond this and Watford’s attributes enable it to continue to attract inward investment on a national and international basis, as well as through exploiting links with London.

²³ Watford EGDA 2014

²⁴ Hertfordshire LEP Strategic Economic Plan March 2014

²⁵ Watford EGDA 2014

Town Centre

Watford's town centre supports a significant level of employment particularly in the retail and leisure industries. Recent pressure on the retail sector and high streets nationally has led to the closure of businesses in many other town centres. But Watford has fared well. As a result of the investment discussed in the first chapter, this national trend has been reversed locally, with many new shops and food businesses opening on the High Street, and new brands are being attracted into the expanded Intu Watford. This is a very positive position for the town and is boosting local employment as well as create an even more vibrant town centre. New businesses need to be secured in the town and an environment created in which they can trade successfully. The creation of the Town Centre Partnership in 2013 and potential future Business Improvement District provides a vehicle to help achieve this, as it brings those businesses together to plan for future success collectively, and decide how to invest in the town centre to provide a sustainable long-term trading environment.

There are also a number of office sites within the town centre that provide employment. If the Town Centre Partnership is successful in securing a BID, these would be inside the proposed BID area. Any future BID Board will shape the future of the town centre and have an influence over how these premises are retained and marketed as employment spaces. There currently is a challenge with many vacant upper floors. Consideration is needed of how best to utilise these spaces which have the capacity to contribute towards either employment or residential targets, yet both present their own individual challenges. The spaces may require investment to make them fit-for-purpose for business which could lead to viability challenges, whilst residential uses is already proving problematic due to conflict with existing town centre uses, particularly the Night Time Economy. Together stakeholders and the TCP / BID Board will seek to establish right approach for the town centre and wider borough.

Business Retention

Once businesses are located in Watford, proactive business retention is needed to secure this employment for the long-term. Watford is considered a positive place for businesses to operate, indicated by an active local business community and engagement in local governance and partnership activities. Ensuring the town remains conducive to local business operations will help sustain a strong employment base. There are many measures that can be introduced that support business retention locally, for example.

- Engaging major employers: active engagement with existing major employers to identify any barriers and provide assistance where possible. Watford's Big Business Connect, established in 2013, provides a forum to engage and support the top 35 employers in the town.
- Planning for growth: identifying high growth local companies and planning for growth with them. The Business Growth Forum is a forum well suited to extending this activity within the town.
- Ease of engagement with the local authority: Hertfordshire's Better Business For All initiative encourages a more open and supportive approach by local authorities when assisting with regulatory matters, in order better meet the needs of businesses.
- Business Charter: Watford will create a business charter to outline commitments to support local businesses and create a framework for simple engagement with the council.

- Local supply chain: active promotion of the local supply chain helps stimulate demand and supply, and therefore growth of locally based businesses. WBC is in a strong position to lead by example in supporting local supply chain, and can influence how the requirement to support local supply chain is embedded in to contracts. With the scale of development in the town there is scope to seek commitments from the developers involved in these schemes, and also to consider how this could be further encouraged through planning policy.

Emerging actions

- a) **Better promote Watford's unique strengths and identity as a premier investment, retailing destination.**
 - Brand consolidation – engaging existing groups, organisations, investors and individual development schemes to promote a shared brand and identity for the town and its regeneration agenda
 - Create a Watford Investment Prospectus
 - Develop a Marketing Strategy for Watford, marketing Watford to key investors, corporates and agency bookers, with particular regard to the Major Development projects and benefits and opportunities they create over the next 5 years
- b) **Support partner organisations promoting the image of Watford and wider South West Hertfordshire on a national and international scale.**
- c) **Provide active support to encourage inward investment, helping potential investors with local support and advice to businesses moving to or recently established in Watford.**
- d) **Integrating new investors to existing sector development group, including PING & CING, and where relevant, facilitating introductions to relevant supply chain, B2B and 3rd sector opportunities.**
- e) **Working with key stakeholders to ensure the cohesive delivery of event, arts and heritage events in the town**
 - Creating a combined Business Events Calendar
- f) **Building confidence with both existing and potential new investors, ensuring they operate in a positive and proactive Planning and Regulatory environment e.g. Environmental Health & Licensing**
- g) **Create a Watford Business Charter outlining the Council's commitment to working with business and providing advice and signposting to relevant council services**
 - Create a Business Engagement/Communications Strategy
- h) **Watford Employer Task Force – formed from key players from the business, commercial property and education sector, along with key landowners, investors and promoters of Major Development schemes, actively promoting relocations options within the Borough for existing businesses.**

Priority 4) Innovation and Enterprise

Key issues:

- Supporting Watford's entrepreneurial and innovative local economy
- Ensuring the right spaces, advice and guidance are available for both start-up and growth businesses within the town
- Nurturing the local business environment and supporting initiatives that help our local employers improve their productivity and competitiveness

Start-ups and Entrepreneurialism

Watford is a place where we want businesses to thrive and grow. The town has a higher than average start-up success rate and an established culture of entrepreneurial activity, however rates of business survival over 5 years are slightly lower than across the wider region or nationally, pointing to a need to increase support for start-up and growth businesses.

Social enterprise Wenta (Watford Enterprise Agency), now the leading provider of business support across Herts, Beds and Bucks, has been successfully providing help and guidance to local businesses for over 30 years. They have made significant progress in improving business survival rates. In 2010, with support from WBC, they launched 'My Incubator' at their Watford site to provide physical space and mentoring for start-up businesses in those critical early stages of operation. My Incubator has proved a great success, so far helping 665 businesses start up, as well as running a range of training courses and advisory sessions. Clients who have received intensive support through the Incubator have a 96% survival rate after the first year. Also, MyIncubator Ventures was launched in 2015, delivering online business support to all Watford residents through a partnership between Wenta and WBC.

However, the current Wenta premises are dated and operating at near full capacity. There is a substantial level of need in the market, but scaling up services to meet this high demand in the existing location is challenging. Wenta's ability to grow, extend support to more entrepreneurs, and to provide contemporary office space for start-up businesses is restricted by the physical space they are operating in. WBC is working in partnership with Wenta to explore options to scale local start-up support services to meet increasing demand, and offer more fit-for purpose high-quality space.

Nurturing Growth Businesses

Watford has always enjoyed a level of economic resilience from its healthy spread of sectors and range of sizes of business, being home to a large number of major employers and HQ functions. Yet a specific focus on further developing knowledge-based activity, widely recognised as having significant growth potential, will help embed future sustainability within the town's economy. There is also scope to further harness the growing potential within the creative economy given the town's close proximity to London, and over half of the UK's top quality production space being within 20 minutes of Watford. Creative centres such as Elstree and Warner Bros Studios Leavesden create excellent local supply chain opportunities. Watford's Creative Industries Networking Group (CING) was started in 2012 and has proved highly successful as a forum which brings together local businesses to promote best practice and knowledge share between local specialist companies, helping improve their competitive positions in both national and international markets, and embedding these strong sectors in the local economy. Another successful local sector group is the Pharmaceutical Interest Networking Group (PING). WBC actively supports these

groups and with the support from key partners, is interested to see other growth sector forums come forward and evolve within the town.

Partnership Working to Enhance Competitiveness

Watford has an active business community which participates in local forums and governance structures across the town. Strong partnership working between the private, public and third sectors enables local stakeholders to create more competitive trading environments, removing barriers to trade and pioneering new initiatives to increase productivity for local firms. An example of this is the Town Centre Partnership which is seeking to secure a Business Improvement District (BID) to improve the competitiveness of Watford as a regional destination for retail and leisure. WBC sits on the board of the TCP and is actively supporting its progression towards a BID.

The value of working with private sector to bring new innovation is demonstrated through the wireless concession model being used to deliver WiFi to the town centre and community areas across the borough. What was once considered a potential area for capital investment, the WiFi project has created an opportunity to bring the town's digital future alive through private sector investment. It is expected that the partner company will deliver WiFi into community hubs during Summer/Autumn 2015 and across the town centre in November 2015. A Watford App will be launched along with the town centre WiFi bringing the best of social and community news to residents and visitors, and providing vast opportunities for town centre businesses to change the way they engage their customers.

Local business groups such as the Business Growth Forum and Big Business Connect are also committed to improving Watford's overall competitive business environment. The council continues to actively support these groups, along with Watford and West Herts Chamber of Commerce which is also an active member of the forums. The chamber offers a range of support services to help businesses operate and compete effectively in local, national and international markets. Networking is also a core chamber activity, bringing local businesses together to connect and build relationships that foster mutual growth. There is a range of networking groups operating within Watford, each with a slightly different offer, so something suited to all types of business. The Federation of Small Business is active locally, providing comprehensive support and engagement with national agendas. Networking groups like BNI and Business Buzz offer diverse ways for businesses to connect for mutual benefit. Regular participation in these groups helps provide the council with a mechanism for feedback from a wider range of local businesses, and also aligns with Herts LEP and their commitment to support business networking in their Strategic Economic Plan.

SME's are the growth engines of the UK economy and are expected to deliver much of the future employment growth. Small, growing businesses face specific challenges which need to be supported to enable them to compete within their markets and remain successful within the local economy. Signposting to this support is not always clear, so the council intends to explore ways to improve signposting and accessibility to partners that deliver relevant business support. The Hertfordshire Growth Hub is one such resource, and working with this team will enable Watford's growth businesses to access support around sales and marketing strategies, finance, funding and investment schemes and skills and apprenticeships, from a single point of access. The council are also exploring further ways in which procurement policy can promote use of smaller local businesses in supply-chain opportunities.

Emerging actions

- a) Support Wenta in development of Watford Business Technology Centre.**
- b) Working with key partners and stakeholders to encourage enterprise through support for small businesses, self employed, start-up and pre-start ups.**
- c) Ensure there are suitable premises for use by small businesses and land for the development of new premises, including innovation space.**
- d) Support businesses by addressing their skills and training challenges and support voluntary and community sectors to deliver quality services.**
- e) Develop knowledge based strategy, increasing the number of knowledge economy businesses in the town and the number of associated jobs.**
- f) Engage the relevant economic delivery bodies to develop the knowledge based economy.**
- g) Embed support for the promotion and development of innovation skills.**
- h) Work closely with Hertfordshire's' growth programmes – The Growth Hub, University of Herts, LEP, Green Triangle, UKTI, Growth Accelerator.**
- i) Develop business engagement programme to establish working relationships and collaboration with primary and small businesses that will be tomorrows major employers.**
- j) Continuing to identify key issues impacting business and working collaboratively to find solutions.**

Priority 5) Employability and Skills

Key issues:

- Working with local employers to deliver the right labour pool to support private sector job growth
- Ensuring local residents have the appropriate skills to access the new jobs being created
- Addressing gaps in the local skills market that have knock on effect on the overall sustainability of the local economy

Context

Watford has a larger than average working-age population and a skilled local workforce. These strengths have contributed to the town's economic resilience over recent years and have enhanced the town's appeal to businesses.

Despite this, national trends around skills' gaps are being felt at a regional and local level, with Hertfordshire LEP reporting in September 2014 that 79% of Hertfordshire businesses experience skills' gaps amongst their employees. There is growing evidence from Watford employers, across many sectors, suggesting challenges in sourcing the right staff, particularly to fill lower skilled posts. Higher skilled posts are also proving difficult to fill due to economic and spatial relationships with the capital and the pull effect of a major world city.

Job growth is forecast to increase significantly in Watford and the wider sub-region as the UK economy continues to stabilise, but also due to close proximity to London and the ripple effects of economic growth within the capital. Affordability issues in both the London housing and commercial markets are already increasing the town's attractiveness as a business location as well as a place to live. This presents both opportunities and challenges which need to be harnessed to secure future economic sustainability and enable local people to benefit from Watford's growth.

As working age population continues to grow, the links with London become more evident, with the volume of residents travelling to London for work increasing by 25% from 2001 to 2011. Higher skilled workers are commuting out, as workplace wages are 14% lower than resident wages. Better connecting the skills of local people to Watford's jobs could bring many benefits; improving employers' ability to access relevant skills, but also reducing commuting and congestion pressures, improving work-life balance for residents, and retaining more spend in the local economy.

Watford Skills Board

One of Watford's many strengths is partnership working between the public, private and third sector. In May 2015 stakeholders from business, education, community, Herts LEP and the council met and formed a Local Skills Board, to improve the way existing businesses and future employers can find the skills they need, and to ensure local people are well placed to access future job opportunities as the town grows. The board is being led by West Herts College.

Watford's labour market operates across its wider FEMA (Functional Economic market Area) and the town performs a key role in providing employment for residents from neighbouring districts. There is a commuting inflow of nearly 30,000 workers, with over a quarter of these coming from London, 20% from Three Rivers, 11% from Dacorum and 9% from Hertsmere. The Board will consider skills across this wider FEMA area, also aligned with the LEP's

M1/M25 Growth Area. The group will seek to engage Hertfordshire County Council (HCC), Job Centre Plus (JCP) and Herts LEP as co-authors of the Hertfordshire Skills Strategy), to better support the local need around skills.

An accurate evidence base is needed to inform decision making, providing both quantitative and qualitative data. Clarity is needed about the 'skills gap' today, and how it is likely to evolve over coming years. The Board is seeking to avoid duplication and to maximise things that are working well, so any new initiatives will respond to particular areas of need. There are 5 emerging 'Themes' for the board:

- 1) Inspiring Young People
 - Watford Inspirers programme - local business leaders inspiring the next generation of workers
 - Working with both colleges and schools
- 2) Local Business Corporate Social Responsibility
 - Engagement of local businesses in development of skills
 - Business support for and involvement in community based activities
- 3) Labour Market
 - Entering /re-entering the jobs market - young people, job seekers, 50+
 - Up-skilling within the workplace
- 4) Local Business Engagement
 - Workforce planning, particularly with SMEs and growth businesses
 - Longer term planning with developers and major employers for future job creation, particularly linked to the major development projects
- 5) Skills Development
 - Future proofing Watford's labour market
 - Responding to businesses, tailoring activity to meet future needs

Unemployment

Watford's unemployment has historically been lower than national averages and currently stands at around 1.5%. Many job seekers from outside the borough register in Watford, again indicating the town's role in providing employment for residents beyond its' statutory boundary. Alongside Job Seekers Allowance claimants, Employment Support Allowance claimants and the economically inactive are seen as a group with potential to provide additional labour market capacity, particularly in some of the harder to fill roles, if given the right support.

Skills Provision

Watford's education provision is recognised as very good, with 23 primary schools and 8 secondary schools (many of which are rated Outstanding by Ofsted) and West Herts College and Watford UTC offer a variety of academic and vocational education options up to the age of 18. There is already good engagement between local employers and education providers, however, there is opportunity to do even more to enable the town to embrace the growth opportunities coming.

A particular challenge employers experience, evidenced locally and nationally, is the 'work-readiness' of particularly young candidates, affecting their ability to engage effectively in professional workplaces. This is something the Local Skills Board is interested to help address through the Themes set out above, as is workforce development, because there is a suggestion that local employers are also reluctant to invest in training because of the risk of losing trained staff to London based competitors.

Policy Approach

WBC is seeking closer coordination between related council agendas and to identify policy areas that can be improved to better support local skills development. These include Housing Policy and availability of affordable housing for lower skilled workers, as well as Procurement and Planning Policy which can be better tailored to encourage the use of local skills in construction supply chain. This also extends to helping support provision of high quality education spaces also needed to support local growth, including significant new primary and secondary school capacity to meet the needs of the towns rapidly growing population.

Emerging Actions

- a) Support the Local Skills Board in development of a Skills Strategy.**
- b) Support the LEP in delivery around its Herts Skills Strategy.**
- c) Ensure the new jobs created through the Major Development Projects are made available to local, suitably qualified people**
- d) Improve access to training to enable individuals to obtain the necessary skills for sustainable employment.**
- e) Identify need within local communities and facilitate access to skills development to meet the gaps in the local labour market.**
- f) Increase the number of people in apprenticeships and work experience placements.**
- g) Support for local skills providers to address demand.**
 - o Increase overall levels of educational attainment
 - o Increase the number of highly skilled workers
- h) Local housing provision to support local employment agenda.**
- i) Local procurement supported through the Social Value Act and within development projects.**
- j) Support adequate school provision with HCC.**

Governance – delivering the commitments of this Strategy

The role of Watford Borough Council

In line with the Council's Corporate Plan, we will provide the strategic lead for Watford's sustainable economic growth. WBC will proactively coordinate dialogue and activity with partners, growing the council's reputation as a leading regenerator.

To do this WBC will:

- ✓ Provide strong community leadership
- ✓ Use public sector assets, influence and expertise to encourage sustainable development and deliver the Council's development agenda, as outlined in the Local Plan Core Strategy
- ✓ Where possible, provide financial and/or in kind resources within the context of limited resources
- ✓ Ensure all communities have access to opportunities arising from investment and regeneration
- ✓ Ensure a positive planning environment
- ✓ Proactively engaging all relevant public sector and 3rd sector partners
- ✓ Being ambitious to help deliver and even stronger future for Watford
- ✓ Help foster an engaged and informed political landscape
- ✓ Helping secure long term sustainable economic growth within the wider sub-region by influencing growth a decision making beyond our statutory boundaries

The Watford Regeneration Board

Watford's ambitious economic development and regeneration agenda is built on the foundations of strong partnership working and integrated delivery arrangements with our individual scheme partners.

The Metropolitan Line extension, in particular, is a fundamental enabler of the regeneration of Watford over the next 5 years.

Coordinated delivery of the Metropolitan Line extension alongside the numerous adjoining major development sites is therefore fundamental in ensuring the stated regeneration and economic outcomes of this strategy are delivered.

The Watford Regeneration Board has been established to provide coordinated governance and delivery arrangements across all the major planned investments. The WRB will provide an overseeing role, ensuring that the stated outcomes for regeneration and economic development are delivered on time and in a coordinated manner.

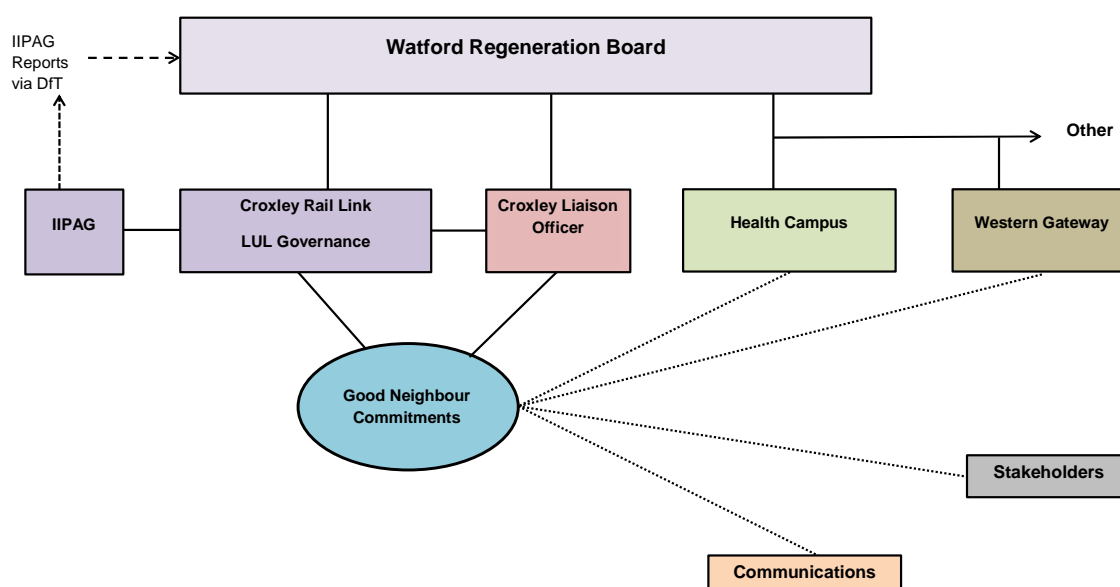
Key members of the WRB include:

- WBC (Chair, as local planning authority and lead on local economic development and regeneration)
- Hertfordshire County Council (HCC)
- Department for Transport (DfT)
- London Underground Ltd.
- Transport for London (TfL)
- Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (Herts LEP)

- Individual Major Scheme Promoters, including:
 - -Western Gateway, including Watford Business Park, Cassiobridge development site and Croxley Green Business Park
 - -Watford Health Campus
 - -Charter Place
 - -Watford Junction

The governance arrangements below reflect the integrated approach being adopted:

Croxley Rail Link Project Governance



For the Croxley Rail Link/Metropolitan Line Extension, the WRB will specifically be responsible for:

- Specifying and monitoring the schemes delivery
- Acting as the primary interface between the individual Major Development Areas
- Co-ordinating complex funding arrangements
- Specifying and monitoring service provision/train timetabling, including consideration of promoting services to Amersham and extending the Bakerloo Line to Watford Junction
- Receiving progress and exception reports
- Undertaking a branded campaign, promoting a positive image of Watford whilst keeping local communities and local businesses informed on development progress

In having a locus on these dynamics, the WRB shall maintain a continuous overview of potential funding pressures, residual risks and integrated delivery programme for all the individual Major Development projects, including the Croxley Rail Link/Metropolitan Line extension to Watford.

Monitoring & Review

The sustainable economic growth of Watford requires a long term plan. The council's Local Plan Core Strategy and this enabling Economic Development Strategy are intended to drive forward economic development and regeneration activity for the period 2015-202. We will also, working closely with our partners, look beyond that period to ensure momentum is retained and built on further. We will monitor activity on an ongoing basis against the strategic priorities and objectives and carry out a review annually through the Council's Annual Monitoring Report (AMR).

These reviews will also examine the local, sub-regional, regional, national and international environments to make sure the strategic priorities remain valid.

In Watford, we and our partners recognise that regeneration and economic development is a long term game. The Watford economic 'story' is already hundreds of years old, but the next 5 years in particular will be game-changing for the town and its long term future.

We in Watford, also recognise that confidence and certainty are key conditions for harnessing investment. Our key message to our local communities, our committed investors and our future investors is that Watford is more confident than ever. The purpose of this strategy is to help foster investor confidence, clearly showing where we want to go and how we are going to get there.

Definitions / Glossary

- **What is a recession?**

A recession is where an economy that had previously been growing slows down. The level of production declines, unemployment rises and consumer spending dries up. In the worst case scenarios, as happened in the 1930s and the 1980s so few people are spending money that businesses sack staff to cut costs. In January 2009, England formally entered into a recession, which subjectively started with a credit crisis in late 2007, and a lack of available money to businesses and consumers through credit facilities. The current policy by the Bank of England & government is that the country is in recession when three continuous months see no economic growth.

- **What is Inflation?**

Inflation is a sustained rise in prices across an economic area, it is literally the cost of living. In Britain it is calculated by monthly measuring the percentage rise in price of a weighted sample or basket of goods and services that a typical household buys compared to the year before. What causes inflation? In classical terms it is caused by demand exceeding supply, in other words, too much money is chasing too few goods and services, so they begin to command higher prices. What can be done about inflation? No one can get rid of inflation permanently. It will always rise and fall with the economic cycle, but government policies to manage this will also affect inflation. Increasing interest rates, interest rates and cutting back on public spending to take the heat out of the boom will also damp down inflation to an extent. However in the long term, sound economic policies may reduce a country's average rate of inflation. Creating conditions for investment, long term growth and currency stability, so that the economy cannot overheat easily and so confidence in the currency remains high, are the best way to achieve the goal of low average inflation.

- **What is GDP?**

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is a measure of the total economic activity occurring in the UK. It can be measured in three ways: Production, which measures the Gross Domestic Product as the sum of all value added by all activities which produce goods and services (See Gross Value Added). Income, which measures the Gross Domestic Product as the total of incomes earned from the production of goods and services. Expenditure, which measures the Gross Domestic Product as the total expenditure made either in consuming finished goods and services or adding wealth, less the cost of imports. A common equation for GDP is ($GDP = Consumption + Investment + Exports - Imports$).

- **What is GVA?**

Gross Value Added (GVA) is the difference between output and immediate consumption for any given sector / industry. That is the difference between the value of goods and services produced and the cost of raw materials and other inputs which are used up in production.

- **What is RPI?**

Retail Price Index is an important domestic indicator of inflation in the UK. It measures the average change from month to month in the prices of goods and services purchased in the UK. In addition there are two commonly used RPI aggregates; RPIx all items excluding mortgage interest payments; and RPIy all items except mortgage interest payments and indirect taxes.

- **What is a Social Enterprise?**

The official definition of a social enterprise is "a business or service with primarily social objectives whose surpluses are principally reinvested for that purpose in the community, rather than being driven by the need to maximise profit for stakeholders and owners." The characteristics of a social enterprise are; they trade i.e. sell goods and/or services and any profit or surplus made as a result of their trading activities is either ploughed back into the business or distributed to the community they serve. They have a clear social purpose, this may include job creation, or the provision of local facilities e.g. a nursery, community shop or social care for the elderly. Thirdly they are owned and managed by the communities they serve.

- **Knowledge based industry**

High Technology industries (such as software engineering, pharmaceuticals, or professional offices based) and knowledge based services (for example telecommunications, information

technology, finance, insurance and business services) which are important to economic development through increased GVA.

- **Intermediate Labour Market Schemes (ILMs)**

A combination of training and employment which aims to move people off income support and into employment.

- **Local Development Framework (LDF)**

The Local Development Framework is a non-statutory term used to describe a folder of documents, which includes all the local planning authorities local development documents (comprised of development plan documents, which will form part of the statutory development plan, and supplementary planning documents, area action plans). The local development framework will also comprise the statement of community involvement, the local development scheme and the annual monitoring report.

- **Local Transport Plan (LTP)**

The LTP sets out the main proposals for achieving an integrated transport system, to make it easier for people to travel between locations with public transport and to tackle the adverse impacts of traffic growth. The plans will normally encourage greater use of public transport, walking or cycling by making these more attractive.

- **Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)**

The LSP is a partnership between different parts of the public sector with the private business, community and voluntary sectors in order to deliver services more effectively. They are expected to prepare and implement a community strategy and in areas that receive neighbourhood renewal funding, it is a condition of the funding that a partnership is developed.

- **Mixed use area**

Provision of a mix of complimentary uses, such as residential, community and leisure uses, on a site or within a particular area.

- **Multiple deprivation**

The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) measures deprivation for every Super Output Area (SOA) and local authority area in England. It combines indicators across seven domains into a single deprivation score and rank. The analysis helps to highlight the most deprived areas in the towns and cities. The domains are; income deprivation, employment deprivation, health deprivation, education skills and training deprivation, barriers to housing and services, living environment deprivation, and crime.

- **Outcomes**

The wider effects or impact on an area of a scheme or project. Outcomes should be measured against defined baselines and linked directly to the strategic objectives of the strategy, plan or bid. Sometimes used interchangeably with impact. In economic development terms an outcome is usually the result of an initiative. E.g. 'as a result of an initiative the crime rate dropped by 15%'

- **Performance management framework**

A framework of strategies, plans, policies and indicators, both national and local that enables the performance of the council and its partners to be effectively and efficiently monitored in an open and transparent manner.

- **Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS)**

A strategy for how the region should look in 15-20 years time and possibly longer. It identifies the scale and distribution of new housing in the region, indicates areas for regeneration, expansion or sub regional planning and specifies priorities for the environment, transport, infrastructure, economic development, agriculture, minerals and waste treatment and disposal.

- **Stakeholders**

Every person and organisation that has a stake in a project, that is, who feels that they are committed to, can contribute to, or will gain from the project.

- **Worklessness**

An expanded definition of unemployment that also includes those who are economically inactive. The economically inactive are people of working age who are not working, are not in full time education or training and are not actively seeking work. Many are outside the labour market voluntarily because of family responsibilities or early retirement for example. There is evidence that many people want a job and would work if they had the right opportunity, incentive or path back into employment. Therefore when thinking about target groups for local initiatives it is important to consider different groups of the 'workless' as well as the 'unemployed.'

- **Community Infrastructure Levy**

Community Infrastructure Levy is a charge which local authorities will be empowered to charge on most types of new development. This charge will be spent on local and sub regional infrastructure to support the development of the area.

- **Managed Office Space**

Managed Office Space is essentially a hybrid of serviced office space and conventional office space fully managed by outside companies. It goes beyond the standard serviced office contract and is usually on a large scale for large companies, often the entire office block, business centre or complex. It is assumed most companies looking for managed offices are occupiers looking for available space from 3,000 up to 150,000 sq ft or more, also it is generally assumed that companies require flexible terms from six month up to five years plus.

- **Business Incubator**

An organisation designed to accelerate the growth and success of entrepreneurial companies, with services that includes physical space, capital, coaching, common services and networking.

