



**WATFORD
BOROUGH
COUNCIL**

CABINET

5 March 2018

7.00 pm

Town Hall Watford

Contact

Caroline Harris Democratic Services Manager

legalanddemocratic@watford.gov.uk .

01923 278372

Publication date: 23 February 2018

Cabinet Membership

Mayor	D Thornhill	(Chair)
Councillor	P Taylor	(Deputy Mayor)
Councillors	K Collett, S Johnson, I Sharpe and M Watkin	

Agenda

Part A – Open to the Public

1. Apologies for absence

2. Disclosure of interests (if any)

3. Minutes of previous meeting

The [minutes](#) of the meeting held on 22 January 2018 to be submitted and signed.

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. Review of Corporate Plan 2020: revised for 2018/19 (Pages 4 - 72)

Report of the Managing Director. Cabinet is asked to note the revised draft Corporate Plan 2020 and recommend it to Council.

6. South West Herts Joint Strategic Plan (Pages 73 - 82)

Report of the Deputy Managing Director and Director of Place Shaping and Corporate Performance. For Cabinet to recommend to Council to work with other South West Herts Authorities to prepare a joint strategic plan.

7. Resolution in principle to promote a Compulsory Purchase Order for Watford Business Park (Pages 83 - 92)

Report of the Property Development Project Manager. To ask Cabinet to approve the comprehensive redevelopment of Watford Business Park Zone A including agreeing in principle to use of Section 226(1)(a) Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) compulsory purchase powers if necessary.

8. Update to the Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy (Pages 93 - 204)

Report of Energy and Renewal Surveyor. To recommend that Cabinet approves the new policy for publication and implementation from 1 April 2018

9. Ombudsman's Decision (Pages 205 - 211)

Report of Head of Democracy and Governance to ask Cabinet to note the Ombudsman's decision.

10. Tackling Loneliness Task Group (Pages 212 - 230)

Report of Committee and Scrutiny Officer. Presenting to Cabinet the final report and recommendations of the Tackling Loneliness Task Group for consideration.

11. Revision to Digital Watford Board meeting schedule (Pages 231 - 232)

Report of Head of Service Transformation regarding the Digital Watford Board meeting schedule and format.

Agenda Item 5

PART A

Report to: Cabinet
Date of meeting: 5 March 2018
Report of: Managing Director
Title: Review of Corporate Plan 2020: revised for 2018/19

1.0 **Summary**

- 1.1 The council's Corporate Plan sets out the direction for the council and how it will achieve its ambitions, vision and priorities. From the Corporate Plan we develop our service plans, work programmes for our section and teams and individual staff objectives (as currently identified within PDRs).
- 1.2 Underpinning the Corporate Plan are a number of areas, all of which are considered in the shaping of the council's programme of work. These comprise:
- The Elected Mayor's manifesto and ambitions
 - Our vision, priorities, values and supporting themes
 - What we know about our borough and feedback from our residents
 - For this year, feedback from our recent Corporate Peer Challenge
 - A review of last's years Plan
 - Our challenges and opportunities
 - The council's budget
- 1.3 This year's plan represents continuity from previous years and is particularly informed by our Watford 2020 transformation programme. Whilst we have taken forward areas of work from last year's Plan, a number of new areas have been identified for delivery by 2020 when we would expect to undertake a fundamental review of our corporate planning framework (i.e. our vision, priorities and ambitions).
- 1.4 The draft Corporate Plan is attached at Appendix A and is presented for consideration and approval.

2.0 Risks

2.1

Nature of Risk	Consequence	Suggested Control Measures	Response (Treat, tolerate, terminate, transfer)	Risk Rating (the combination of severity and likelihood)
<p>The council's corporate plan and its Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) fail to work together to achieve outcomes identified within the plan. Failure to link the two effectively might result in insufficient financial resourcing for areas of work identified or failure to meet financial targets.</p>	<p>Insufficient financial resourcing for areas of work identified or failure to meet financial targets.</p>	<p>Clear direction in place from Mayor and Cabinet on future priorities.</p> <p>Robust discussions and challenge on both the MTFS and Corporate Plan.</p>	<p>Treat</p>	<p>4</p>
<p>Failure of the organisation taking ownership of corporate planning framework</p>	<p>Poor commitment to delivery and targets not achieved. Potential for slippage.</p>	<p>Robust project and programme management and strong governance of projects and programmes.</p>	<p>Treat</p>	<p>4</p>

		<p>Clear service plans and objective setting for teams and individual staff.</p> <p>Communication with staff through internal communication channels.</p> <p>'At a glance' Corporate Plan developed so work to be delivered is clear.</p> <p>Regular monitoring through Leadership Team and Portfolio Holders.</p>		
<p>Failure to understand the inter-dependencies between projects and highlighting where resources from other parts of the organisation</p>	<p>Area of work / project / programme not delivered on time.</p> <p>Potential impact on costs due to delays</p>	<p>Robust project and programme management and strong governance of projects and programmes.</p>	<p>Treat</p>	<p>4</p>

are required to successfully deliver an area of work / project / programme				
--	--	--	--	--

3.0 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 To note the revised draft Corporate Plan 2020 and propose any amendments and recommend it to Council (Appendix A).
- 3.2 To note that the work programme within the plan will underpin service plans and staff’s individual work programmes as set out in their annual performance development reviews.
- 3.3 To note the work programme set out in the plan will be monitored through the year.

Contact Officer:

For further information on this report please contact: Kathryn Robson
 telephone extension: 8077 e-mail: kathryn.robson@watford.gov.uk

Report approved by:

Manny Lewis, Managing Director

4.0 **Detailed Proposal**

As part of its business planning cycle, the council undertakes an annual review of its corporate planning framework (its vision, priorities and values) and its Corporate Plan. Through this process the organisation reviews and agrees what is important for the town and the council over the medium term and where it should focus resources to deliver good quality services to our community and real improvements to the borough.

The Corporate Plan is, therefore, the council's key planning document, which underpins its programme of work and by which it can measure its achievements. From the Plan the council develops its service plans which, in turn, inform the work programme of each team within the council and the individual objectives of each member of staff, identified through our annual performance development review (PDR) process.

4.1 **Corporate Plan 2020 – reviewed for 2018/19**

4.1.1 The council reviewed its vision, priorities and values in 2016 in order to provide the organisation with the direction and corporate framework needed to 2020. Whilst these remain the key building blocks for our corporate planning and priority setting, the organisation does undertake an annual review of the Corporate Plan to ensure it continues to reflect:

- The Elected Mayor's manifesto and ambitions
- Our vision, priorities, values and supporting themes
- What we know about our borough and feedback from our residents
- For this year, feedback from our recent Corporate Peer Challenge
- A review of last's years Plan - what has been achieved (and can, therefore, be removed from the corporate work programme), work that is still in progress and needs to be carried forward (with appropriate updates to reflect the milestones achieved during the past 12 months) and new areas of work, based on the emerging challenges and opportunities for the council to include in the revised corporate work programme
- Our challenges and opportunities
- The council's budget

4.1.2 Over the last year, the council has successfully taken forward its Watford 2020 transformation programme. Highlights of this include the delivery of the three key supporting strategies: ICT, People and Commercial and the completion of the organisation-wide Service Innovations which, by working with staff from across service areas has helped identify where the council can do things more efficiently and effectively. This work will continue in 2018/19 and is expected to continue to deliver the level of transformation and innovation the organisation requires to meet its 2020 challenges and opportunities.

4.1.3 The borough's housing challenges are also highlighted in the Corporate Plan

and remain a central focus for the council as we seek to find effective solutions to meeting the government target for new homes and securing a range of housing solutions, including affordable housing, for our residents and communities.

4.2 Delivery and monitoring

4.2.1 To support the delivery of the Corporate Plan, the council has established a range of governance and reporting fora. Major projects are reported to Programme Management Board (PMB) and Watford 2020 related projects to the Watford 2020 Programme Board. Digital related initiatives are reported to the Digital Watford Board and the Finance Review Board provides additional scrutiny and strategic direction for the council's finances.

From 2018/19, those projects and areas of work not identified as either PMB or Watford 2020 projects, will be monitored through quarterly updates to a panel chaired by the Deputy Managing Director and supported by the Head of Corporate Strategy and Communications. This is to ensure the rigour applied to making sure of the successful delivery of these projects areas is consistent with that of our major and Watford 2020 projects.

5.0 Implications

5.1 Financial

5.1.1 The importance of securing the council's financial future is a priority within the Corporate Plan and work to achieve this is outlined under this priority, including the embedding and delivery of the council's agreed Commercial Strategy. The council's Medium Term Financial Strategy, supports the synergy between its financial and corporate planning and identifies how the council will make sure it links its financial decisions to the delivery of the Corporate Plan.

5.2 Legal Issues (Monitoring Officer)

5.2.1 The Head of Democracy and Governance comments that the Corporate Plan is one of the policy framework documents listed in the constitution that has to be approved by Council. The current plan will be presented to Council in March.

5.3 Equalities

5.3.1 The Corporate Plan is informed by the Watford context, including an understanding of the demographic make-up of the borough's community and feedback from local people on the issues that are important to them. An overall equality impact analysis has been undertaken on the Corporate Plan (Appendix B) and impact analyses will be undertaken on specific projects/programmes where relevant.

5.4

Staffing

5.4.1

The Corporate Plan is a key document for staff and provides an important part of the council's performance framework. An 'at a glance guide' to the delivery element of the Plan was produced last year and this was well received by staff as it made very clear what the council was committed to delivering and by when. This will be continued for 2018/19.

Individual staff objectives are set from service plans, which are informed by the Corporate Plan. In this way, staff can see the link between their own work and the wider corporate work programme.

Appendices

Appendix A – Draft Corporate Plan 2020

Appendix B – Equality Impact Analysis



MAKING
WATFORD
BOLD & PROGRESSIVE

Watford Borough Council's Corporate Plan to 2020

2018/19

Author	Kathryn Robson
Version number	V0.6
Document	Corporate Plan 2018-2020
Issue date	12 January 2018
Approval date	
For internal /external publication	Internal + external

Issue	Date	Comments
V0.1 & V0.2	January 2018	Working versions
V0.3	12 January 2018	To Leadership Team
V0.4	29 January 2018	To PHs
V0.5	13 February 2018	To Leadership Team
V0.6	19 February 2018	To Cabinet



Our Corporate Plan

Welcome to our Corporate Plan for 2018-2020.

This will be the last Plan that champions my ambitions for the borough and the council and which I will recommend to Council for setting our direction to 2020.

I feel confident that we are in a good position to continue to deliver on our 'bold' and 'progressive' vision, priorities and values. Our Corporate Peer Challenge (see page 9) was an outstanding endorsement of my time as Elected Mayor and a real tribute to the hard work and commitment that has been shown by councillors, staff and our partners during my sixteen years in office.

I was particularly keen for an independent assessment of the council during my last year as Elected Mayor. Whilst we can feel proud of what we have achieved as a council, we can never be complacent and having independent verification that we are amongst the best performing district authorities in the country has been extremely reassuring and means I can pass on a strong legacy to my successor.

It is also vitally important that we listen to the communities we serve. As Elected Mayor not every decision you take will be popular with everyone but the important thing for me is to have always kept the best interest of the town and our residents at the heart of decision making. Our recent Community Survey showed that residents do, overall, have confidence in the council and what we are trying to achieve for the borough. They clearly have concerns over some issues and it is important that we listen to what people are telling us.

My time as Elected Mayor has been one of unprecedented change for local government. I would put the massive cuts in the funding from government and the national crisis in housing as two of the biggest challenges we face. This Plan sets out how we are addressing both these areas and finding solutions that are innovative and will achieve positive outcomes for our residents and the council.

So, whilst I can feel proud of what has been achieved since I came to office in 2002, there is still a lot to be done. It will be for the next Elected Mayor of Watford to steer the council, and its plans, to ensure that it continues to successfully serve our borough and its residents.

As ever, if you have any comments on the Corporate Plan, our plans, major projects or the Council, then email me on themayor@watford.gov.uk or call 01923 226400 and ask for the Mayor's office.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dorothy Thornhill". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large 'D' and 'T'.

Baroness Dorothy Thornhill MBE

Elected Mayor of Watford

Shaping our Corporate Plan

Foreword

Our Corporate Plan sets out our ambitions for Watford and how we will deliver these commitments by 2020. It is underpinned by the elected Mayor's priorities for the town during her fourth term in office, as well as our corporate vision, values and objectives as well as. 2018 marks the final year of Baroness Dorothy Thornhill's time as elected Mayor of the town and, in May, we will welcome a new elected Mayor. Part of their role during their first year will be to review this Plan and work with us to reconfirm our priorities and corporate programme of work.

For next year (2018/19), we have agreed an overall direction for the council based on our corporate vision and our drive to be a 'bold' and 'progressive organisation that delivers outstanding services and positive outcomes for our residents and town. This Plan has been developed through:

- Reviewing last year's Plan – including our achievements and those areas of work still to be completed
- Identifying new and emerging projects that support our vision and deliver our priorities including those set out by our elected Mayor
- Considering feedback from our local community about what is important to them and the town
- Reflecting on what we know about Watford and its population so that we can feel confident that our Plan is forward thinking and working towards a successful and sustainable future for the borough
- Building on the feedback from our Corporate Peer Challenge

Through our planning across the organisation we remain committed to some key principles in shaping what we do. These are important as they ensure we effectively manage our challenges and maximise opportunities as they arise. We need to:

- focus on ensuring our residents and customers are at the heart of what we do
- improve access to our services by delivering more digitally and online
- be more commercial and entrepreneurial to meet our financial challenges and opportunities
- retain our ambitious approach as we cannot afford to scale back our ambition for the borough and the council.
- be more creative, innovative and resilient if we want to continue to be successful as we go forward
- retain the drive and commitment of our staff and members that was recognised through our Corporate Peer Challenge in 2017

Part One

The council's Vision, Priorities and Values

OUR VISION: To create a bold and progressive future for Watford

Our vision reflects our approach to the current challenges and opportunities facing the council and the town as a place to live, work, visit and study. We want to champion our town so that it is a place where all our communities thrive and prosper, benefitting from strong economic growth and good quality local services and facilities. This will require the council to be innovative, explore new ways of working and champion initiatives that will transform the town and the organisation. More of the same isn't going to secure the future we want for Watford, which is why **bold** and **progressive** lie at the heart of our ambitions.

OUR FIVE PRIORITIES:

Supporting this vision, the council has five priority areas of work. Our priorities are critical to the Council achieving successful outcomes for its ambitions for the town.

1. Identify ways to manage the borough's housing needs
2. Champion smart growth and economic prosperity
3. Provide for our vulnerable and disadvantaged communities
4. Deliver a digital Watford to empower our community
5. Secure our own financial future

In addition, our core, day to day business underpins everything we do and all of our work and effort contribute to our success. In particular, we recognise the importance of three core objectives which at all times makes us a more effective organisation, in touch with our residents and delivering in the areas and in a way that they expect. These are:

- Effective two-way engagement and communication
- Sound management and high performance
- Improving the town's environment.

OUR VALUES:

Our revised corporate values reflect the behaviour we expect our staff to demonstrate in their work and clearly establish how they contribute to delivering our new vision.

1. **BOLD:** We work as a team and we make things happen
2. **PROGRESSIVE:** We are ambitious, we are innovative and we are welcoming

Our values focus on taking forward our corporate agenda. We also believe it is important to be fair, to behave with integrity and be inclusive in how we deliver services..

We strive towards a **DYNAMIC CULTURE**, that is :

Ambitious - having a “can-do” attitude to making things happen. Challenging ourselves to deliver excellent services and inspiring others to deliver results in a business-like way

Innovative – embracing creative and entrepreneurial approaches and championing new ways of working that will transform Watford and deliver our ambitions

Welcoming – engaging our residents and partners and providing an excellent customer experience

Empowering - enabling our staff to take ownership and be accountable for their own performance, actions and decisions. Valuing diversity and listening to and understanding the views of others

and

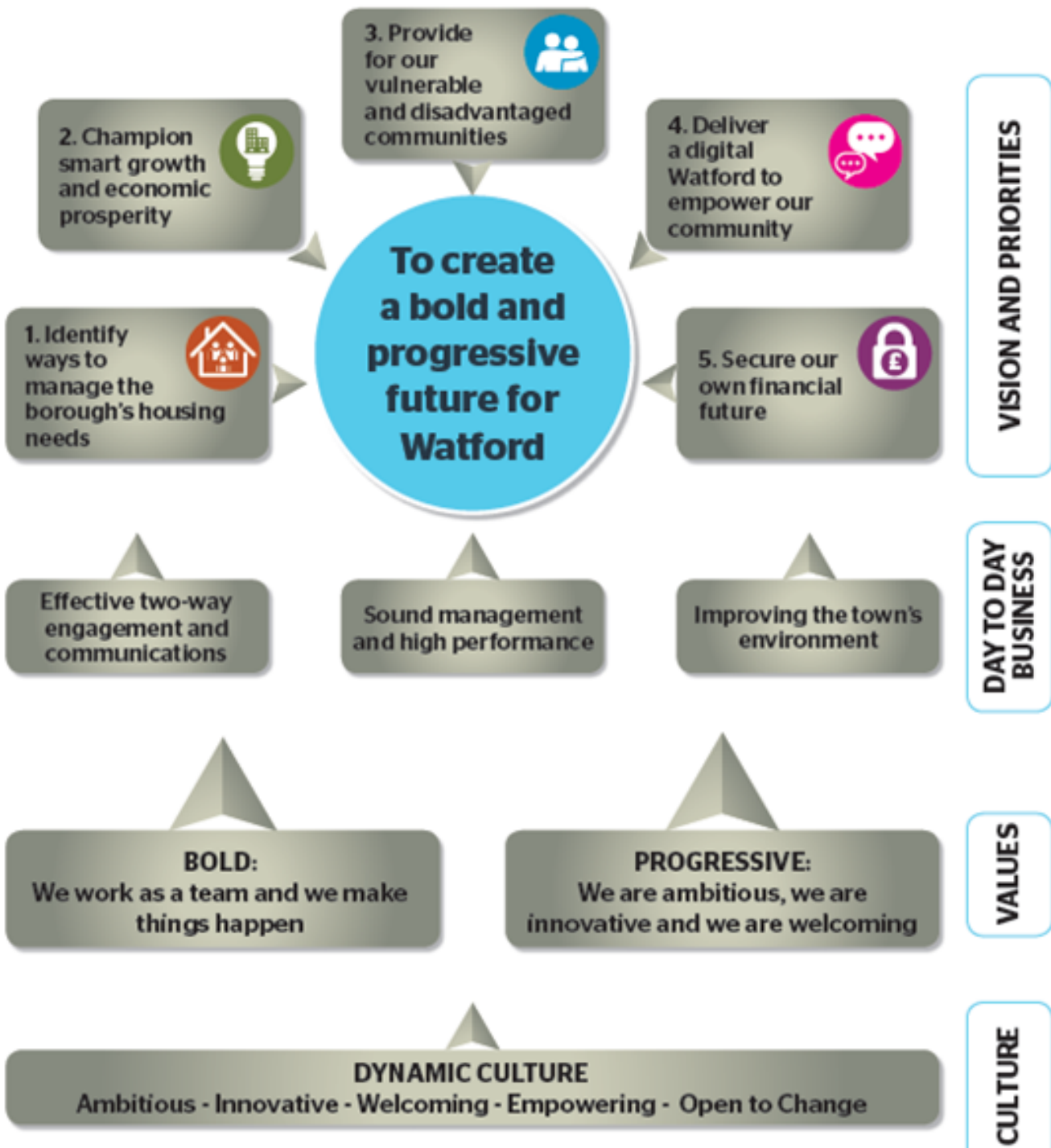
Open to Change - being adaptable and agile in order to support the needs of the business – working collaboratively and supporting colleagues

OUR CORPORATE FRAMEWORK

Our corporate framework shows how our vision, priorities, values and culture work together, along with the Elected Mayor's priorities, to achieve our ambition.

OUR CORPORATE FRAMEWORK

Our corporate framework shows how our vision, values and culture work together, along with the Elected Mayor's priorities, to achieve our ambition.



Part Two

Watford today

Watford is a place to be proud of, and as a council, we plan to keep it that way. We value our clean streets, well-kept parks, and places for children to play, the vibrant high street and diverse range of activities and facilities across our borough. We have a diverse and cohesive community who add to the vibrancy of our town and our residents are generally satisfied with the council and their local services. Understanding our town and our community helps us to identify what shapes Watford and the challenges and opportunities we face as a council to champion our town.



Population: 96,800 over an area of **8.5 sq. miles**

Young population: average age **36.46** years

Diverse population: **38% BME**

39,031 households

Average household size: **2.48** people

High proportion of single person households: **31%**

High number of households in rental accommodation: **37%**



High growth in house prices and demand:

Most in demand place to live on the tube map (2015)



Voted 9th happiest place to live in the country (2015)

11 Green Flag award winning parks – the highest in Hertfordshire with 3 new awarded in 2017



Career Builders: Singles and couples in their 20s and 30s progressing in their field of work from commutable properties – most common MOSAIC group: **12%**



5th best connected borough in UK - M1, M25, West Coast Mainline, Overground, Underground

Direct services to London Euston in **16** mins



5,700 active businesses **93,000** jobs

Low unemployment / high level of qualifications

48% of Watford employment is in Knowledge Sectors

11% self-employment rate

77% of residents are satisfied with the way Watford BC runs things & **74%** of residents are satisfied with Watford as a place to live things well (Community Survey 2017)

Our residents' priorities

Understanding our residents views on the town, their neighbourhoods and the council is an important part of our corporate planning. Whilst we can identify what we think are the priorities for Watford, we need to ensure that these resonate with our communities and are delivering the improvements and quality of services local people expect.

Our regular Community Survey is one way we test what we are doing and our future plans. The Community Survey 2017 received over 1,100 responses, which indicates the level of interest our residents have in the town and its future.

COMMUNITY SURVEY 2017: HEADLINE RESULTS

Views on the council

- 77% of respondents are satisfied with the way the council runs things
- 80% agree the council is working to make Watford a better place to live
- 82% think we provide value for money and the same percentage are satisfied with the way we spend our proportion of your council tax
- 85% agree we are working to make Watford economically successful

Top council services

These are the services that local residents think we do really well:

- Waste and recycling
- Parks and open spaces
- Sports and leisure facilities

Views on Watford

- 74% of respondents are satisfied with Watford as a place to live
- 80% are proud to be a Watford resident
- 84% think that where they live people from different backgrounds get on well together
- 91% agree Watford is a safe town

Top five things that respondents said make somewhere a good place to live

- Feeling safe in my home and the local area
- Good quality hospital and health services
- Cleanliness and tidiness of the town

- Good access to public transport
- Rubbish collected on a regular and reliable basis

Where we need to do even better

- Ensuring that new homes are supported by good infrastructure such as school places, GP surgeries, better transport links
- Keep local people informed about decisions
- Provide more opportunities for people to find out what is going on and share their views
- Explaining why well-planned growth is important to the town
- Explaining housing targets and the need for new homes

Priorities for the borough

The survey also asked people about their priorities for the borough. The top choices were:

Priority	% response
Ensuring a vibrant and prosperous local economy that offers a range of jobs and opportunities for local people	48.5%
Keeping the town clean and our streets free from litter	38.6%
Working with community safety partners to tackle issues and make Watford even safer for our communities	38.0%
Creating a well-connected borough with good infrastructure such as better transport links	37.4%
Supporting our more vulnerable residents so that they can live independent lives	35.5%
Protecting and enhancing our parks and open spaces	31.5%
Helping to provide a range of new homes that meet local needs, including more affordable homes	30.2%

Total responses: 1,095

Residents were also able to provide their views on other priority areas for Watford not identified within the answer choices. Of the comments received, the most commonly cited issues were parking and congestion.

Set out in this plan are the ways we are addressing these resident priorities through our programme of work. Over the next 12 months, we will continue to engage with our communities to keep them informed of how this Plan is delivering solutions to those areas they have identified as important.

Our Corporate Peer Challenge feedback

In September 2017, the council underwent a Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge. This is local government's equivalent of Ofsted for schools or Care Quality Commission inspections of hospitals and care homes and was carried out by a team of independent assessors from local government.

The team spent three days in Watford meeting our councillors, council staff, many of the council's key partners like the police and our business community and even found time to pop along to one of our meetings with local residents.

The good news for Watford was that we received outstanding feedback from the assessment. It was a very strong endorsement of how the leadership and vision of the Elected Mayor have steered the council over the past 16 years. The team saw that the council's work to keep Watford a prosperous and thriving borough was, in comparison to many areas, achieving real results in the town and that we are a council who keeps its promises and delivers.

The team was also extremely impressed with our staff and the commitment and enthusiasm they demonstrated to excellent service delivery.

The overall feedback included:

- We have a strong legacy
- There is a great partnership in place between the Elected Mayor and Managing Director
- The council punches above its weight
- We are a self-aware council that understands our borough
- We have achieved a lot and should be proud
- We have impressive plans and ambitions for the future
- There are good partnerships in place
- We live up to our 'Bold and Progressive' vision
- Staff seem to like it here!

Whilst the team were very positive about the council, there were areas that they recommended we ensure are addressed. We need to:

- keep up the pace and rigor
- ensure we have the right capacity and skills to deliver ambitions and provide resilience
- articulate our vision more to residents, commuters, businesses and some partners
- be more outward looking - shout and share about our success
- ensure the visibility of leadership on internal transformation
- create a roadmap for post May 2018
- decide what culture we want for 2020

The specific recommendations from the Peer Challenge are set out below as is the action we will take within this corporate plan to address them:

1. Develop capacity and skills to deliver and sustain your ambitious programme to keep pace and rigour

Action: *the council, as part of its 2020 transformation programme is setting out the objective to work through a Programme Management Office framework. This may be by establishing a resourced new centralised function or expanding the devolved approach currently in place.*

2. Develop communications strategies to articulate vision to residents, commuters, businesses and partners

Action: the council has procured a specialist communications adviser to support its public relations, communications and engagement agenda. The Cultural Leaders Group, working with the Watford BID (Business Improvement District), has also procured a partner to develop a clear brand strategy for the Town which will engage all residents in the vision for the Town's future.

3. Prioritise visibility of leadership on internal transformation

Action: the Council's Leadership Team has signed off the key deliverables and agreed to act as lead sponsors for the programme and will lead jointly the all staff engagement process

4. Integrate transformation, commercialisation, Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), people and digital strategies etc. into one coherent whole = holistic council-wide change programme

Action: the council's Leadership Team has agreed to produce a clear integrated roadmap for transformation with the MTFS underpinning it.

5. Consider the council's role in owning management and delivery of housing supply

Action: the council is reviewing its housing supply delivery in the light of the Transport for London decision not to proceed with the Metropolitan Line Extension. This review will be part of Local Plan Part 3 which the political executive will sign off following a range of discussions.. The procured communications adviser is tasked with providing a narrative for engagement on housing with the community and in partnership with Watford community housing.

6. Create a roadmap for post May 2018 and future proof key strategies e.g. finance, asset management

Action: this Corporate Plan along with the 2020 programme provides the roadmap for Watford's priorities and objectives post May 18. Any major changes from a new Mayor will be considered at the first Council meeting in June.

7. Build on the willingness of partners to develop the future Watford agenda

Action: Discussions have taken place with the Local Strategic Partnership and the big business community on sharing the community leadership roles and a plan is under development for joint promotion of the Watford ambition – this will be reflected in the branding strategy and business partnership on economic growth projects.

8. Be more outward looking - shout and share your success

Action: the Built Environment Communications Group is advising on a publicity / PR plan, the council has submitted its achievements for peer group recognition (such as the MJ awards) and has agreed to share its successes working with the LGA.

9. Decide what culture you want for 2020 and beyond

Action: this Corporate Plan sets out the dynamic corporate culture required over the medium term (see p6 above)

Part Three

How we will deliver our priorities



1. Identify ways to manage the borough's housing needs



Challenges

Watford is a popular place to live. Its location close to London, great road and rail links, good schools and employment opportunities have seen demand for homes in the town increase over recent years. However, it has also meant rising house prices and rental costs, which has put strain on affordability for local people. It can also mean issues in the rental sector as some landlords can charge higher and higher rents without necessarily maintaining or improving the standards of these homes.

The national housing crisis means that government has reviewed housing requirements. Places like Watford that are popular and have high housing costs are being asked to deliver an even greater number of new homes over the next decade. Through our Local Plan we are working to understand what these targets mean for Watford and how we can deliver the new homes Watford needs in a way that is best for the town. We want new housing to be supported by good quality infrastructure such as better transport links, schools, doctors' surgeries and neighbourhood shops and facilities. These are areas where we have to work closely with partners such as Hertfordshire County Council and health providers.

As demand and housing costs rise, we expect the numbers of people presenting at the council with housing issues to increase. From April 2018, the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 changes how local authorities manage homelessness. Watford is well-prepared for what is one of the biggest changes to homelessness legislation in recent years and will be monitoring the overall impact over the next twelve months.

Opportunities

We have already started some innovative work to tackle the supply of housing available, particularly both affordable housing and additional temporary accommodation for those in urgent need. This includes:

- setting up a joint venture with Watford Community Housing (called Hart Homes) to deliver new affordable homes. The first of these will be ready in 2018 with 76 temporary homes becoming available for local people
- working with developers delivering our major projects to accommodate affordable housing within the residential elements of the schemes (Watford Riverwell's first residential zone will deliver 29 affordable homes, Ascot Road 170)
- negotiating with developers on other key sites to ensure either the delivery of affordable homes or a sufficient commuted sum. This is money which developers will be expected to pay for sites which, whilst they are delivering new homes, might not be providing the size and type of homes needed to meet the borough's housing needs (e.g. studio apartments rather than family-sized apartments). These commuted sums will allow us to deliver appropriate affordable homes on other sites
- being robust with developers to also ensure schemes are high quality and create vibrant and successful communities
- working with neighbouring authorities to identify where we can work co-operate to build new homes to meet housing demand

Highlights of what we have achieved so far:

- 346 homes delivered (2016-17)
- Supply of sites for 5.7 years identified
- 'Skyline – Watford's Approach to Taller Buildings' approved to set out where we would consider applications for taller buildings, including design criteria; tall buildings are now modelled on our townscape to understand how they might impact the surrounding area and environment
- Joint Venture Companies with Watford Community Housing established and first project to deliver temporary accommodation and new homes progressed (Tolpits Lane) by Hart Homes
- Modular construction to deliver cost effective temporary accommodation (Balmoral Road)
- Proposals for the first homes on major project areas coming forward including:
 - Watford Riverwell
 - Planning permission achieved for first homes at Woodlands (95 homes including 29 affordable homes that will be delivered by Watford Community Housing)
 - Planning application submitted for Waterside, which will deliver 408 new homes
 - An agreement with Mayfield Villages, a specialist retirement village developer and operator, to deliver the first of its kind retirement village accommodating 250 residents

- Western Gateway
 - Planning permission achieved for new homes as part of the redevelopment of Ascot Road with 485 new homes, 170 of which are affordable
- Clarendon Road
 - Whilst remaining predominantly a primary location for office space, incorporating a limited amount of residential within new schemes is providing a catalyst for much needed upgrading and improvement of the Clarendon Road offer. One approved scheme, will provide 154 new homes and up to £6million for the council to invest in affordable housing across the borough

- Developed and approved a planning policy statement on affordable housing and commuted sums

- Passed the NPSS (National Practitioner Support Service) Peer Review Challenge, which shows our frontline housing and homelessness services are effectively managing and preventing homelessness and saw the number of households in temporary accommodation fall for the first time in recent years

We will continue to deliver this priority by:

- Supporting the delivery of the target of 577 new homes per annum
- Delivering a review of our Local Plan to reflect the borough's needs and to identify the necessary infrastructure for growth so that our communities remain sustainable and supported by good quality facilities, services and transport links
- Supporting new housing development at Watford Junction
- Working with Watford Community Housing and Hart Homes to build new homes for social rent
- Completing the first new homes and temporary accommodation (including 40 homes at Tolpits Lane) delivered through the Hart Homes Joint Venture and explore further opportunities
- Completing the delivery of the modular homes at Balmoral Road
- Continuing to secure new homes, including affordable homes as part of the town's major projects as well as on other potential sites
- Meeting the requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 new Housing Service delivery model
- Working with our partners to deliver projects to improve housing through the delivery of the Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy

2. Champion smart growth and economic prosperity



Watford has been extremely successful in building a strong local economy. By being forward-thinking and having the right plans in place, we have secured local employment, retained businesses and remain an attractive place for investment. We have also ensured that the growth continues to provide some really positive outcomes for the town (such as intu's new regional shopping centre, which will house the town's first IMAX cinema) and generated money to support local services. The latter has become more significant as we look for ways to bridge our funding gap and protect services that we know are valued by residents.

Over the last twelve months, we have seen the real benefits of our proactive approach to smart growth, with developments coming forward across the borough including in Clarendon Road. Focusing well-planned growth here has, for example, delivered new employment opportunities and homes as well as a new primary school (St John's) and improved street scene.

The council plays its part through its own investment in the town, such as the improvements to Cassiobury Park (in partnership with the Heritage Lottery Fund and Big Lottery Fund), which opened in 2017 and our other parks and open spaces (with a record number of Green Flags achieved in 2017). We are continuing this investment through projects such as the refurbishment and improvement of Watford Museum (also in partnership with the Heritage Lottery Fund), a state of the art activity and community hub in Oxhey Park and public realm upgrades in the town centre. The latter will enhance the area around the new intu centre, reducing vehicles, improving pedestrian and cyclist safety and the overall quality of the environment.

Critical to achieving this priority is also securing the right partnerships to take forward the major projects that will transform the borough such as intu, Western Gateway, Watford Business Park and Watford Riverwell.

Even with so much achieved, we know the town cannot stand still if it wants to remain successful and prosperous. As a council we want to shape our town positively for the future, which is why having a robust, evidence-based and ambitious Local Plan is so important. Over the next two years, we will review our Local Plan so that it clearly sets out our commitment to well-planned and managed growth – without this we would be at risk of poor quality, unplanned developments and unchecked back filling. This is what is happening in some other areas. But we know smart growth also means addressing issues such as congestion and parking, which are important to local people so securing the right infrastructure to support growth is vitally important.

Our challenges

- Managing the impact of the cancellation of the Metropolitan Line Extension (MLX) on the town's future infrastructure and our major projects
- Competing demands for land within the borough – particularly between housing and commercial land
- Limited land for any new housing / new business / industrial space
- Making sure the necessary infrastructure (roads, schools, public transport) is in place so that new homes are supported by the facilities and activities important to building strong, sustainable communities
- High use of car rather than other forms of more sustainable transport such as buses, cycles or even walking, which would help tackle both congestion and parking issues
- Shortage of fit for purpose office and light industrial accommodation
- Ensuring the quality of the design of new developments so that they enhance the town's overall environment and promote the wellbeing of residents
- Ensuring sufficiently skilled local labour force to meet needs of local employers and businesses

Our opportunities

- Reviewing our Local Plan to provide a robust framework for managing successful growth including an alternative transport solution for the MLX
- Championing inward investment in Watford – particularly where it provides the infrastructure to support smart growth
- Maintaining the strong linkage between our strategic development sites and sustainable transport opportunities such as public transport, cycling, car sharing / car clubs
- Building strong local partnerships with our major business and cultural leaders to promote Watford as a great place to do business and to find a skilled and enthusiastic workforce
- Exploring ways to reduce reliance on the car and promote more sustainable methods of transport
- Investing in a family friendly and successful town – our parks, town centre, community events

Smart growth is a better way to build and maintain our towns and cities. It encourages a mix of building types and uses, diverse housing and transportation options, development within existing neighborhoods, and strong community engagement. It aims to support local economies and protects the environment through a focus on cycling, walking and public transport rather than the car. Our Local Plan has, at its heart, the positive outcomes that can be achieved through smart growth.

Highlights of what we have achieved so far:

- Trade City Watford opened at Watford Riverwell securing 12 new industrial units and more than 70,000 sq ft of commercial space
- Planning achieved for Woodlands (Riverwell) residential zone with 95 new homes including 29 affordable homes
- Planning application submitted for Waterside (Riverwell) residential zone (408 new homes) and for Mayfield Retirement Village (250 homes) – a ground breaking new style of retirement accommodation and a first for Watford and the UK
- Design work started on the ‘northern zone’ of Watford Riverwell, which will create new public spaces and community facilities at the heart of the scheme
- Agreement for a two form entry primary school on site to provide much needed school places for west Watford
- Planning achieved for the 4.4 acres Ascot Road site, achieving a landmark development for our Western Gateway – the 24 storey building will deliver 485 new homes (including 170 affordable homes), new retail space and over 50 permanent new jobs
- Transformation of Clendon Road underway and already seeing positive outcomes achieved through our new approach to the area including:
 - New international HQ building for TJX Europe will provide a landmark building for the Watford Junction end of Clendon Road – 12 storey office block, high level footbridge to link offices and public real improvements plus securing 3,000 jobs in Watford

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Gresham House granted permission for redevelopment to provide B1 office accommodation, coffee bar and 59 homes, around 20 of which will be affordable ○ New primary school (St John's) with roof top play area under construction ○ A further landmark building comprising mixed office and residential in an iconic 23-storey building at the town centre end of Clarendon Road has been approved – creating 11.180 square metres of Class B1 office space for around 1,000 jobs, 154 new homes, café, gym and rooftop café plus providing a minimum of £1.4million commuted sum for affordable homes in the borough
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● £200million upgrade of Charter Place by intu plus refurbishment of current centre progressing successfully with opening of initial phase on target for autumn 2018, over 2,500 permanent jobs anticipated when the new centre is complete
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● High Street improvements and upgrade initiated to deliver a smarter, more pedestrian friendly town centre with less vehicle intrusion and associated pollution to complement the intu refurbishment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cassiobury Park 'Parks for People' completed; bandstand relocated to the park, new visitor hub building and refurbished paddling pools opened for summer 2017
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fourth year of our successful Big Events programme delivered generating vibrancy and footfall in the top of the town and now with the added events in Cassiobury Park to enrich the programme and offer for local residents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Achieved 11 Green Flags for our parks and opens spaces (three new ones awarded for 2017) – this is the highest number for any district in Hertfordshire
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Installed electric car charging points at 15 locations across the borough

We will continue to deliver this priority by:

- Delivering the next phase of our Local Plan including submission to the planning inspectorate
- Progressing investment in major projects, infrastructure and public realm:
 - Town Hall and Town Hall square development
 - Watford Riverwell: completion of first residential zones at Woodside and Waterside, approving and delivering the 'norther zone' masterplan, car park strategy for Watford General Hospital
 - Western Gateway: Ascot Road start on site
 - Watford Junction: first phase planning applications
 - Clarendon Road: new office and residential construction progressing, school completion, public realm enhancements
 - Zone A development agreement in place and vacant possession achieved, Watford Business Park
 - intu completion including aligning leases across both sites and delivering High Street improvements

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Working in partnership with Hertfordshire County Council on tackling congestion and promoting more sustainable methods of transport including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ improving cycling lanes ○ promoting cycle hire ○ promoting car clubs ○ improving walking routes ○ extending electric charging points network ○ safeguarding the MLX route for an alternative transport solution
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Exploring alternatives for people to get into and around Watford including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 'Hop on / hop off' bus to link the town ○ Working with schools to encourage alternatives to the school run ○ Considering a short-distance park and ride for specific events such as football matches ○ Investing in way finding to better link communities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Working in partnership to deliver our Economic Growth Delivery Plan and providing the strategic lead for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Renewed inward investment and business retention strategy in place ○ Support to Skills brokerage and sector skills development ○ Growing Watford's knowledge economy especially the digital economy ○ Establishing a new engagement forum with SMEs ○ Supporting business to business relations through a Watford directory of business services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Delivering the next phase of Sports Facilities Strategy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Woodside: masterplan approved ○ Oxhey Park activity and community hub ○ Cassiobury Site (Fullerians) investment ○ Cassiobury Croquet Club improvements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Developing a River Colne improvement strategy to enhance the river and its surrounds as a green asset for Watford
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Developing a new Cultural Plan for Watford and a Town-wide brand strategy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● renew outdoor market livery
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Taking forward Watford Museum Heritage Lottery Fund improvement project ● Review our town centre planning policies to ensure all parts of the high street remain vibrant and sustainable and tackle long term voids

3. Provide for our vulnerable and disadvantaged communities



We are fortunate in Watford that the majority of our population enjoy a high standard of wellbeing and healthy lives and are able to access help when they may need it. We recognise that this is not the case for everyone and people's circumstances can change. We need to understand where these pressure points are for our town, and for individuals, and ensure that we are working with our partners to minimise the issues vulnerability can bring. Through our commitment to equalities and diversity, we will ensure that changes to service delivery as well as our strategies and policies take into account the impact on our community as part of our decision-making process.

Our challenges

- Harnessing prosperity to benefit all our citizens
- Changing demographics and emerging communities, including a high proportion of young people and families as well as a growing older population
- Impact of cuts and changes to benefits and other support
- Pockets of deprivation and health inequalities within the borough
- Changing and reducing services provided by other agencies such as health and social care

Our opportunities

- Targeting our support to those most in need
- Building on successful projects to date, such as the Street Improvement Project and Herts Healthy Homes project, and accessing funding through use of data and intelligence for targeted projects
- Working with partners, such as the police and health, to understand vulnerabilities and our emerging communities

Highlights of what we have achieved so far:

- Secured free adventurous play all year round championed through our two outstanding adventurous playgrounds at Harebreaks and Harwoods and an Easter and Summer holiday activities programme
- Supported by the Community Sport Activation Fund, delivered an exciting range of sports activities to get people in central Watford more active and seen 3,500 local people get involved
- Children's weight and eating habits tackled through our 'Fit 4 Fun' programme run through our local schools
- Free swim and gym scheme for 8-15 year olds during the Easter and summer holidays offered through our two leisure centres
- Through our Street Improvement Programme made a real difference to Cassio Road and its residents by working with our partners to address some of the issues that can impact on the quality of life of an area, including fly tipping, empty properties
- Achieved our best ever results for the time taken to deal with both new benefit claims and ones where people's circumstances have changed – this means people in need are getting the money they need even sooner

- Published our Equalities statement to confirm our commitment to championing equalities across our service areas and the town
- Working in partnership with 'New Hope' – annual rough sleeper count reduced from 13 to 6 over a 12 month period. Watford BC securing a government grant of £330k to support rough sleeper intervention

We will continue to deliver this priority by:

- Promoting Watford as a dementia friendly town
- Explore ways to welcome people new to living in Watford including a 'buddy scheme' and welcome pack
- Working with partners to provide solutions for rough sleeping
- Implement the approved recommendations from the Tackling Loneliness Task Group
- Review our pilot Street Improvement Programme and decide on our approach for future projects
- Exploring options for a new cemetery in Watford to meet the needs of our residents
- Reviewing our three year Voluntary and Community Sector Commissioning Framework to ensure it continues to promote the wellbeing of our town and our residents
- Providing the strategic lead for promoting economic equality through our Economic Development Growth Plan
- Working with our partners to deliver projects to improve health conditions in the borough including through the Warmer Homes project
- Reviewing our council tax reduction scheme
- Working with partners to understand our community and the issues that are affecting our vulnerable and disadvantaged residents so we can ensure local services are targeted effectively
- Developing a corporate approach to mental health issues in the borough

Our Watford 2020 transformation programme



*Watford in 2020 will be a **customer-focussed, digitally-enabled, commercially-minded** council*

The Watford 2020 programme is driving the transformation we know we need to meet the challenges, and opportunities, of the future. It recognises that we cannot be the 'bold and progressive', forward looking organisation we want to be without fundamental change and that this needs to cut across everything we do. Whilst we are looking to transform as a council, we remain committed to keeping our residents and customers at the heart of what we do and to continue to deliver the high quality services they value. However, we recognise their needs and expectations are changing, which is why a major part of the programme has been our 'Service Innovations'. These have looked at how we do things from a customer perspective to see where we could improve and work in a smarter, more joined up way. Through the findings from the 'Service Innovations', we will be able to develop a new operating model that will deliver a customer focussed, digitally enabled and more commercial council.

Watford 2020 will enable delivery of all of the corporate priorities but will particularly help to achieve:

- **Deliver a digital Watford to empower our community** (improving our digital offer to customers – residents and businesses with online services and self-serve channels)
- **Secure our own financial future** (the programme has a £1m savings target by 2020 and key commercial income targets, particularly through property investment)

During 2017/18 we laid the groundwork for the programme, achieving a number of key milestones that have set us up for delivery in 2018/19.

4. Deliver a digital Watford to empower our community



Our challenges

- Speed and complexity of some of our processes and transactions
- Customer expectations on how they access our services
- Current workforce skills in the digital arena
- Speed of technological change
- Not all residents and businesses have online or digital skills or experience
- Key strategies need to align to ensure we have the right building blocks in place for digital transformation

Opportunities

- Harnessing the potential of our new website to improve customer experience, engagement with our community and to reduce costs where appropriate
- Potential of the Internet of Things (IoT) to deliver digital solutions within Watford that will help us make the most of real time information and data
- High level of take up of new technologies and social media in Watford – our population is digital ready

Highlights of what we have achieved so far:

- Our Watford 2020 programme sets out how we plan to transform the council and our customers' experience through better use of technology and being more innovative in our digital thinking and ways of working.

Highlights for 2017/18 include:

- **Service Innovations:** High-level design – completed
-
- **Supporting strategies** - completed
 - People Strategy
 - Commercial Strategy
 - IT Strategy
- **Enabling projects** – completed
 - Refurbished Customer Service Centre to improve the face to face customer experience of visiting the Town Hall through:
 - Queue management system which is improving people's waiting experience
 - Redesigned, more customer-friendly reception area
 - 'Meet and Greet' role to provide greater support for customers
 - Procured a new Customer Relationship Management system which will be critical to implementing better customer services and greater opportunities for people to self-serve and access the council at a time and place that suits them
 - Completed the installation of wi-fi across council buildings

- Implemented our own LoRaWAN across the borough to support the Internet of Things (IoT) to do things differently and more efficiently
- Delivered free Wi-Fi to our town centre, which has attracted over 50,000 registered users
- Developed a medium term ICT strategy that will see increased deployment of cloud based applications, unified communications and support flexible and remote working
- Provided more services online so people have more options on how, and when, they interact with us, such as:
 - waste and street care issues can now be easily reported using a new online reporting tool
 - council tax and business rates are easy to pay with a new online payment tool and residents can sign up for paperless billing
 - parking services such as applying for visitor permits and appealing parking fines can now be done directly through our website with licensing, building control and planning services to follow shortly
- Opened up communications and engagement channels with the introduction of the Govdelivery electronic newsletter to our residents and conducted a Community Survey with our residents, achieving over 1,100 responses

We will continue to deliver this priority by:

- As part of our Watford 2020 programme:
 - Deliver the next phase of the programme including the implementation of the new operating model for the council
 - Explore innovative ways of using the Internet of Things

5. Secure our own financial future



All of the work in this Corporate Plan is dependent on the council getting its finances right and securing a sound financial base. This has never been more challenging with the Council facing the loss of around £2.5million revenue support grant by 2020 and a total saving requirement of £3million. However, this also brings the drive to innovate and look for ways to do things differently that will deliver savings or generate additional income. It also provides the council with the opportunity to establish a sound financial basis into the future, which is not dependent on changes in government priorities or policy. We also recognise that supporting our local businesses to thrive is critical to ensuring both a healthy economy and to securing business rate growth, which will form a key part of our future finances.

Our challenges

- Loss of revenue support grant by 2020
- Savings or additional income of £3million needed to 'balance the books' by 2020
- Need to finance our ambitions as well as business as usual
- Growing population means an increasing demand for our services

Our opportunities

- Access funding streams and external funding to support our ambitions
- Use our property assets to increase our income
- Identify the right commercial opportunities to explore
- Work with other organisations (both private and public sector) to deliver services and, potentially, raise income
- Provide stimulus to the economy in terms of business growth and more jobs through our approach to smart growth, which helps support the council's finances too
- Achieve returns on our capital investment to enable us to re-invest in our town
- Greater financial security as we are now less dependent on government decisions and policies affecting our budget, which helps our long-term planning for the council and the town

Highlights of what we have achieved so far:

- Watford Commercial Services Limited established as our own trading company
- As part of our Watford 2020 programme:
 - Agreed a Commercial Strategy to provide a robust framework for deciding on which commercial proposals present the right opportunities for Watford
- Medium Term Financial Strategy agreed that aligns both our revenue and capital budgets to our ambitions in this Plan and ensures we are in a strong financial position by 2020
- Engaged a private sector partner to manage our commercial property portfolio to ensure we are maximising the income we receive
- Achieved a successful retender of our leisure centre management contract to manage our two outstanding leisure facilities and procured both an excellent provider and a substantial increase on our annual management fee
- Maintained excellent provision and value for money in the areas local people tell us are important - our parks, street cleansing, refuse collection, leisure centres, art and culture and events and will continue to do so
- HLF funding of nearly £5million leveraged in the last three years through our own investment and commitment to improve important facilities such as Cassiobury Park and Watford Museum

- Reviewed how we use the Town Hall complex and rented out empty office space to other organisations
- Launched a major project that will transform the Town Hall complex, allowing further sharing of accommodation with other organisations (including the Police) that will upgrade the current complex and secure additional rental income

We will continue to deliver this priority by:

- Approving the detailed plan to Secure £1million savings through our Watford 2020 programme
- Procuring a Commercial Adviser to evaluate and provide support to new income generating initiatives
- Undertaking an analysis of the Council's cost base to build a more thorough understanding of the costs of our services
- Managing our property portfolio to stimulate growth, generate returns and meet changing service needs
- Ensuring our contracts are delivering value for money and high quality services through robust tendering and procurement processes and on-going review including: waste collection, street care, parks and open spaces, Watford Colosseum
- Capturing returns on investment from our major projects and joint ventures
- Submitting a planning application for the Town Hall complex

Part Four

Underpinning themes

Whilst this Corporate Plan focuses on our priorities and the areas of work that will drive delivery, there are some important foundations that ensure our success and also build our effectiveness as an organisation. These are the themes that underpin the organisation and reflect our continuing commitment to being a quality council, achieving high performance across all we do.

Effective two-way engagement and communications

Our local community and residents are the heart of the town. We want them to feel confident that they are kept well-informed about all that is going on in the town and that their voice can be heard on issues that matter to them. Whatever we do must be underpinned by effective and relevant communication and be responsive to how people want to engage with us, whether this be through meetings, consultation, our website or social media. At the same time we need to keep up to date with the way new technology is rapidly changing how people choose to communicate – our local population is relatively young and many are early adopters of new technologies. Our challenge is to keep up with them whilst still responding to those with more traditional ways of staying in touch.

- Actions:**
- we will take forward specific initiatives to consult our community post the Mayoral elections to review the town's progress and help shape future priorities and decision making
 - we will build a new approach to two way engagement with our residents through the use of social media and other channels so they better understand the council's vision for the town and can make a greater contribution to local issues, policy development and service improvement
 - we will review our communications strategy to ensure it is innovative and matching the best practice both within the public and private sector
 - we will proactively share Watford's successes

Sound management and high performance

Successful delivery of our ambitions relies on making sure we have the best people, systems, processes and management arrangements in place to deliver efficient, high quality services that represent real value for money to the community.

Our vision challenges us to continually improve and ensure we are amongst the top performing councils across all the services we deliver – whether we do these ourselves or through effective partnerships. This means we need to set ourselves targets that really stretch what we do and how we work and look to the best authorities for our benchmark. We need to embed a culture of 'delivery' through sound programme and project management and rapidly identify and address any areas where there is a risk of slippage.

Our support services like IT, HR and Finance continue to be the essential building blocks for our success. IT remains critical for all that we do and whilst real step change has begun, we need to ensure IT continues to improve and that we have the right strategy in place to make the most of the opportunities it offers. We want our staff and elected members to be equipped with the best IT solutions available, including making sure our critical business applications are up to date and that we modernise where better solutions present themselves.

Talented, well skilled staff are vital if we are to achieve what we have set out in this Corporate Plan. We want to retain and grow our own talent where possible but when we do recruit we want to make sure we attract the best from elsewhere. We will work with our HR team on embedding a culture where strong performance and delivery are recognised, people are encouraged to be innovative and strive to make a real contribution to the Council and the town.

- Actions:**
- we will implement:
 - the recommendations of the Corporate Peer Challenge
 - Year 1 of our People Strategy
 - Year 1 of our IT Strategy
 - We will strengthen our project and programme management to ensure our plans and ambitions are delivered on time and within budget
 - we will review our key performance indicators to ensure they are measuring what is important and being used to improve decision- making
 - we will keep our services under review to continuously examine the best way to deliver them, whether in house or externalised

Improving the town's environment

An attractive, well maintained environment is fundamental to our town and, we know, is really important to local people. We will ensure that the refuse, recycling and street cleaning service remains high quality and we will identify pockets where a focused, partnership approach to bring the neighbourhood up to a higher standard would be beneficial. This is part of our continuing commitment to enhancing the public realm including building on the successful improvements to the top of the town, which have seen this area revitalised, with work planned for the civic area outside of the library and Town Hall.

- Actions:**
- we will maintain excellent relationships with delivery partners such as Veolia
 - we will continuously enhance the quality of our environment and monitor and tackle environmental hotspots as they occur
 - we will continue to protect our heritage and conserve the town's history
 - we will champion the use of more environmentally-friendly materials and encourage greater recycling

Our finances

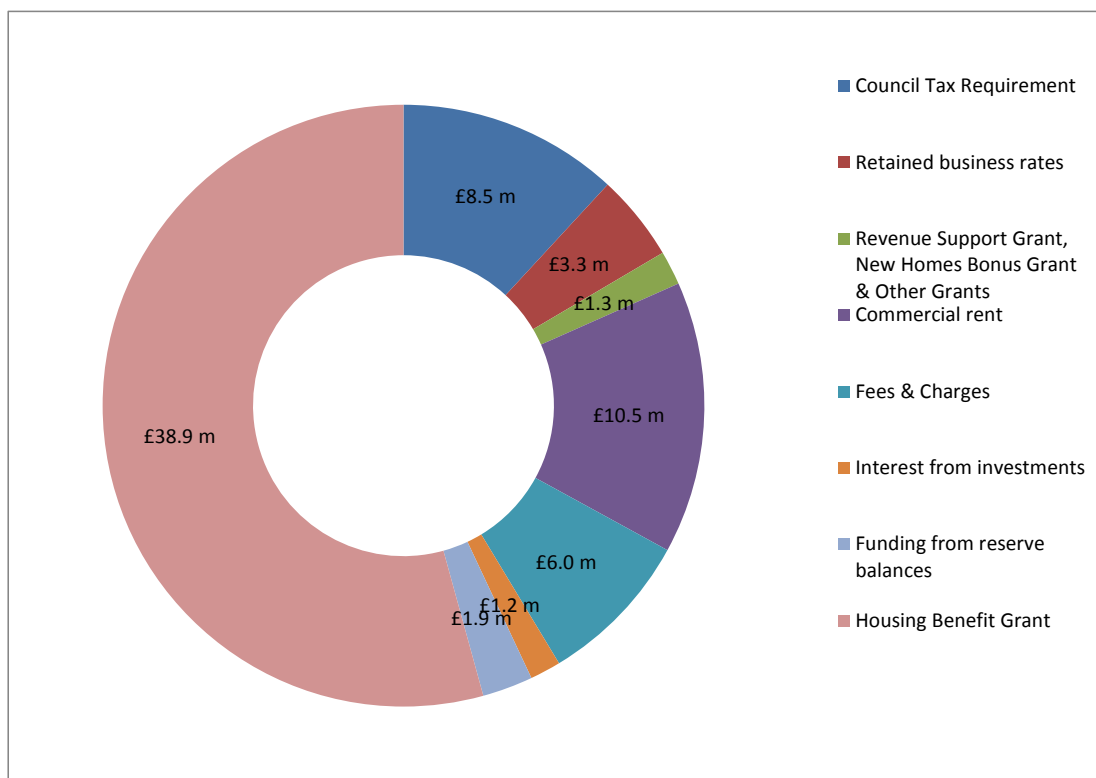
Our finances are perhaps the most critical building block for our plans. We need our finances to not only support our day to day activities and provide our services (through our revenue budget) but also to deliver the major, transformational projects that make such a difference to our town and local neighbourhoods (through our capital budget).

Our Medium Term Financial Strategy includes a three year forecast that sets out our budget and looks at factors likely to impact on our expenditure.

For 2018/19, the strategy shows that our gross budget is **£71.6 million** with a net budget requirement of **£13.520million**.

There are a number of ways this is funded:

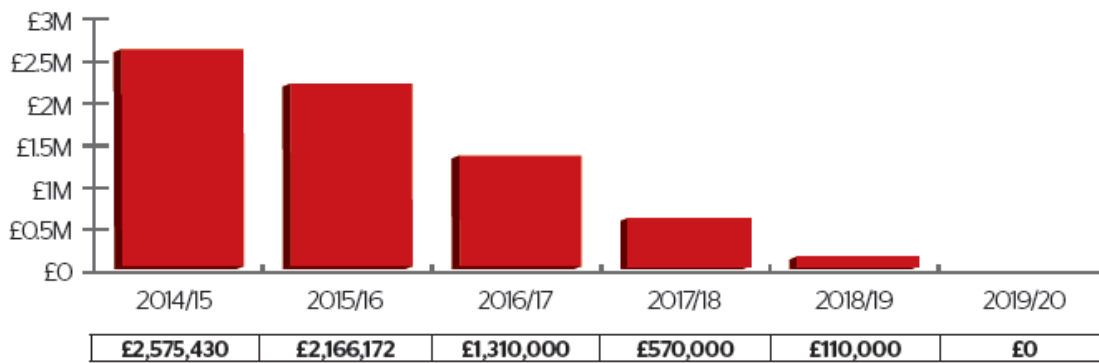
- Council Tax requirement
- Retained Business Rates
- Revenue Support Grant (but reducing to zero by 2019/20), New Homes Bonus Grant & other grants
- Commercial rent
- Fees & Charges
- Funding from reserve balances
- Interest
- Housing Benefit Grant – this is money that comes directly from government to be administered by the council to support those in need of housing benefit. It is not council money that we can spend in any other way



Watford BC's funding 2018/19: by different funding sources- the largest amount of money we receive is for Housing Benefit which we are responsible for allocating to our residents in need of this financial support

Changes to government funding

In terms of the Revenue Support Grant, this is the grant councils receive from government to help support the cost of the services they deliver. The government has reduced this funding year on year until it reaches zero in 2019/20. What this means is shown in the chart below – indicating a reduction of £2,575,430 by 2020. It also means the percentage of our funding stream dependent on council tax increases from 60% in 2017/18 to 69% in 2020/21.



As set out in this Plan, this presents a significant challenge for Watford – in percentage terms it is around 16% less budget to spend by 2020 compared with 2014/15. Implementing our Medium Term Financial Strategy, which sets out how we will bridge this gap, will be a major area of focus for the Council to 2020. Our goal is to ensure we maintain the quality of the services that are important to our residents whilst still being able to innovate where this delivers improvements or in response to new opportunities.

Use of reserves

With the savings we need to make over the next year (and following two years), it is not always easy to be exact as to the timing and the final sums that will be achieved. In view of this, the Council is allowed to, and will, make prudent use of some of its reserves to ‘smooth’ the delivery of the savings. Obviously using reserves to support the revenue deficit is not sustainable in the longer term and, therefore, this means that savings and efficiencies will still need to be made. It does, however, ensure that the Council is able to set a balanced budget whilst the organisation undertakes the work necessary to achieve a permanently secure financial footing. Our Medium Term Financial Strategy has allowed for the use of £1.3m of reserves in the next financial year.

Council tax

As a result of the on-going reduction in government funding, council tax is now, by far, the major source of funding for the Council.

The government has built into our finances an assumption that we will raise council tax, and most councils are doing so. However, the proportion of council tax that comes to Watford Borough Council is extremely small – around £260 a year for someone living in a Band D property. Most goes to Hertfordshire County Council (including an additional charge to support the County’s adult social care budget) and a small amount to the Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire.

Watford had managed to freeze its element of council tax for 7 years up to 2017/18 but faced with a significant funding gap a continued freeze is not sustainable. Increasing the council tax by 2.99% generates additional income of £250,000. For 2018/19 Watford’s element of council tax will increase by £7.62 to £262.46 for a Band D property, which is less than a 15p a week.

Business rates

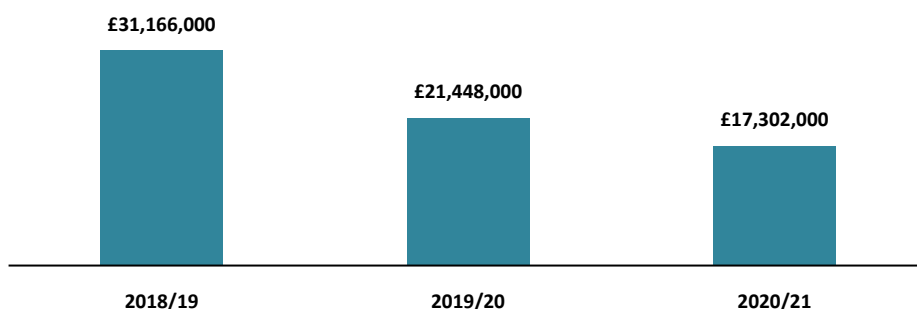
Whilst the Council collects business rates it cannot keep all the money it collects. This has to be shared with the county council, the Police and Crime Commissioner and government to fund services. There is an element of risk involved in the Business Rates scheme, which is designed to incentivise Councils to promote business growth within their areas. The Council expects its share of business rates to be £3.332 million in 2018/19.

Capital spending

The Council's plans are supported by its Capital Investment Programme, which is used to acquire or create new assets, or enhance existing ones. Capital Investment may be paid for by capital resources (which are restricted to this kind of use) or borrowing, or any spare money available from revenue budgets (unfortunately WBC does not have any such spare money!). Even if there is pressure on the revenue budget, councils are not allowed to use capital resources to support revenue spending on day to day activities and service delivery, they have to be used to either acquire or create new assets or to enhance an existing ones.

The capital budget for the next three years is:

To be updated



There is a huge amount of capital investment in Watford over the next few years and the Council is committed to use its own capital budgets, seeking investment from central government and other third parties, and borrowing to the benefit of its residents. Below are some of the major projects and areas of work we have identified for capital expenditure in 2018/19..

<p>Oxhey Park leisure and community hub an exciting new centre dedicated to cycling, skate boarding and scooting, incorporating a café, community room and play area</p>	£3,750,000
<p>Garston Park Improvements continuing to upgrade the town's facilities for sports and leisure</p>	£250,000
<p>River Colne project Improving and enhancing one of Watford's two major rivers running through our borough</p>	£100,000
<p>Watford Museum HLF improvement project a partnership with Heritage Lottery Fund to upgrade and enhance the home of Watford's history and heritage</p>	£425,000
<p>Watford Riverwell this will help support the first six phases of residential development to deliver new homes and a new multi-storey car park for the hospital. This investment will generate a return back to the council to support front line services.</p>	£10,930,713

<p>Modular Housing providing additional temporary accommodation in the borough</p>	<p>£2,000,000</p>
<p>High street improvements scheme to improve the road and public space between Clarendon Road and St Mary's Church</p>	<p>£250,000</p>
<p>Town Hall Redevelopment Construction of a multi storey office block and raised deck car park with associated highways alterations</p>	<p>£2,310,000</p>

Part Five

Monitoring the Plan

Ensuring we deliver our Corporate Plan is critical to our success as an organisation and builds our residents confidence that we keep our promises.

We ensure delivery is on track through:

- Making sure all our Corporate Plan areas of work are reflected in service plans, work programmes and individual performance development review objectives, building the 'golden thread' through the organisation
- Identifying the key milestones for our work and holding ourselves to account for delivery – this will include regular updates to our Cabinet, Programme Management Board and Leadership Team
- Establishing a robust set of performance measures that are regularly monitored by Leadership Team, Portfolio Holders and our Scrutiny Committees. These measures extend to our outsourced services
- Providing challenge and assurance through robust governance including: Programme Management Board for our major projects, Property Investment Board for our property related work, Finance Review Board for our finances and Digital Watford Board for our 2020 transformation agenda



How do I find out more?

www.watford.gov.uk/councilplan

Corporate Plan: Year 1 Deliverables

Deliverable	Lead Area	Identify ways to manage the borough's housing needs	Champion smart growth and economic prosperity	Provide for our vulnerable and disadvantaged communities	Deliver a digital Watford to empower our community	Secure our own financial future
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting the delivery of the target of 577 new homes per annum 	Place Shaping & Corporate Performance: Housing	✓	✓	✓		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivering a review of our Local Plan to reflect the borough's housing needs and to identify the necessary infrastructure for growth so that our communities remain sustainable and supported by good quality facilities, services and transport links 	Place Shaping & Corporate Performance: Planning Policy	✓	✓			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completing the first new homes and temporary accommodation (including 40 homes at Tolpits Lane) delivered through the Hart Homes Joint Venture and explore further opportunities 	Community & Environmental Services: Housing	✓	✓	✓		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completing the delivery of the modular temporary accommodation at Balmoral Road 	Place Shaping & Corporate Performance: Property	✓	✓	✓		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuing to secure new homes, including affordable homes as part of the town's major projects as well as on other potential sites 	Place Shaping & Corporate Performance: Development Management	✓	✓	✓		

Deliverable	Lead Area	Identify ways to manage the borough's housing needs	Champion smart growth and economic prosperity	Provide for our vulnerable and disadvantaged communities	Deliver a digital Watford to empower our community	Secure our own financial future
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting the requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 new Housing Service delivery model 	Place Shaping & Corporate Performance: Housing			✓		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working with our partners to deliver projects to improve housing through the delivery of the Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy 	Community & Environmental Services: Environmental Health	✓	✓	✓		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivering the next phase of our Local Plan including submission to the planning inspectorate 	Place Shaping & Corporate Performance: Planning Policy	✓	✓			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progressing investment in major projects, infrastructure and public realm: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Town Hall and Town Hall square development Watford Riverwell: completion of first residential zones at Woodside and Waterside, approving and delivering the 'norther zone' masterplan, car park strategy for Watford General Hospital 	Place Shaping & Corporate Performance		✓			✓

Deliverable	Lead Area	Identify ways to manage the borough's housing needs	Champion smart growth and economic prosperity	Provide for our vulnerable and disadvantaged communities	Deliver a digital Watford to empower our community	Secure our own financial future
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Western Gateway: Ascot Road start on site ○ Watford Junction: first phase planning applications including infrastructure improvement plan ○ Clarendon Road: new office and residential construction progressing, school completion, public realm enhancements ○ Watford Business Park, including Zone A venture partner, achieved ○ intu completion including aligning leases across both sites and delivering High Street improvements 						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Working in partnership with Hertfordshire County Council on tackling congestion and promoting more sustainable methods of transport including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ improving cycling lanes ○ promoting cycle hire ○ promoting car clubs ○ improving walking routes ○ extending electric charging points network 	Place Shaping & Corporate Performance: Transport & Infrastructure		✓			

Deliverable	Lead Area	Identify ways to manage the borough's housing needs	Champion smart growth and economic prosperity	Provide for our vulnerable and disadvantaged communities	Deliver a digital Watford to empower our community	Secure our own financial future
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploring alternatives for people to get into and around Watford including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 'Hop on / hop off' bus to link the town ○ Working with schools to encourage alternatives to the school run ○ Considering a short-distance park and ride for specific events such as football matches 	Place Shaping & Corporate Performance: Transport & Infrastructure		✓	✓		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working in partnership to deliver our Economic Growth Delivery Plan and providing the strategic lead for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Inward investment and business retention ○ Skills brokerage and sector skills development ○ Growing Watford's knowledge economy 	Corporate Strategy & Communications: Economic Development		✓	✓	✓	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivering the next phase of Sports Facilities Strategy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Woodside: masterplan approved ○ Oxhey Park project ○ Cassiobury Site (Fullerians) 	Community & Environmental Services: Parks & Projects		✓	✓		

Deliverable	Lead Area	Identify ways to manage the borough's housing needs	Champion smart growth and economic prosperity	Provide for our vulnerable and disadvantaged communities	Deliver a digital Watford to empower our community	Secure our own financial future
investment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Cassiobury Croquet Club improvements 						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing a River Colne improvement strategy to enhance the river and its surrounds as a green asset for Watford 	Community & Environmental Services: Parks & Projects		✓	✓		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing a new Cultural Plan for Watford 	Community & Environmental Services: Culture & Events		✓	✓		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determining investment options for New Watford Market and renew outdoor market livery 	Community & Place Shaping & Corporate Performance: Property		✓			✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking forward Watford Museum Heritage Lottery Fund improvement project 	Community & Environmental Services: Culture & Events		✓			✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting Watford as a dementia friendly town 	Community & Environmental Services:			✓		

Deliverable	Lead Area	Identify ways to manage the borough's housing needs	Champion smart growth and economic prosperity	Provide for our vulnerable and disadvantaged communities	Deliver a digital Watford to empower our community	Secure our own financial future
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore ways to welcome people new to living in Watford including a 'buddy scheme' and welcome pack 	Corporate Strategy & Communications: Corporate Strategy			✓		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working with partners to tackle rough sleepers 	Community & Environmental Services: Community Safety			✓		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review our pilot Street Improvement Programme and decide on our approach for future projects 	Community & Environmental Services: Environmental Health		✓	✓		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertaking a review of our community assets to ensure they are being best used to help our third sector support our communities, including our more vulnerable residents 	Community & Environmental Services: Leisure & Community			✓		✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exploring options for a new cemetery in Watford to meet the needs of our residents 	Environmental Services: Parks & Projects		✓	✓		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewing our three year Voluntary and Community Sector Commissioning Framework to ensure it continues to promote the wellbeing of our town and our residents 	Community & Environmental Services: Leisure & Community			✓		✓

Deliverable	Lead Area	Identify ways to manage the borough's housing needs	Champion smart growth and economic prosperity	Provide for our vulnerable and disadvantaged communities	Deliver a digital Watford to empower our community	Secure our own financial future
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing the strategic lead for promoting economic equality through our Economic Development Growth Plan 	Corporate Strategy & Communications: Economic Development		✓	✓		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working with our partners to deliver projects to improve health conditions in the borough including through the delivery of the Warmer Homesproject 	Community & Environmental Services: Environmental Health	✓		✓		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewing our council tax reduction scheme 	Revenues & Benefits: Revenues			✓		✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working with partners to understand our community and the issues that are affecting our vulnerable and disadvantaged residents so we can ensure local services are targeted effectively 	Corporate Strategy & Communications: Corporate Strategy			✓		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing a corporate approach to mental health issues in the borough 	Environmental Services: Environmental Health			✓		

Deliverable	Lead Area	Identify ways to manage the borough's housing needs	Champion smart growth and economic prosperity	Provide for our vulnerable and disadvantaged communities	Deliver a digital Watford to empower our community	Secure our own financial future
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As part of our Watford 2020 programme: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver the next phase of the programme including the implementation of the new operating model for the council Explore innovative ways of using the Internet of Things 	Service Transformation: Watford 2020				✓	✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Securing £1million savings through our Watford 2020 programme 	Service Transformation: Watford 2020					✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertaking an analysis of the Council's cost base to build a more thorough understanding of the costs of our services 	Finance					✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Managing our property portfolio to stimulate growth, generate returns and meet changing service needs 	Place Shaping & Corporate Performance: Property					✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring our contracts are delivering value for money and high quality services through robust tendering and procurement processes and on-going review including: waste collection, street care, parks and open spaces, Watford Colosseum 	Democracy & Governance: Procurement					✓

Deliverable	Lead Area	Identify ways to manage the borough's housing needs	Champion smart growth and economic prosperity	Provide for our vulnerable and disadvantaged communities	Deliver a digital Watford to empower our community	Secure our own financial future
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capturing returns on investment from our major projects and joint ventures 	Finance					✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submitting a planning application for the Town Hall complex 	Democracy & Governance: Facilities Management		✓			

Underpinning themes

Deliverable	Lead Area	Effective two-way engagement and communications	Sound management and high performance	Improving the town's environment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take forward specific initiatives to consult our community post the Mayoral elections to review the town's progress and help shape future priorities and decision making 	Corporate Strategy & Communications: Communications	✓		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build a new approach to two way engagement with our residents through the use of social media and other channels so they better understand the council's vision for the town and can make a greater contribution to local issues, policy development and service improvement 	Corporate Strategy & Communications: Communications	✓		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review our communications strategy to ensure it is innovative and matching the best practice both within the public and private sector 	Corporate Strategy & Communications: Communications	✓		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proactively share Watford's successes 	Corporate Strategy & Communications: Communications	✓		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the recommendations of the Corporate Peer Challenge 	Corporate Strategy & Communications: Corporate Strategy		✓	

Deliverable	Lead Area	Effective two-way engagement and communications	Sound management and high performance	Improving the town's environment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Year 1 of our People Strategy 	Human Resources		✓	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Year 1 of our IT Strategy 	Service Transformation		✓	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen our project and programme management to ensure our plans and ambitions are delivered on time and within budget 	Corporate Strategy & Communications: PMO		✓	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review our key performance indicators to ensure they are measuring what is important and being used to improve decision- making 			✓	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintaining excellent relationships with delivery partners such as Veolia 				✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuously enhance the quality of our environment and monitor and tackle environmental hotspots as they occur 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to protect our heritage and conserve the town's history 				✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Champion the use of more environmentally-friendly materials and encourage greater recycling 				✓



Equality Impact Analysis

Title of policy, function or service	Corporate Plan 2020 (2018/19 update)
Lead officer	Manny Lewis – Managing Director
Person completing the EIA	Kathryn Robson
Type of policy, function or service:	Existing (reviewed) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New/Proposed
Version	v.01- 22 February 2018

1. Background

Corporate Plan 2020: update 2018/19

Each year, the council undertakes a corporate planning process in order to review and agree the organisation's strategic direction in the medium-term and to detail how it hopes to achieve its vision and priorities over the next four to five years. This is then articulated through the council's Corporate Plan and through service plans, which in turn help inform team work programmes and individual objectives for each staff member, identified through their annual performance development reviews. In line with good practice, the council adopts a medium-term perspective to corporate planning and ensures that the process is informed and influenced by a number of key drivers. These include: resident and community consultation and feedback, an analysis and understanding of the local area, external issues (such as government requirements and legislation) and financial resources, including capital investment. The ultimate aim of effective corporate planning is to make sure the organisation is clear about what it has promised to deliver, has a shared understanding of what work needs to be completed in the short and medium-term, the milestones that will measure progress and the outcomes that will measure its success.

The council's Corporate Plan, therefore, sets out the direction for the council to 2020. It is our key improvement and planning document, which identifies where we are focusing our efforts and resources both over the next year and for the medium term. The Corporate Plan is the highest level document that covers the whole of the council's work.

It links with other council strategies and plans, such as the Local Plan, Sports Facilities Strategy as well as our transformational Watford 2020 programme and is reviewed and updated annually to reflect any changes to the national, regional or local environment.

As our key strategic planning document, the plan's impact on the town and community is fundamental to ensuring it also provides effective linkage to the council's commitment to equalities and diversity and that it meets its duties under the Equality Act 2010.

2. Focus of the Equality Impact Analysis

This EIA, therefore, considers the potential equality related impacts, both positive and negative of the Corporate Plan 2020 – update for 2018/19 - on the people in the groups or with the characteristics protected in the Equalities Act 2010, should Council approve the plan in March 2018.

These are:

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.

3. What we know about the Watford population

Population

The current population of Watford is 96,800 (mid 2017 estimate) and is estimated to grow by 16% by 2026. Population growth estimates stated that they expected Watford to reach 100,000 by the end of 2017. In terms of gender breakdown, there are estimated to be fractionally more female than male residents but the difference is not significant.

The population density for Watford is circa 4,500 people per square kilometre. This makes it the most densely populated district area in England and Wales. However, in comparison with some metropolitan boroughs, particularly those in and around the outskirts of London, the density is relatively low.

Ward level populations

Mid 2016 year population estimates show Central has the highest population of any ward in Watford and Tudor the lowest at 6,059.

	2016
Callowland	7,983
Central	9,101
Holywell	8,716
Leggatts	7,910
Meriden	7,870
Nascot	8,721
Oxhey	6,949
Park	8,464
St anborough	7,645
Tudor	6,944
Vicarage	8,986
Woodside	7,484

This is ONS experimental data (Ward Level Mid-Year Population Estimates (experimental), Mid-2016)

Population projections

The ONS interim 2014-based subnational population projections are an indication of the future trends in population to 2024.

- Watford's population is projected to be 109,600 by 2022 with the population reaching 100,000 in 2017 (we will know if this was accurate with the release of 2017 population estimates)

- The bulk of the estimated 14.8% increase for Watford over the ten years from 2014 to 2024 is expected to stem from natural change of 8.8% (more births than deaths), net migration within the UK of 5.2% and net international migration of 0.7%. The level of natural change can be attributed to the relatively young age structure of the current population, with a high proportion of child bearing age.

Households

The average household size in Watford is currently 2.45. This is average for the region.

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 31 January 2017 the figure was 39,052.

Household size

The 2014 projections estimate that, between 2014 and 2039:

- Watford's average household size will decrease from 2.45 to 2.33
- Hertfordshire's average household size will decrease from 2.42 to 2.29
- England's average household size will decrease from 2.35 to 2.21

Household Composition

From the 2014 projections, one person households see the biggest increase in household growth in Watford, representing 44% of the total household growth.

However, households with dependent children see the next biggest rise, with 35% of household growth; couples with other adults make up 9%; other (multi-person adult) households make up 7% and couple households (without children or other adults) make up the remaining 6% of all estimated growth.

Ethnicity

Watford has a very diverse population, more so than the rest of Hertfordshire.

For Watford, the Census 2011 shows the following breakdown in terms of ethnicity: White British (61.9%), White other (7.7%), Pakistani (6.7%), British Indian (5.5%) and British other Asian 4.4%). Census information is now nearly 10 years old and it is likely that the ethnic profile of the borough has changed during this time. For example, it would not have captured the more recent EU arrivals to the borough (EU2 countries – Romania and Bulgaria, who were given residency rights in 2014). We know from other data such as National Insurance Registration that Watford has experienced a relatively high increase in nationals from the EU2 countries applying for National Insurance registrations as Watford residents. This follows a period of a high number from EU8 countries (including Poland, Latvia, Lithuania) who were given freedom of movement to the UK from 2004. Throughout the period the arrival of new residents from south Asia (e.g. Pakistan / India) has remained relatively constant.

Other data sources, including a school language survey on the languages spoken by Watford school children at home, endorse the National Insurance findings with English still the predominant language (at around 60%) followed by (in order of selection): Urdu, Polish, Tamil, Pahari, Gujarati, Portuguese, Romanian and Hindi.

From our assessment of our 74,522 electorate (i.e. those aged over 18 and registered to vote) the following main ethnicity groups have been identified.

- British – 61,399
- Polish – 1,791
- Romanian – 1,612
- Rep of Ireland – 1,389
- Indian – 1,079

- Portuguese – 758
- Italian – 747

Age

The largest populations by age band in Watford are:

- 25-44 (31,700)
- 45-59 (18,100)

The numbers in each successive age-band fall progressively until there are estimated to be 6,000 who are 75+. We know that around 74,000 residents are of voting age in Watford and that the borough has a younger profile than the rest of England and Wales.



Disability / Health

Around 85% of the population of Watford state that they have ‘good health’ and just under 14% record a disability. We do not have details as to what these disabilities are but they will include a wide range of physical and mental health disabilities or impairment.

The 2016 NHS Health Profile’s summary conclusion is that the health of people in Watford is ‘varied’ compared with the England average. About 14% (2,700) of children live in low income families. Life expectancy for both men and women is similar to the England average (which is an improvement on previous years when men’s was lower).

The profile also shows that physically active adults has remained stable since 2016 at 54.4%, compared to the England average of 57%. There has been a very small increase from 58.9% to 60% in the percentage of adults classified as overweight or obese in Watford, although significantly better than the England average of 64.8%. Also remaining consistent is the percentage of obese children in Year 6 (aged 10-11) at 16%, significantly better than the England average, which is 19.8%.

Religion / belief

The religious breakdown in the Census 2011 of the main religions in Watford was: Christian (54.1%), Muslim (9.8%), Hindu (4.8%), with no religion stated at 21.4%.

Sexual orientation / Transgender

Watford has no specific data on the transgender community within the borough

Education and skills

A skilled workforce supports the economic development and employment aspirations for Watford. There has been a mostly increasing trend in Watford over the last few years. Watford's working age population has the third highest percentage (43.7%) in Hertfordshire of those with qualifications at NVQ 4 and above (St. Albans is the highest with 62% and East Herts second highest with 44.2%); this is also higher than both the 40.4% average in Hertfordshire and the England average of 34.2%. There are fewer people with no qualifications and significantly more people with Level 4/5 qualifications (degree level).

63.6% of Watford young people achieved 5 A*-C including English & Maths at the end of key stage 4. This is the better than the England average of 57.8%.

Homelessness

Whilst this is not a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010, the council recognises that the particular circumstances of people without their own home might be a factor in their taking an active role in our community. We currently have 24 statutory homeless (December 2017) and 188 households in temporary accommodation (December 2017).

Deprivation

The English Indices of Deprivation 2015 was published by the Government in September 2015, and updates the previous 2010 Indices, published in March 2011.

The Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2015 uses 37 separate indicators, grouped into seven domains (three of which contain sub-domains); the domains are Income; Employment; Health and Disability; Education, Skills and Training; Crime; Barriers to Housing and Services; and Living Environment. In addition to the domains and their sub-domains there are two supplementary income deprivation Indices: Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) and Income Deprivation Affecting Older People Index (IDAOPI).

In the IMD 2015, Watford is ranked 189 out of 326 authorities, putting it in the 6th decile nationally. This means that, overall, Watford is less deprived than half the authorities in England.

Watford is the third most deprived authority in Hertfordshire. (Stevenage and Broxbourne are the most deprived.) However, three Hertfordshire authorities are among the 10% least deprived authorities in England (Three Rivers, East Herts and St Albans).

Overall, Watford is not an area with significant deprivation issues and the majority of the LSOAs within the town are in the bottom 50% of LSOAs nationally for deprivation; the borough's position has improved relative to that of 2010.

The combined deprivation index, which weights income and employment more heavily than the other domains, obscures the more deprived areas in Watford, which are affected by crime, living environment deprivation and education, skills and training deprivation in particular. This is, at least in part, because income and employment deprivation are less of an issue for Watford.

The ten most deprived LSOAs in Watford, as ranked in the IMD 2010, are as follows:

Watford rank	Ward	LSOA code	Hertfordshire		England	
			Rank	Decile in Herts (1st = most deprived)	Rank	Decile (1st = most deprived)
1 (2)	Central	E01023860	5 (5)	1st (1st)	5005 (7683)	2nd (3rd)
2 (1)	Meriden	E01023876	19 (7)	1st (1st)	7590 (7539)	3rd (3rd)
3 (5)	Holywell	E01023865	22 (32)	1st (1st)	7800 (9818)	3rd (4th)
4 (7)	Holywell	E01023866	30 (40)	1st (1st)	9203 (10445)	3rd (4th)
5 (4)	Stanborough	E01023891	31 (21)	1st (1st)	9377 (9075)	3rd (3rd)
6 (11)	Meriden	E01023873	33 (57)	1st (1st)	9628 (11634)	3rd (4th)
7 (9)	Woodside	E01023906	41 (46)	1st (1st)	10062 (10768)	4th (4th)
8 (3)	Central	E01023861	45 (15)	1st (1st)	10469 (8354)	4th (3rd)
9 (8)	Central	E01023859	47 (45)	1st (1st)	10609 (10705)	4th (4th)
10 (6)	Oxhey	E01023883	49 (34)	1st (1st)	10710 (10014)	4th (4th)

MOSAIC profile

Our MOSAIC profiling of the borough enhances our understanding of our population and provides valuable context for our decision-making as well as underpinning our communications and engagement.

MOSAIC GROUP	Group/Type Name	MOSAIC DESCRIPTION	Number of households in Watford	Watford Percentage	UK Percentage
1 J40	Career Builders	Singles and couples in their 20s and 30s progressing in their field of work from commutable properties	4508	11.69%	1.59%
2 J44	Flexible Workforce	Young renters ready to move to follow worthwhile incomes from service sector jobs	3123	8.10%	1.26%
3 D14	Cafés and Catchments	Affluent families with growing children living in upmarket housing in city environs	2837	7.35%	1.31%
4 I36	Cultural Comfort	Thriving families with good incomes in multi-cultural urban communities	2794	7.24%	1.37%
5 H35	Primary Ambitions	Forward-thinking younger families who sought affordable homes in good suburbs which they may now be out-growing	2391	6.20%	1.96%

Watford's MOSAIC profile (2016)

4. What local people have said is important to them

Our regular Community Survey is one way we test what we are doing and our future plans. The Community Survey 2017 received over 1,100 responses, which indicates the level of interest our residents have in the town and its future.

COMMUNITY SURVEY 2017: HEADLINE RESULTS

Views on the council

- 77% of respondents are satisfied with the way the council runs things
- 80% agree the council is working to make Watford a better place to live
- 82% think we provide value for money and the same percentage are satisfied with the way we spend our proportion of your council tax
- 85% agree we are working to make Watford economically successful

Top council services

These are the services that local residents think we do really well:

- Waste and recycling
- Parks and open spaces
- Sports and leisure facilities

Views on Watford

- 74% of respondents are satisfied with Watford as a place to live
- 80% are proud to be a Watford resident
- 84% think that where they live people from different backgrounds get on well together
- 91% agree Watford is a safe town

Top five things that respondents said make somewhere a good place to live

- Feeling safe in my home and the local area
- Good quality hospital and health services
- Cleanliness and tidiness of the town
- Good access to public transport
- Rubbish collected on a regular and reliable basis

Where we need to do even better

- Ensuring that new homes are supported by good infrastructure such as school places, GP surgeries, better transport links
- Keep local people informed about decisions
- Provide more opportunities for people to find out what is going on and share their views
- Explaining why well-planned growth is important to the town
- Explaining housing targets and the need for new homes

Priorities for the borough

The survey also asked people about their priorities for the borough.

The top choices were:

Ensuring a vibrant and prosperous local economy that offers a range of jobs and opportunities for local people	48.5%
Keeping the town clean and our streets free from litter	38.6%
Working with community safety partners to tackle issues and make Watford even safer for our communities	38.0%
Creating a well-connected borough with good infrastructure such as better transport links	37.4%
Supporting our more vulnerable residents so that they can live independent lives	35.5%
Protecting and enhancing our parks and open spaces	31.5%
Helping to provide a range of new homes that meet local needs, including more affordable homes	30.2%

Total responses: 1,095

Residents were also able to provide their views on other priority areas for Watford not identified within the answer choices. Of the comments received, the most commonly cited issues were parking and congestion.

5. How will the council ensure equality is promoted through the Corporate Plan 2020

Under the Equality Act 2010, three areas need to be considered when analysing the equality impact of the Corporate Plan:

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

Watford's vision is: **To create a bold and progressive future for Watford**

To deliver this vision it has 5 agreed priorities:

1. Identify ways to manage the borough's housing needs
2. Champion smart growth and economic prosperity
3. Provide for our vulnerable and disadvantaged communities
4. Deliver a digital Watford to empower our community
5. Secure our own financial future

These are then underpinned by areas which we believe are well embedded in Watford and which we would want to see maintained: high performance and sound management, effective two-way communications and engagement and improving the town's environment.

Through the Corporate Plan, specific projects and areas of work are identified that set the corporate work programme and demonstrate how we will deliver against the 5 priority areas and the vision to 2020.

All of the priorities, and the work set out to deliver them, impact on our communities to some extent. Indeed, the underlying driver for the plan is to ensure we are working in a way that benefits all our communities; we seek to identify where the council can contribute to improving the borough and its own services and make a difference to issues that matter to local people.

EIA commitment

As part of its commitment to the Equality Act 2010, Watford BC expects EIAs to be undertaken on all new strategies and policies and where a strategy or policy has been reviewed and significantly revised. Therefore, there are a number of areas of work identified in the Corporate Plan programme where separate EIAs will be carried out. The councils Corporate Equalities Working Group oversees this area of activity to ensure EIAs are undertaken and equalities impacts considered.

How our priorities will support our public sector equalities duties under the Equality Act 2010 is described below, with some of the individual projects /areas of work identified:

1. Identify ways to manage the borough's housing needs

This priority looks to address the significant issues arising from the growing demand for homes in Watford, including affordable homes. Many of those needing permanent accommodation are young people and people with families and so we need to understand the impact of our housing policies in terms of the age profile of both people presenting themselves in housing need and, more generally, on the types of home needed in the borough to meet the requirements of its population – particularly given that we know that we have a younger population than many areas and high numbers of children under 5. However, we also know that our population is aging, with people living longer and this also impacts on housing requirements.

Another area where we understand that our profile means we require focus is private rented accommodation, where an extremely high proportion of our residents live. Whilst this is the right solution for many local people we know that the role of the private landlord in the town is critical to our communities and population. A significant amount of the rental sector is accessed by those aged 20 -35 years and so the work we do with the town's landlords has an important impact on this age group.

Therefore, through our Corporate Plan we seek to address both the supply and demand for housing within our borough, including affordable housing. Through our major projects we have already achieved significant progress towards meeting housing targets – indeed in 2017 we have facilitated the delivery of Watford's first purpose built retirement community through Watford Riverwell.

2. Champion smart growth and economic prosperity

Ensuring the town remains prosperous is a key priority for the council. A prosperous economy provides jobs for those of working age across a range of occupations. Planning for smart growth means that issues such as transport and other infrastructure (e.g. schools) are considered as plans take shape for the borough. Areas like good public transport links are important to all the community but particularly for those too young to drive or with a disability or age-related impairment that means driving is not an option.

Our Local Plan provides the spatial planning for the borough and identifies how land is used, determining what will be built where. It provides the framework for development in the borough and has to be underpinned by a sound evidence base, including an understanding of our local communities and its various needs. A separate EIA is undertaken on the Local Plan to ensure it is meeting the council's equality duties and our own equality objectives. Other key strategies will also be expected to undertake robust EIAs to be presented to our members

3. Provide for our vulnerable and disadvantaged communities

This priority recognises that whilst most people who live in the borough enjoy a good quality of life and are able to make the most of what the town offers, we do need to understand where others might need some extra help or support. As a district council not responsible for some of the major 'support' service areas such as adult social care and children's services, we work with our partners to ensure these services are meeting the needs of our residents and we ensure those services we are responsible for are responsive to our communities. This covers areas such as our public health work, providing health and fitness opportunities across the town and free activities for our children and young people. For 2018/19 we have added our commitment to becoming a dementia friendly town as well as developing our own mental health strategy for Watford. It also acknowledges that we need to make sure we understand who makes up our communities given that we know we have a growing and

often transient population. This ensures our services are focused on local need and that we can support our partners in their work with up to date information and Watford based profiles. It also informs our work on a welcome pack and ambassadors for new residents – one way we can maintain our strong and cohesive community.

4. Deliver a digital Watford to empower our community

We know that the way people receive information and prefer to engage with organisations whether they are in the public or private sector is changing. For many younger people, even email is outdated and they prefer social networks and mobile apps. But there are still significant parts of our communities that prefer more traditional types of communication and engagement including face to face conversations and meetings.

Through our Watford 2020 programme, our aim is to empower local people and communities, to improve their lives, make things easier and quicker, and to give them access to things they might not have been able to take advantage of before. Our drive to digital is to provide the online and digital opportunities for those who want them – more often our younger population and those of working age – whilst retaining other channels to meet the needs of people who are not so digitally aware or skilled.

5. Secure our own financial future

Whilst this priority focuses on making sure the council has well-thought and tested financial plans in place to ensure it has a secure future financially following the ending of government funding by 2020, it also challenges us to make sure our services can meet increasing demand and to be more innovative in the way we do things. We need to ensure that as we take this forward, we keep in mind the impact of our financial decisions on our communities.

A. Positive impacts

Potential positive effects

The work programme articulated in the council's Corporate Plan 2020 is designed to improve the town and the quality of life of our residents. Through all the priorities identified for the council, there are areas of work and projects that will require additional consideration in terms of the council's equality duty and this will be delivered through a programme of equality impact analyses.

Some of the positive impacts include:

- All equality groups should benefit from activities to strengthen the local economy through attracting and supporting local businesses, which supports job opportunities and ensures local businesses thrive
- The work to deliver new homes will have a positive impact on young adults and families. Work to increase the number of affordable homes will have a positive impact on many BME groups in the town as there is a higher rate of people in social housing from a BME background compared to the Watford population overall
- The Green Spaces Strategy and related projects, including Oxhey Park and Woodside, will provide a positive impact for families in particular, although not exclusively as other protected characteristics benefit from the town's green spaces

- The council is currently reviewing its community assets to ascertain usage and determine a strategy for the future. It is anticipated that this review will highlight how the council can work more effectively with the community to make best use of its assets which should deliver an overall positive effect on communities
- The review of how we address mental health issues and the commitment to a dementia friendly town will impact positively on those with either mental health issues or age-related issues such as dementia
- All equality groups should benefit from our work with partners to understand our community and the issues that are affecting our vulnerable and disadvantaged residents. This will help us target our services effectively and ensure our partners, including Hertfordshire County Council, are also addressing issues where there is most need (social care, children’s services, youth)
- Fostering good relations within the community will be achieved through a number of our areas of work including the Green Spaces Strategy and the Sports Development Framework.

The plan highlights the importance of equalities to the organisation (see priority 4). This commitment will ensure that, where appropriate, the equalities impact of new policies and strategies and changes to service provision are considered in advance of decision making through the equality impact analysis process. This is monitored through the Corporate Equalities Working Group.

Recommendation 1: Ensure EIAs are undertaken on all relevant Corporate Plan areas of work (to both ensure the delivery of positive benefits and to mitigate potential negative impacts – see below).

Recommendation 2: Continue to build a comprehensive picture of the Watford community through feedback from consultations and updating the Watford context on a regular basis.

Recommendation 3: Ensure consultation and engagement continues to collect relevant equalities data so that there is an understanding of who is accessing facilities and services and understanding is built in relation to the views of our communities

B. Negative impacts

Potential negative effects

These would arise if equalities and the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 are not considered through the delivery of the corporate work programme.

The main ways of mitigating these potential negative effects:

- Training and communication – an online training programme is offered to all staff; this addresses both the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and the council’s own commitment to equalities and diversity. Face to face training is provided for staff who have regular interactions with the public and for councillors.
- Corporate Equalities Working Group – provides critical friend support for EIAs and advice on equalities overall

- Leadership Team receives reports on equalities to inform of progress and any issues
- Committee reports – the guidance to members has been revised to ensure members are fully informed of any equalities implications of any decisions they are required to make
- Our website has a Browsealoud facility which translates information into a range of languages and provides audio services too

Recommendation 4: Ensure staff and members undertake the mandatory online equalities training and appropriate staff undertake face to face training

Recommendation 5: The need to conduct EIAs has been outlined in Recommendation 1 above – the council needs to ensure staff are confident to undertake robust EIAs and it is recommended that additional training be undertaken to support staff in this area

Recommendation 6: Ensure the council’s project and programme management frameworks identify equalities as an area for consideration to highlight where necessary

Recommendation 7: Develop an ‘at a glance’ guide to the Corporate Plan to make the messages clear and the commitments in terms of what will be delivered

Recommendation 8: Promote the council’s website Browsealoud facility both internally and externally

6. Overall conclusion

Meeting the Public Sector Equality Duty

This EIA has taken into account the council’s public sector equality duty under s149 of the Equality Act 2010 and is intended to assist the council in meeting its duty.

The information within this report and an assessment of both the positive and negative impacts together indicate that the Corporate Plan will, overall, deliver positive impacts for the Watford community.

This is because, through the corporate work programme, it seeks to improve the town and services and facilities available to local people. The council’s commitment to equalities is identified within this corporate work programme and, through this commitment, it demonstrates its expectation that equalities is considered and addressed as part of its delivery.

EIAs are expected on individual projects and areas of work where equality issues will be considered and impacts identified.

Summary of potential positive impacts and ways in which they can be ensured

Positive Impact	Protected characteristics	Ways to ensure the positive impact
Delivery of the corporate work programme will deliver a range of benefits across all equality groups.	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to build a comprehensive picture of the Watford community through feedback from consultations and updating the Watford context on a regular basis • Embed understanding of equalities and impact on those with protected characteristics of new policies, plans and changes to service delivery • Ensure EIAs are carried out and are effective and support decision making • Work with outsourced service providers to ensure equalities duty is understood, embedded and reflected in service delivery (including equality monitoring where appropriate) • Continue to identify equality issues within committee reports and highlight where EIAs have been completed
Through consultation and engagement encourage feedback from our communities to understand take up of facilities and services and overall satisfaction with the town and council	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure consultations seek feedback from our communities in terms of their demographics and protected characteristics, where relevant • Ensure feedback is considered in decision making where relevant and appropriate

Summary of potential negative impacts and ways in which they can be removed or mitigated

Negative Impact	Protected characteristics	Ways to mitigate the negative impact
Potential if individual areas of work do not fully consider equality impacts as part of planning and delivery	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective training • Corporate Equality Working Group to provide leadership and direction
Potential negative impacts for some equality groups from the work programme – as yet not identified	All (potentially)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to build a comprehensive picture of the Watford community through feedback from consultations and updating the Watford context on a regular basis • Embed understanding of equalities and impact on those with protected characteristics of new policies, plans and changes to service delivery • Ensure EIAs are carried out and are effective and support decision making • Work with outsourced service providers to ensure equalities duty is understood, embedded and reflected in service delivery (including equality monitoring where appropriate)

This EIA has been developed by:

Kathryn Robson

..... **Date22.02.18**

Part A

Report to: Cabinet
Date of meeting: 5 March 2018
Report of: Deputy Managing Director
Title: South West Herts Joint Strategic Plan

1.0 Summary

1.1 Delivering more homes to meet growing need has become a key issue for Government. Recent Government announcements indicate that the Duty to Co-operate is going to be strengthened in favour of more formalised joint spatial planning among local authorities. At a Leader, Portfolio Holder and Senior Officer meeting in January 2018 the principle of supporting the preparation of a South West Herts Joint Strategic Plan was agreed. This report outlines the issues, benefits and implications of preparing such a plan and seeks authority to progress such a plan including the preparation of a Memorandum of Understanding as the next step in the process, to be followed by a Statement of Common Ground.

2.0 Risks

2.1

Nature of Risk	Consequence	Suggested Control Measures	Response <i>(Treat, tolerate, terminate, transfer)</i>	Risk Rating (the combination of severity and likelihood)
Changing Government legislation	New national policy could require additional work or change of focus	Adapt plan and evidence studies to reflect changes in national policy	Treat	8
Changing local	Could	Effective	Tolerate	8

politics	undermine progress on joint plan	involvement of members from all authorities and strong leadership		
Staff changes	Currently all authorities are experiencing staff moving on which could delay progress on the SW Herts work programme	A knowledge bank will be shared across the five authorities to support the delivery of the SW Herts Joint Plan and provide resource resilience	Treat	8
Resource reduction	All Councils are having to find solutions to resource reduction	More efficient use of existing resources across the authorities and bids for external funding	Tolerate	12
Brexit	Brexit could affect multiple issues including demographic, investment and policy.	Given the timescales for Brexit and uncertainties a number of scenarios would need to be tested as part of the plan making process.	Tolerate	12

3.0 **Recommendations**

To recommend to Council :

1. To agree to work with the other South West Herts Authorities (Three Rivers, Dacorum, Hertsmere and St.Albans Councils) to prepare a Joint Strategic Plan. Details of working arrangements and governance structures will be included in a Memorandum of Understanding which is currently being worked on. A timetable and the relationship with individual local plans will be set out in a Statement of Common Ground, to be agreed by all partners.

2. To agree to progress a Memorandum of Understanding as the framework for governing future joint working arrangements and for the final terms of the Memorandum of Understanding to be delegated to the Deputy Managing Director for agreement.

3. To agree to officers progressing work on the joint plan and to note that this will come back to Council for final approval.

4. To note the support of Hertfordshire County Council and the Hertfordshire LEP for this process.

Contact Officer:

For further information on this report please contact: Ian Dunsford, Planning Policy Section Head

Telephone extension: 8280 email: ian.dunsford@watford.gov.uk

Report approved by: Nick Fenwick, Deputy Managing Director

4.0 **Detailed proposal**

- 4.1 South West Hertfordshire faces significant strategic challenges in accommodating the required new homes, jobs and supporting infrastructure over the next fifteen years and beyond. The five local authorities which make up this area – Dacorum, Hertsmere, Three Rivers, St Albans and Watford – continue to experience an acute shortage of new and affordable housing and beyond existing built up areas, are almost entirely designated as Green Belt land.

- 4.2 In recent years it has become increasingly evident that the scale of growth Government is expecting local authorities to deliver is of such a scale that it cannot be delivered sustainably by individual local authorities working in isolation. Neighbouring

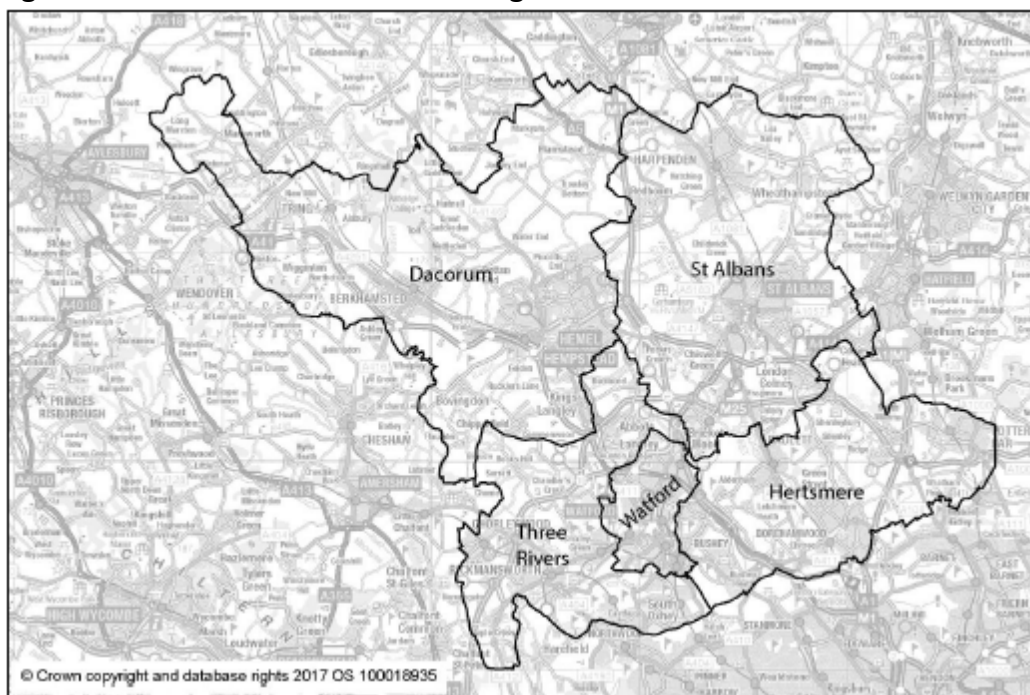
authorities are therefore increasingly being encouraged to work together to provide the high quality homes, jobs and infrastructure where people want to live their lives. The opportunity to agree new arrangements for strategic planning across the area is particularly timely as all five SW Herts authorities are now at a similar stage in the plan making process.

4.3 Following a meeting on the 23 January 2018 attended by Leaders, Portfolio Holders and Senior Officers from Dacorum, Hertsmere, St Albans, Three Rivers, Watford Councils and Hertfordshire County Council, it was agreed to progress work towards a joint strategic plan for South West Herts. As such an undertaking is of such a strategic scale, this report seeks support from members to proceed with the preparation of a South West Herts Joint Strategic Plan and for governance arrangements to be put in place to enable this work to move forwards.

4.4 Dacorum, Hertsmere, Three Rivers and Watford Councils have been working together as an informal planning group since 2014, when a Strategic Housing Market Assessment and an Economy Study were jointly commissioned to inform the Local Plan reviews. Further joint technical work, including a Retail and Leisure Study and a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, is underway. Since November 2017, St Albans Council has formal Member agreement to move forward with joint work on this SW Herts geography (see Figure 1 below).

All five authorities have already been working as a group with Hertfordshire County Council on transport matters, including the SW Herts Growth and Transport Plan.

4.5 **Fig.1 South West Hertfordshire Housing Market Area and Functional Economic Market Area**



- 4.6 **The Duty to Co-operate**
The duty to cooperate was created in the Localism Act 2011. It places a legal duty on local planning authorities, county councils in England and public bodies to engage constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis to maximise the effectiveness of Local Plan preparation in the context of strategic cross boundary matters.
- 4.7 Whilst the duty to cooperate is not a duty to agree local planning authorities are required to make every effort to secure the necessary cooperation on strategic cross boundary matters before they submit their Local Plans for examination.
- 4.8 Local planning authorities must demonstrate how they have complied with the duty at the independent examination of their Local Plans. If a local planning authority cannot demonstrate that it has complied with the duty then the Local Plan will not be able to proceed further in examination. This has already been a stumbling block at examination for a number of local plans in recent years including Castlepoint in Essex and St Albans.
- 4.9 In February 2017 the Housing White Paper: 'Fixing our broken housing market' proposed a new spatial local plan based on effective joint working as part of the new Housing Delivery Test. To strengthen the duty to co-operate, a Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) would also be required. The clear expectation from Government is that these would be prepared on Housing Market Area geographies i.e. involving the authorities shown in Figure 1 above.
- 4.10 The Government's "Right Homes in Right Places" published in November 2017 proposes two new tests of soundness for local plans including:
- a) plans should be prepared based on a strategy informed by agreements over the wider area, and*
 - b) plans should be based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic priorities, which are evidenced in the statement of common ground.*
- 4.11 With the Government driving for a step change in housing delivery these proposals are highly likely to be implemented in 2018 with the publication of the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which is expected by the end of March. These new soundness tests will effectively mean that local planning authorities will need to change the way they work together on strategic and cross boundary matters for their plans to be found 'sound'.
- 4.12 At the same time the Government is offering resources to local authorities to support wider area based plans. A SW Herts bid for £220,000 has been submitted to the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government to support the development of a joint plan. It is understood that further funding opportunities will be announced.
- 4.13 **Examples of Joint Planning**
Following the demise of the old county structure plans and the regional spatial

strategies, it has become evident that many key planning and infrastructure issues extend beyond individual borough and district boundaries. Consequently there are a number of cases where authorities are working together on strategic planning matters. Some partnerships of local authorities have taken a non-statutory approach to preparing infrastructure frameworks and plans. Areas that have been doing this include West Sussex and Greater Brighton and South Essex. Such plans are useful for bringing infrastructure providers together and helping co-ordinate growth. However as they are non-statutory they only have of limited weight when guiding the preparation of individual Local Plans and strategic development proposals. As a result of this limitation, a number of authorities are now working together to prepare statutory Spatial / Strategic Plans. Examples include Greater Exeter, Oxfordshire and Greater Manchester.

4.14 The closest example of what is being considered for SW Herts is a statutory document akin to the emerging West of England Joint Spatial Plan which covers Bath and North East Somerset, Bristol City, North Somerset, and South Gloucestershire. The emerging plan contains 7 high level policies and 12 area policies which sets the broad direction and strategic approach for development across the whole area. This is then supported by detailed policies in each authority's local plan. These two levels of plans are being prepared in tandem.

4.15 **Role of Hertfordshire County Council and the Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)**

Both the County and the LEP have an important role in helping to deliver a new joint plan; the County from its perspective as a major service provider, funding partner and land owner and the LEP as a key business and funding partner. County Councils are identified as participants in the Duty to Co-operate. LEPs have a less formal requirement but it is generally considered best practice to work closely with the LEP. As a result both organizations would be invited to be signatures of the MOU and SoCG. However the joint plan would only need to be approved by district and borough authorities.

4.16 **Benefits**

A statutory joint plan has a number of significant benefits, the first is that it provides a more effective way of place shaping, by providing a bigger canvas to direct development to the right areas that deliver growth and that are, or can be, supported by the right infrastructure.

4.17 Second joint planning brings with it increased funding opportunities and secures wider support from Government and other agencies such as Homes England (formerly Homes and Communities Agency) and the LEP. Joint plans are increasingly favoured by the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (i.e. Housing Infrastructure Fund and Planning Delivery Fund). There is also greater potential for a bespoke housing deal to deliver strategic infrastructure where significant growth is proposed.

- 4.18 Third a joint plan can help local authorities to manage their housing delivery more effectively. Currently the Government is proposing to allow 5 year housing land supply and the new Housing Delivery Test to be managed across strategic areas where there is a joint plan in place. This could be particularly useful where very complex and large scale developments are being progressed with significantly longer lead-in times i.e. houses can typically be delivered faster than an apartment scheme.
- 4.19 Fourth joint planning can provide a more robust and coherent basis for negotiating with others. In the SW Herts case, by working together we would be in a stronger position when dealing with the Greater London Authority to ensure that there are greater mutual benefits arising from London's growth, and to the north, how we work with the Cambridge- Milton Keynes-Oxford Growth corridor where one million new homes are proposed and being supported by Government.
- 4.20 Fifth, by having a joint plan in place it would address the duty to co-operate and help to deliver technically sound and legally compliant local plans.
- 4.21 **Risks**
- The primary risk is for one of the partners to break away from the arrangement. To reduce the risk of this occurring, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) would establish the governance and ambitions for the new plan. It would also increase the likelihood of that authority, in particular, failing to meet the requirements of the Duty to Co-operate and the possibility of the Secretary of State intervening in the Local Plan process.
- 4.22 The preparation of a MOU would be followed by the authorities agreeing a Statement of Common Ground which would identify the key cross boundary issues. This SoCG is expected to be a new statutory requirement, to be introduced by the new NPPF.
- 4.23 Resource availability and changes in staffing would be a risk to the plan's preparation as resources would need to be committed from all participating authorities. To address this, a skills bank would be prepared and specific officers would be expected to work with Officers of all other member authorities of the joint plan as appropriate.
- 4.24 The risk of programme slippage significantly increases when multiple parties are involved. To address this, a governance structure will be included in the Memorandum of Understanding. A standard project planning approach will be put in place across the participating authorities.
- 4.25 **Budget**
- In terms of budgets, it is estimated that the combined cost across South West Herts for a joint plan would be £400,000 over a three year period. A number of funding sources are available and a joint bid to the MHCLG Joint Working Fund has been submitted for £242,000 covering the period to the end of the 2018/2019 financial year. This would provide additional resources including two temporary specialists. The outcome of this process is due before the end of February 2018 with the initial tranche of c£15,000

being made available before the end of the current financial year and the balance due at the start of 2018/19. Alternative funding from the East of England Local Government Association (EELGA) may also be available if the MHCLG grants are not awarded.

4.26 It is considered that the new strategic plan making requirement can be contained within the existing local plans budget for 2018/19 £6,000 per authority. Autumn 2018 would provide the opportunity to review the budgets for the local plan as the progress of the Local and Strategic Plan will be clearer in timescales and cost of preparation.

4.27 In 2019/20 and 2020/21 it is anticipated that a further £150,000 would be required across the two years to cover public consultations, legal and consultancy advice and the examination. This would equate to c£15,000 per annum per authority. Ideally we would want to keep the two specialists in post during 2019/20.

4.28 In terms of financial risk c £40,000 is considered acceptable across the five authorities. Autumn 2018 would provide the opportunity to review the budgets for each authority to cover any additional expenditure that may arise.

4.29 Subject to the successful award of funding, the recent 20% increase in planning fees could be used to meet the additional cost along with a further bid to government or/and EELGA. Therefore a growth bid is unlikely to be required for Watford.

4.30 **Next Steps**

The first step to embark on a South West Herts Joint Plan is for all the authorities to agree a Memorandum of Understanding. The next step will be to progress a Statement of Common Ground. This document will identify the relevant cross-boundary strategic priorities and will also be expected to set out how growth will be distributed across the area and what key supporting infrastructure will be required. The five South West Herts authorities and Hertfordshire County Council will be the signatories. During the time the Statement of Common Ground is being drafted, a new timetable for the plan's preparation will be drafted and officers will be working to progress the evidence to support the new plan.

4.31 **Retention of Sovereignty**

A new joint strategic plan would need to be agreed individually by all authorities. Members would be consulted as the plan progressed at each stage through a series of workshops and broader consultation events. Each authority would continue to maintain its own Local Development Scheme, setting out arrangements for both the preparation of its own Local Plan documents, as well as the agreed timescales for the Joint Strategic Plan.

4.32 Both the Submission and Adoption joint plan documents would need to be approved by each Council.

4.33 In addition to the joint plan, each authority will progress their own local plans to

address local issues and provide site allocations.

- 4.34 Whilst an adopted joint plan will form part of the development plan for the district/borough, local development management committees would retain sovereignty when it came to determining planning applications in their area.

5.0 **Implications**

5.1 **Financial**

- 5.1.1 The Shared Director of Finance comments that funding for 2018/19 has been applied for from the MHCLG and if this is not successful then alternative funding may be available from EELGA. Funding for future years may be through additional grant applications or can be included in the annual budget setting process.

5.2 **Legal Issues** (Monitoring Officer)

- 5.2.1 The Head of Democracy and Governance comments that section 28 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 give the power for two or more local planning authorities to agree to prepare one or more joint development documents. Under the constitution any decision to agree to make a joint development plan must be agreed by Council.

5.3 **Equalities/Human Rights**

- 5.3.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment will be undertaken as the plan progresses, alongside a health impact assessment and a sustainability appraisal. As part of this work there will be a consideration of the impact of the plan on Human Rights including an assessment of how proposals would outweigh any detriment to them.

5.4 **Staffing**

- 5.4.1 Two additional staff are being proposed for two years to be funded from the Planning Delivery Grant. These would be based in Dacorum but would work across SW Herts.

5.5 **Accommodation**

- 5.5.1 No additional requirements identified.

5.6 **Community Safety/Crime and Disorder**

- 5.6.1 N/A

5.7 **Sustainability**

- 5.7.1 The plan would be subject to a full Sustainability Appraisal that complies with national guidance and legislation.

Background Papers

West of England Joint Spatial Plan 2016

Fixing the Broken Housing Market 2017

Planning for the Right Homes in the Right Places: Consultation Proposals 2017

File Reference

P:\SP1.Corporate Democracy & External\SP1.2 Members\SP1.2.2 Meetings & Reports\SP1.2.2.2 Cabinet Reports\2018 Reports\SW Herts Joint Plan 310118.docx

Part A

Report to:	Cabinet
Date of meeting:	5 March 2018
Report of:	Property Development Project Manager
Title:	Resolution in principle to promote a Compulsory Purchase Order for Watford Business Park.

1.0. Summary

- 1.1. This report provides an update to Cabinet on the progress to date regarding the proposed regeneration of Watford Business Park in line with the aspirations set out in the Council's Local Plan Part 1 (Core Strategy adopted January 2013).
- 1.2. It outlines the next steps required to bring forward the first phase of regeneration within the business park through a comprehensive redevelopment proposal.
- 1.3. The report seeks approval 'in principle' for the Council to acquire compulsorily, by means of a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) pursuant to section 226(1)(a) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended), land and existing rights and interests where agreement cannot be reached in order to implement the comprehensive delivery of the first phase of regeneration within the business park.
- 1.4. The proposed order lands are indicatively shown in the plan attached to this report at Appendix 1. The proposed site, also referred to as 'Zone A' is edged red in the plan. The area hatched blue indicates land over which the Council proposes to extinguish (or override) any existing rights that these interests may have over the area edged red. It is important to highlight that no land or interests will be acquired over the area hatched in blue. The boundaries may change subject to further feasibility work. Should a CPO be required, the proposed boundary will be confirmed in a subsequent report to cabinet.
- 1.5. Cabinet should be satisfied at this stage that the relevant criteria for making a Compulsory Purchase Order are justifiable. A subsequent report will be

presented to Cabinet seeking authority to progress the making and serving of a Compulsory Purchase Order should the need arise.

2.0. Risks

Nature of Risk	Consequence	Control Measure	Response	Risk Rating
It is not possible to acquire all interests by agreement	CPO powers may need to be exercised to enable comprehensive redevelopment.	Treat	Through its appointed consultants, the Council will exhaust all possible options to acquire by agreement prior to making an order.	8
Financial implications	Abortive costs if CPO application rejected by the Secretary of State.	Tolerate	An order will only be made if the Council is confident it has a strong case. Project holistically budgeted and resourced from the onset.	9
Market uncertainty	Acquisition values fluctuate and impact on budget and/or viability of the scheme.	Tolerate	This should be monitored closely and advice sought from consultants when appropriate.	9
Objections to the CPO	Increased costs and programme with regard to executing an inquiry.	Tolerate	Monitor and assume high probability that inquiry may be required.	8
Business relocation	Risk of extinguishment if alternative premises can't be found.	Treat	Detailed business relocation strategy drafted and implemented at an early stage.	8
Legal challenge /	Significant programme	Terminate	Monitor risk and have a contingency plan in place	8

Judicial review	implications if the CPO decision is challenged.		should this become an eventuality.	
-----------------	---	--	------------------------------------	--

3.0. Recommendations

3.1. It is recommended that Cabinet:

- a) Supports the comprehensive redevelopment of Watford Business Park Zone A (indicatively edged red in the plan attached at Appendix 1) for the reasons outlined in this report;
- b) Notes that officers are carrying out an options appraisal with regard to the delivery mechanism for the redevelopment of Zone A. The details of which are contained within this report;
- c) Agrees in principle to the use of Section 226(1)(a) Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) compulsory purchase powers, if necessary, to acquire outstanding land interests and existing rights (which may be extinguished or overridden) in the proposed Watford Business Park Zone A development site (indicatively edged red in the plan attached at Appendix 1) where acquisition by agreement is not possible;
- d) Agrees to authorise officers to take all necessary steps to commence the process for the making, confirmation and implementation of a Compulsory Purchase Order, including securing the appointment of suitable external advisors and preparing all necessary CPO documentation;
- e) Notes that a further report will be presented to the Cabinet to approve the making of the order and confirm the extent of the order lands to be acquired following the finalisation of the necessary preparatory work and delivery option appraisal.

Contact Officer:

For further information on this report please contact:

Lauren Sharkey, Property Development Project Manager

Telephone: 01923 278 265

Email: lauren.sharkey@watford.gov.uk

Report approved by: Nick Fenwick, Deputy Managing Director, Place Shaping and Corporate Performance

4.0. Detailed proposal

4.1. Overview

4.1.1. Watford Business Park (WBP) is a major strategic land holding of approximately 75 acres (or 30 hectares) accommodating 65 businesses and employing in the region of 1,000 people. However, a significant proportion of the existing built stock is over 50 years old and is deteriorating.

4.1.2. The Local Plan Part 1 (Core Strategy adopted January 2013) sets out the vision, objectives and spatial strategy for Watford Borough to 2031 and forms the strategic planning context. The Local Plan Part 1 (LPP1) outlines the need to improve and upgrade Watford Business Park to facilitate economic development and environmental improvements. Watford Business Park is contained within Special Policy Area 6 'Western Gateway' of the LPP1.

4.1.3. The objective of Special Policy Area 6 is to deliver redevelopment that improves and upgrades this area from an economic development and environmental perspective.

4.1.4. Whilst Watford Borough Council holds the freehold title to the park, the majority of the buildings have been sold with long leasehold interests, many of which now have less than 40 years remaining. This fragmented leasehold structure is a significant barrier to comprehensive redevelopment or regeneration in the form of new investment either from occupiers, the Council or in attracting third party funding.

4.1.5. Without a significant rationalisation of land holdings and uses this strategic site will fail to attract new business, it risks deteriorating further and losing employment opportunities for the borough. This proposal is considered to be a much needed catalyst to regenerate WBP as an employment destination.

4.2. Progress to date

- 4.2.1. In 2013 a joint funding bid to the Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), led by Greenhill Asset Management on behalf of Watford Borough Council, secured £1.5m of loan funding to develop a strategy and master plan to bring forward the redevelopment of WBP.
- 4.2.2. The funding consisted of £300,000 to undertake due diligence and develop a regeneration strategy and a further £1.2m for the implementation of identified projects, including strategic purchases, from that strategy.
- 4.2.3. The strategy identified a number of development opportunities within WBP with a phased and comprehensive approach. It recommended that 'Zone A' is brought forward as the first phase in the implementation of the strategic master plan.
- 4.2.4. 'Zone A' is located at the entrance to the business park and has potential to accommodate a gateway development to the estate. It is currently characterised by low density and inefficiently planned buildings comprising low quality office and warehouse accommodation. Zone A is indicatively edged red in the plan attached at Appendix 1.
- 4.2.5. Following the development of the strategy and master plan, the Council have made good progress acquiring interests within Zone A using the remaining LEP funding. However, in order to secure the remaining interests and facilitate a comprehensive redevelopment of the site, the Council may need to use its Compulsory Purchase Powers under Section 26(1)(a) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

4.3. Next steps

- 4.3.1. Now a significant number of the interests have been acquired through agreement, the Council is in a position to commence a more detailed site and development appraisal. This will inform a preferred development option for the site which will be progressed with the intention to secure a planning consent. It is possible that the indicative Site A boundary (as outlined in Appendix 1) will be amended following this development appraisal.

- 4.3.2. The scheme that is developed and submitted for planning approval will be designed to achieve a significant and sustained improvement to the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of WBP and the wider borough.
- 4.3.3. Alongside the development of a scheme, the Council will continue to engage with leaseholders in Zone A with the intention to acquire as many interests as possible through agreement.
- 4.3.4. A relocation strategy will be adopted to outline the Council's approach to assisting affected businesses in identifying and relocating to alternative premises. This strategy will be developed with the Council's Economic Development Officer using a similar methodology adopted by the Council on Cardiff Road.
- 4.3.5. A communication strategy will be developed to ensure affected businesses are able to fully comprehend the implications of the potential Compulsory Purchase Order. It will also ensure the process is transparent and expectations are managed.
- 4.3.6. In order to comprehensively establish all those with an interest in or right to occupy the land, the Council will commission a referencing exercise using its powers under Section 16 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 to serve Requisitions for Information.
- 4.3.7. It should be noted that Requisitions for Information will be served on a wider area outside of the proposed Zone A boundary. This will ensure that all existing rights over the area edged in red, including rights to park vehicles, are fully established and those interests are properly engaged in the process. If necessary the Council will then seek to extinguish or override those rights in the CPO Process. Overriding rights has the effect of them lawfully being suspended for the duration of the development, authorised subject to the payment of compensation. That applies to most rights and restrictive covenants. Any private rights of way can however be extinguished again subject to the payment of compensation. Given the period of suspension they effectively operate with the same consequence – the rights cannot be exercised and compensation paid.

4.4. Delivery options

4.4.1. A number of delivery and procurement options have been reviewed to bring forward a comprehensive redevelopment of WBP Zone A. The Council will need to ensure compliance with its contract procurement rules for all options presented. Options will be tested with the market to ensure an attractive proposition can be secured for all parties.

4.4.2. It has been concluded that four broad procurement routes should be tested:

- a) A full procurement for a Joint Venture (JV) partner with the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU);
- b) The addition of the scheme to the existing Local Asset Backed Vehicle framework between the Council and Kier Property Developments Ltd.
- c) The potential for a land transaction agreement with a neighbouring landowner or 3rd party;
- d) The phased direct delivery of individual or smaller zones for redevelopment (potentially requiring a formal OJEU process for each zone);

5.0. Implications

5.1. Financial

5.1.1. The Shared Director of Finance comments that the Council has approved a capital budget for the 2017/18 of £5,295,299 and 2018/19 of £4,412,809 for the WBP project.

5.1.2. This budget will be used primarily for the acquisition of any outstanding interests within the development area and the progression of a Compulsory Purchase Order should it not be possible to acquire the interest through negotiation with the lessees.

5.1.3. Zone A generates approximately £200,000 per annum from the ground and occupational leases the Council presently holds. This contributes to the Council's income from its investment property portfolio. It is anticipated that

there will be some short term loss of income as a result of redevelopment. However, the redevelopment of Zone A is expected to increase long term revenue and capital gain, reversing the erosion of income as a result of progressing redevelopment.

5.1.4. Additionally, the delivery of new industrial units at 18 Caxton Way will bring in a new revenue stream which will offset the loss in income in Zone A to some extent whilst the development takes place.

5.1.5. A full financial appraisal of the development and delivery options is currently being undertaken. In any case, it is anticipated that the redevelopment of Zone A is likely to produce an uplift in business rates income.

5.2. Legal Issues (Monitoring Officer)

5.2.1. The Head of Democracy and Governance comments that the Council is using external legal advisers to advise on both the CPO and procurement options.

5.3. Equalities/Human Rights

5.3.1. A Compulsory Purchase Order should only be made as a last resort where there is a compelling case in the public interest that is considered to outweigh the human rights of the owners and occupiers affected. Together with an Equalities Impact Assessment, that case will need to be set out in a future report to Cabinet to inform any decision on taking compulsory purchase action. This process will be informed by engaging with the various parties within WBP that fall within the proposed area of land for acquisition.

5.4. Staffing

5.4.1. The Property Development Project Manager within the Council's Regeneration and Property Team will be the primary resource for this project. External advisors will be appointed where appropriate to provide additional resource and expertise.

5.5. Sustainability

5.5.1. Many buildings in Watford Business Park Zone A date back to the 1960s and are inefficient both in terms of configuration and do not meet basic energy standards. The comprehensive redevelopment of this site will significantly improve the existing environmental performance of employment accommodation within the business park. Sustainability considerations will be built into the design development process from the onset.

5.5.2. Research by property consultants Savills identifies a lack of 'move on' accommodation for office based businesses in Watford. This exposes the borough to the risk of losing major employers to other locations should the local market not provide an appropriate mix of available premises. This proposal will seek to increase the economic sustainability of the town and provide high quality commercial premises to create and retain jobs in the borough.

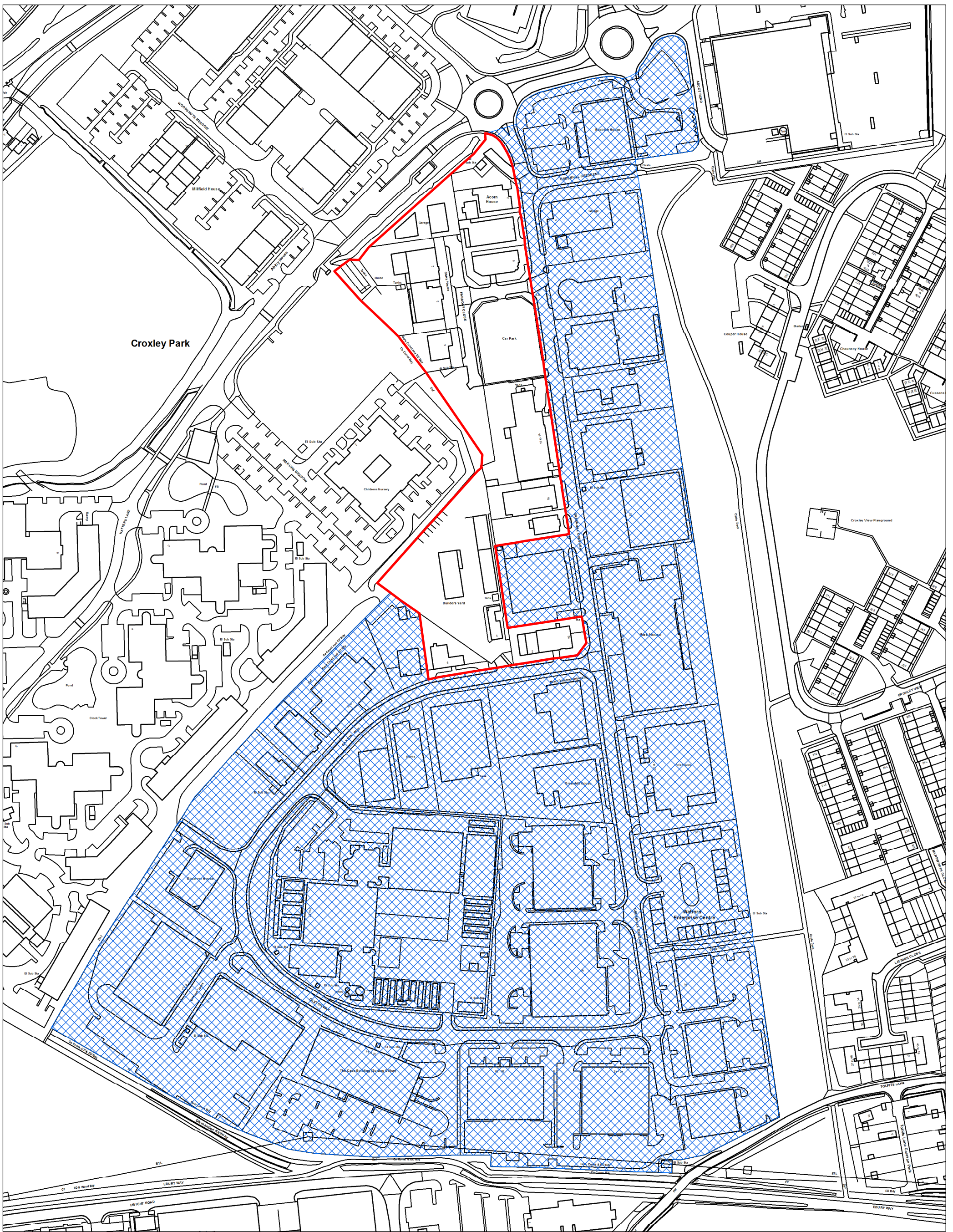
Appendices

Appendix 1 Indicative plan of the proposed order lands, Watford Business Park Zone A.

Background Papers

No papers were used in the preparation of this report.


File Reference




**WATFORD
BOROUGH
COUNCIL**

Town Hall, Watford,
Hertfordshire WD17 3EX

Watford Business Park

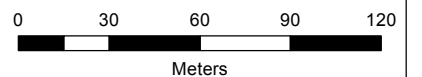
 Indicative Zone A

 Rights to be acquired over indicative zone A

Cabinet 5th March 2018



Scale **1:2,500**
at A3



© Crown copyright and database rights
2017 Ordnance Survey 100018689

Aerial 2010 © Geoperspectives

GI & Aerial 2013 © Watford BC

PART A

Report to: Cabinet
Date of meeting: 5 March 2018
Report of: Energy and Renewal Surveyor
Title: Update to the Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 This report is to seek the approval of an update to the Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy attached at Appendix A. The current policy was last updated in 2006 using the 2004 stock condition survey information.
- 1.2 The update seeks to confirm the priorities and principles of work that will be undertaken over the coming years. It is informed by the 2017 Stock Modelling and Health Impact Assessment (HIA) carried out by the Building Research Establishment (BRE). These models make use of the vast amount of data now accessible and more widely available, to give us a clear picture of the condition of the housing stock in Watford. These models have shaped and influenced the Private Sector Housing Renewal policy. It gives us a clear picture of the condition of the housing stock in Watford.
- 1.3 In summary, the principles of intervention remain largely unchanged but the new policy adds some clarity to the current priorities and the tools used to deliver it. The updated policy, and importantly the data used to inform it, give officers the structure, corporate governance and approvals needed; underpinned with the evidence from the BRE to support future project bids and the development of initiatives to achieve the Policy aims.
- 1.4 The Policy is not seeking additional resource in itself. It is believed that the current resourcing is sufficient to provide the reactive services and small scale match funding for projects as they emerge. There is no evidence that reactive services are not performing sufficiently and planned changes to the statutory licensing regime later this year will reinforce this and be self-funding. The performance relating to licensing, housing complaints, the Warmer Homes initiative and the Street Improvement Project in Cassio Road demonstrate this.
- 1.5 In terms of proactive and larger scale projects the proposal is that either through the annual service planning process or ad hoc as external opportunities arise, projects and bid for funds will be quickly assimilated to meet the Policy aim and priorities. This approach recognises the reality of how funding is now accessed and that we have the evidence of need, the proven track record of delivery, the links and

partnerships as well as the capability to operate in this way. For this reason the Policy does not contain an action plan. Actions/projects will be contained within service plans as has previously been the case.

- 1.6 The aim of this policy is to improve and maintain housing standards to support an accessible private sector housing stock in an environment which promotes health, wellbeing and sustainability; which is targeted to those most in need.
- 1.7 The basis for all assistance is to remove or reduce housing related defects that are detrimental to an occupant’s health, in terms of physical and mental wellbeing.
- 1.8 This policy supports the Councils vision in the Corporate Plan, contributing to its priorities; namely its number one priority to manage the borough’s housing needs as well as its priorities to champion smart growth and economic prosperity by helping homes to become more efficient, with cheaper bills and to provide for the boroughs vulnerable and disadvantaged communities. It forms part of the Councils Housing Strategy 2015-2020.

2.0 Risks

2.1 Nature of Risk	Consequence	Suggested Control Measures	Response <i>(Treat, tolerate, terminate, transfer)</i>	Risk Rating (the combination of severity and likelihood)
The general condition of the private housing stock decreases	Negative impact on the health of Watford residents. Negative perceptions of Watford and blighting of area. Inability to place homeless within private sector stock	Continue monitoring condition through BRE reports as planned through existing contract for next two years. Continue existing enforcement/enabling measures. Implement the impending extension to the statutory licensing regime for HMOs. Continue the development, implementation and proactive use of	Tolerate	4

		Residential Premises Module – the new case management system for monitoring private sector housing work in Environmental Health.		
Challenge to conditions attached to financial assistance	Reputational risk. Spending of limited funds on people/schemes that are not a priority. Failure to recoup funds after completion of the scheme.	Conditions and definitions are well tested and match the “vulnerable” definitions commonly used. No legal challenge to previous policy.	Tolerate	2
Failure to have the capacity, evidence, governance arrangements to access external funding for projects.	Inability to influence and improve through targeting the housing stock and health impacts.	Approved Policy setting the principles. Approval of new schemes via PFH within the scope of the Policy. Maintain data and database of work and outcomes to provide evidence. Maintain relationships, links and participation in local and national groups and initiatives.	Tolerate	4

3.0 Recommendations

- 3.1 To approve the new policy for publication and implementation from 1st April 2018. Note that the changes to the Policy do not apply retrospectively to any applicants currently progressing through the grant/loan process.
- 3.2 To approve the delegation to the Head of Community and Environmental Services

decisions in relation to changes in government policy and definitions. This enables the policy to stay aligned with any changes to the Affordable Warmth group, Housing Benefit and Watford's Council Tax Reduction Scheme definitions, subject to these changes still delivering the principles and aims of the policy. To be clear this delegation does not allow for changes in provision/services.

Contact Officer:

For further information on this report please contact: Neil Walker, Energy & Renewal Surveyor

Telephone extension: 01923 278149 email: neil.walker@watford.gov.uk

Report approved by: Ayaz Maqsood, Head of Housing

4.0 Detailed proposal

4.1 This Policy sets out how Watford Borough Council will seek to improve housing standards within the borough. In general terms this includes:

- Works to remove of category 1 hazards as identified under the [Health & Hazard Safety Rating System](#) to create safer homes and safer housing environments.
- Enabling and encouraging access to home interventions (social prescribing and the linking and referring to voluntary and charitable services).
- Improving to achieve affordable and warm homes (safe, warm housing)
- Improving suitability and accessibility (including regular repairs, adaptations and support to handyperson services)
- Housing Support (enabling people to continue to live independently in their home).

4.2 The policy enables the delivery of 4 key aims:

1. Improve the health and wellbeing of the borough's residents through housing improvement; with a focus on those most in need (vulnerable households)
2. To improve the Energy Efficiency to the Boroughs housing
3. Continuation of the enforcement of housing standards in the Private Rented Sector
4. Continued provision of Disabled Facilities Grants (and a supported service to deliver them)

4.3 To achieve the most outcomes the council will continue to:

- Encourage homeowners and landlords to maintain and invest in their own property, thus protecting their asset (and its value) in the longer term.
- Target and recycle limited public funds at the most vulnerable households living in the worst housing conditions by providing a framework of

support based on enforcement and interest free loans.

- Utilise partnership working to lever in further funds for improvement works to increase project capabilities and improve service delivery. For example ECO monies, health monies and/or other grant funding.
- Continue to collect and use evidence, data and intelligence about the borough to target funding and enforcement, including information to inform the equalities agenda and the equalities impact assessment for this policy.
- Address small works at an early stage to prevent deterioration of properties in the future and to improve home safety and health.
- Proactively approaching priority households to assess the need for enforcement or services. For example by doing pro-active work in areas with high numbers of poor quality rented accommodation.
- Proactively targeting properties, areas and owners where accommodation presents the highest risk to health and safety of occupants and the most negative impact on local communities. For example area or ward action, rented properties, HMOs, etc.
- Focus resources on tackling issues of corporate importance and move to a targeted approach based on annual plans contained within the Environmental Health & Licensing Service Plan and Housing Service policies.
- Although some place must be given to a reactive service, we aim for 70% of resources to be allocated as a result of proactive prioritisation, planned visits and programs.

Housing conditions according to BRE modelling

- 4.4 This policy update has been informed by the 2017 Stock Modelling and Health Impact Assessment (HIA) carried out by the Building Research Establishment (BRE). These models give the council a far more accurate and detailed assessment of housing in the borough than has previously been available. In conjunction with this modelling, information has been taken from our own data sources (for example council benefit recipient records) as well as incorporating updates and influences of current legislation.
- 4.5 A summary of the BRE modelling is included in Appendices B and C of this report.
- 4.6 Over the last 10 years there has been significant growth in Watford's population and dwelling numbers, as well as the proportion of homes within the rented sector. Modelling shows that Watford has 39,157 dwellings. Of these 56% are owner occupied, 28% private rented and 16% are social rented.

- 4.7 The rented sector has a higher proportion of fuel poverty and lower income households as well as having an increased element of disrepair in these properties. These issues can be worse within the Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO's), which represent 4% of the housing stock in Watford.

Housing and health

- 4.8 There is evidence which shows the strong link between poor housing and poor physical and mental health. The government's white paper "[Choosing Health](#)" states that the key to success in health inequalities will be effective local partnerships led by Council's and the NHS working to a common purpose. Housing is a key determinant of health, and poor housing conditions continue to cause preventable deaths and contribute to health inequalities.
- 4.9 In order to inform the effect of housing hazards and intervention strategies the Council also commissioned BRE to undertake a Health Impact Assessment. Headlines include:
- There are estimated to be 6,670 category 1 hazards within the private sector stock and 2,326 are within the private rented sector.
 - The estimated cost of mitigating all the hazards is £11.6 million with £4.4 million in the private rented sector.
 - If the hazards are mitigated the annual savings to society are £10 million, including £1.1 million to the NHS. £3.6 million of these savings are generated from the private rented sector.
- 4.10 BRE state: "The return on investment when all hazards are mitigated may seem rather limited and modest. However, this report considers a number of different scenarios where the mitigation of different hazards and mitigation costs are further investigated to identify more compelling scenarios. For example, mitigating all damp and mould hazards in the owner occupied stock would cost approximately £299,448. The least costly half of all these hazards could be mitigated by investing around £19,845 per year for 5 years. The return on investment, or payback period, when costs to society are considered is 4 years; therefore, 4 years after the repairs are carried out, the savings to society will be greater than the mitigation costs. For falls associated with baths, all hazards in the owner occupied sector could be mitigated for £171,877. This would save the NHS £59,920 per year thus giving a payback period of less than 3 years."
- This detail of how to achieve results and the principles of targeting both in relation to "people" and "areas/type of properties" are translated into the policy. The data and ability to show pay back and cost benefits are critical for the bidding for funding necessary to support activities.
- 4.11 **The recommendations from the BRE as a result of their study of Watford are:**
- Services to assist owner occupiers in relation to falls and excess cold should be provided;

- The use of a handy persons service or Home Improvement Agency are important in enabling services;
- Increasing professionals knowledge of landlord responsibilities, hazards and referral pathways is important to mitigating hazards for all and especially for children;
- An active enforcement strategy is necessary;
- Landlord accreditation can help to educate landlords; and,
- Targeting work to reduce falls for the over 60s will bring great benefits.

- 4.12 All of these recommendations are represented and addressed within the Policy and proposed services with the exception of the landlord accreditation scheme. At present it is not thought to be a high priority to progress accreditation given the high demand for housing within the area. Education of landlords is however a priority and so landlord engagement and training are included. Further details are shown in Appendix C.
- 4.13 With limited resources the policy seeks to enable added value and greater impact by making use of external and other sources of funding in conjunction with exploiting the opportunities to work with our partners. The Council already has an excellent track record in this area such as using Energy Company Obligation money and government grants and initiatives to improve housing conditions in Watford.

Examples of a project based approach

- 4.14 The last 10 years have seen 6 projects delivering around £6.5 million of capital work to externally insulate houses in project areas such as Boundary Way and the Harebreaks estate (where incidence of fuel poverty is higher than some other areas of the borough). The majority of the funding (£6.5m) was sourced externally with WBC contributions making up around £0.5 million. Over 700 properties (both private and LA) have been improved through such schemes creating fuel bill savings to residents of £183,000 and 775 tonnes of CO2 annually.
- 4.15 The Street Improvement project in Cassio Road; where £22,500 of capital funding from the council levered in £62,500 from public health and £20,000 from the Police and Crime Commissioner and various other support from private and public/charity organisations as well as business and landlord contributions to works. This resulted in 100% of rented properties being inspected and 100% of category 1 hazards being removed.
- 4.16 The current Herts Warmer Homes project that Watford has led on developing across Hertfordshire has levered in over £0.5 million spend in Herts to reduce the risks of excessive cold in homes with WBC contributing £12,000.
- 4.17 The policy seeks to maximise the number of people it helps by enabling targeted, project

based approaches for some of the assistance. Alongside this project based approach, other individual grants and loans will be for our most vulnerable residents, with applications for assistance via a referral from a housing or health based professional.

4.18 The policy includes the influences and themes that came from the internal and external (public) consultation that took place via surveys. 177 responses were received with a summary of the findings detailed within the policy document.

4.19 As well as making substantial savings to the NHS and to society, this policy has the potential to improve economic prosperity and also reduce the demands for services provided by the Council.

4.20 **The Principles that are being applied in the development of tools and interventions are:**

- **Responsibility:**

The owner is responsible for repair and maintenance and needs to make provision for this. This policy will aim to enable residents to improve their housing through enabling, facilitation and encouragement.

- **Prevention:**

The Council will provide advice, information and facilitation to sustain the housing stock and help owners' prioritize their investment in repairs and improvement. Pro-active work will be used to meet this principle.

- **Targeting:**

By targeting to those clients, areas, properties, sectors and themes most in need the policy works to make use of more effective re-sourcing. Pro-active work will be used to concentrate on particular needs and opportunities (for example where external funding is available or a health priority has been identified).

The policy will be delivered by:

- A Project Based Approach – to make use of scale of economies and best use of resources. Projects also encourage and lend themselves to additionality achieved through external funding.
- Working with individuals most in need due to their vulnerabilities. This is to provide a very specific targeted approach through professional referrals and be tailored to individual needs. This is a move away from a reactive service based on set criteria.

- **Partnership:**

The Council will continue to work with partners; to develop and make use of partnership working to optimize resource and bring added value to projects. Partners may be internal departments within the council or external partners (such as Watford Community Housing Trust or

Public Health as examples).

- **Fairness, transparency, consistency and accessibility:**
Council policy and action will aim to be fair, transparent, consistent and accessible.
- **Linkage with strategic aims and objectives:**
Private Sector Housing renewal work aims to reflect national, regional and local priorities and policies; including those detailed within this policy.
- **Wider community benefit:**
The work undertaken aims to impact on the wider community where possible, having a broader impact. Examples may be where aesthetic housing improvements help to improve wellbeing or where energy efficiency measures reduce fuel bills; helping to increase resident prosperity and reduce poverty.
- **Choice:**
The Council aims to provide choices and create incentives for private sector owners, landlords and occupiers to encourage responsibility and self-empowerment.
- **Prudent use of Council resources (including the recycling of money, cost recovery and income generation for services):**
 - Encouraging homeowners to use own resources first.
 - Provide targeted loans to release equity where vulnerable households are in poor and unhealthy homes.
 - Grant aid will be targeted at vulnerable and low income groups and/or those identified within project areas or criteria.
 - Recycling assistance through charges on property (or works in default where enforcement is used).
 - Charging for enforcement action where the legislation allows.
 - Charging fees to help keep discretionary services within this policy sustainable
 - Covering the cost of HMO licensing through ensuring that the fees charged are at a cost recovery level.
 - Development of assisted housing application policy and resource (for example charging fees for aiding an HMO license application).

4.21 **Enforcement**

In relation to enforcement; we continue to operate within our service standards of responding to all complaints/enquiries within 3 days and visiting all homes that may have hazards (319 initial enquiries in the last 12 months). In addition we continue to monitor and process HMO licences; currently 114 which compares well to the BRE estimate of 120. All enforcement is undertaken within the controls of the Environmental Health and Licensing Compliance Policy adopted by the Council. The Council have a proven track record of tackling landlords who do not comply with several successful prosecutions including a custodial sentence.

4.22 We have considered the planned introduction of further mandatory licensing for all HMOs with five or more residents nationally later this year. This will be self funding and when further details are confirmed a plan for implementation will be produced. The plan will not require any reduction in core services or growth bid. Given that Watford previously had a Registration scheme for all HMOs we think properties and landlords in Watford will be in a good position in comparison to other areas to comply with requirements. This is not to say that there are not properties that require improvements, officers are however confident in the processes, competency and capacity to respond. One area that is a focus is to promote and increase understanding of the legal requirements and services/powers of the council in relation to housing standards to other professionals. This will increase referrals and help to safeguard vulnerable residents. Work is also underway to promote services to those residents who may be less likely to approach authority for assistance.

4.23 The Portfolio Holder has approved the use of civil penalties for low level housing offences and these are incorporated within the Compliance Policy. The Service plan for the Environmental Health and Licensing (EH&L) team includes plans to develop the use of any national database of rogue landlords and banning order that may also be introduced this year. This year a case management system for residential premises functions in EH&L has been implemented and will go fully live on 1.4.18. This will allow for full work flow monitoring and reporting; including outcomes in relation to hazards and cost savings. This will enable very effective reporting and monitoring of performance.

4.24 Assistance is to be delivered through the following summary:

Assistance	Qualification	Finance Offer	For
Safer Homes Grant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Referral by a health or housing professional (not open to general resident applications) Be eligible to qualify under the governments vulnerable definition as indicated by the affordable warmth group with the addition of Housing Benefit and Watford's Council tax reduction OR in exceptional circumstances for consideration of the grants panel and whereby a loan is not appropriate (and the applicant is deemed as vulnerable or susceptible to a health condition and there 	Up to £1,000 Grant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Removal of HHSRS Hazards Prevention of Category 1 HHSRS Hazards Work that leads to the enabling of HHSRS hazard mitigation Housing defect rectification that alleviates an individual's state of physical, mental and social well-being As an incentive tool to encourage take up of other assistance such as a Safer Homes Loan or to engage vulnerable residents to work with other external

	is a housing related defect that that could lead to a class 1 or 2 harm outcome due to age or infirmity as defined under HHSRS guidance		agencies and services
Safer Homes Loan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referral by a health or housing professional (not open to general open applications) • Be part of the governments vulnerable definition as indicated by the affordable warmth group with the addition of Housing Benefit and Watford's Council tax reduction 	Up to £10,000 loan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removal of HHSRS Hazards • Prevention of Category 1 HHSRS hazards • Work that leads to the enabling of HHSRS hazard mitigation • Housing defect rectification that alleviates an individual's state of physical, mental and social well-being
Project Loan or grant	<p>Determined by the scope of the project; (prior set and published) limited to housing related defects or improvements and include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geographically set dependent upon the project target outcomes • Have consideration to and have set criteria around an appropriate level of the applicant or tenants income • Be match funded supplementary to other sources of funding • Only be available within the private housing sector 	Up to £5,000 Loan or grant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To top up or provide supplementary funding where other sources of funding have been used first • To enable property improvements where the housing condition is detrimental to the occupants health and wellbeing
Trusted Advice	All Residents	Advice	Help with trusted builder schemes and housing advice / support with applications. General advice on building works

4.25 Fees and charges

The principle within this policy is to charge cost recovery fees on Safer Homes Loans (where the resident has an interest free loan recoverable at point of sale of the property) and Project Grants or Loans (which may be provided to the 'able to pay' sector) where appropriate.

4.26 Safer Homes Grants are considered too small in nature and unreasonable for vulnerable clients to have the additional burden to fund. The Safer Homes Loan or Project Loan/Grant would incorporate fees which are added to the cost of the loan and put as a charge on the property. The fee, for administration and assessment of the loan, which is a non-statutory service, is repayable in the same terms as the loan itself and remains interest free.

4.27 In relation to charges for licensing and enforcement, these are already detailed in the approved Fees and Charges. These include charges for services of formal notices and we will always seek full cost recovery on prosecutions – although these are very infrequent and will very likely be less in the future now we have the ability to issue civil penalties. In addition to charges for statutory services, we also now offer consultancy and advice services for property owners on a commercial basis. This could include providing design advice and schedules of work for upgrading of HMOs that maximize their use.

4.28 Fees will be subject to changes via the delegated authority function of this policy in accordance with council policy and procedure on fees and charges. The current fee proposal from the operational date of the policy (1st April 2018) is set at 10% of the net figure or at a fixed rate of £375 (whichever is the cheaper).

4.29 **Review and performance**

In terms of performance against the Policy, all projects will have agreed objectives and outcomes that will be monitored and measured through the Service plan. Routine work will be monitored through the new case management system and an annual update brought to portfolio holders on performance. The stock condition will be updated annually through the BRE contract in place to ensure we remain focused on the priority issues and can revise the Policy if necessary. It is planned to develop performance indicators for the next financial year.

Implications

5.0 **Financial**

5.1 The Shared Director of Finance comments that;

5.2 There are no additional financial commitments for the council through approval to the update of this existing policy.

5.3 Financial expenditure in the form of the assistance given through the policy is to be met from the existing assigned capital budget (WAJ 300 X2029).

5.4 It is noted that within the Private Sector Renewal Policy Update discretionary financial assistance is only offered subject to the availability of funding and that assistance may therefore be put on hold or withdrawn at any time.

6.0 **Legal Issues** (Monitoring Officer)

6.1 The Head of Democracy and Governance comments that the under the Housing Act 2004 the Council is legally obliged to keep under review its policy and the condition of the housing stock in its area

7.0 **Equalities/Human Rights**

7.1 An Equality Impact Analysis has been carried out in regard to the council's obligations under s149, which has considered Equalities/Human Rights issues.

7.2 The findings of the EIA show that the policy is non-discriminatory in its nature being open to all vulnerable residents and those considered 'able to pay'. The Council does not expect the presence of any protected characteristics to influence the actions of any officers in their implementation of the policy. There are a number of positive impacts; seeking referrals from all sectors of the community through a move to health professional based referrals, inclusivity in a geographical area for project based work and enhanced support to live safely and independently for those accessing Disabled Facilities Grants through the newly formed Herts Home Improvement Agency. One potential negative impact has been identified with associated mitigation; that underrepresented minority groups could still potentially be excluded from the assistance offered. This is mitigated by the referrals moving to a health professional based referral approach and by promotion and training with health professionals and community groups so they are aware of the assistance offered and that professionals make referrals from all sectors of the community.

7.3 Overall it will have a positive impact, by supporting all sectors of the community to improve and maintain housing conditions in the area.

7.4 The Human Rights Act 1998 which gives effect to the human rights set out in the European Convention on Human Rights has been considered with particular regard to Article 8, the right to respect for private life, family life and the home and Article 14, prohibition of discrimination. Essentially, the policy does not seek to interfere with these rights and freedoms but instead to support and assist in the improvement and

maintenance of housing in the area and thereby promoting health and wellbeing of our communities.

8.0 **Staffing**

8.1 There are no additional staffing requirements required to implement and deliver this policy.

9.0 **Accommodation**

9.1 There are no additional accommodation requirements required to implement and deliver this policy.

10.0 **Community Safety/Crime and Disorder**

10.1 There are no crime and disorder implications through the approval of this policy.

11.0 **Sustainability**

11.1 The policy principles and priorities are designed to both financially and environmentally achieve sustainability of the policy objectives and outcomes.

Appendices

Appendix A – Private Sector Renewal Policy 2018

Appendix B – Summary of BRE Stock Modelling Report for Watford

Appendix C – Summary of BRE Health Impact Assessment for Watford

Appendix D - Equality impact assessment for the PSR Policy

Background Papers

- Various background papers, reports and information were used to develop and support the Private Sector Renewal Policy update. These are listed throughout the policy with hyperlinks and also listed on the last page of the policy document.

File Reference

E:\Functions\Housing\PSR Policy update 2018

PRIVATE SECTOR RENEWAL POLICY

Update April 2018



For further information contact the Environmental Health and Licensing Service, Town Hall, Watford, Hertfordshire, WD17 3EX
Telephone **01923 278503** or email envhealth@watford.gov.uk

watford.gov.uk



[watfordcouncil](https://www.watfordcouncil.gov.uk)



WATFORD
BOROUGH
COUNCIL

Contents

1.0	Executive Summary.....	1
Background to the Update of the Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy		
1.1	Background to the Update of the Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy.....	4
1.2	Key Housing Strategy Policy Areas and Influences to the Housing Agenda.....	6
1.2.1	Private rented sector.....	6
1.2.2	Central Government policy on addressing health inequalities.....	6
1.2.3	Regional strategy on addressing health inequality - Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategies.....	7
1.2.4	Energy Act 2011.....	9
1.2.5	Empty homes.....	9
1.2.6	Housing Act 2004.....	9
1.2.7	The Housing and Planning Act 2016.....	10
1.2.8	The Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm (England) Regulations 2015.....	10
1.2.9	The Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016 and the Welfare Reform Act 2012.....	11
1.2.10	Localism Act 2011.....	11
1.2.11	Energy Efficiency - The Energy Company Obligation (ECO).....	12
1.2.12	The Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA).....	12
1.2.13	Fuel Poverty Strategy.....	13
Building Research Establishment Modelling		
2.0	BRE Modelling.....	15
Consultation		
3.0	Consultation Analysis.....	17
3.1	Survey with Watford residents.....	17
3.2	The Internal Survey (Council staff).....	18
Structure, Aim, Framework and Principles of the policy		
4.0	Structure of the policy.....	21
5.0	Policy Aim.....	21
6.0	Policy Framework.....	21
6.1	The Councils Vision.....	21
7.0	Policy Principles and Priorities.....	22
7.1	Principles.....	22
7.2	Priorities.....	24
8.0	Discussion and Reasons for Choosing These Priorities & Principles.....	25
Policy Delivery		
9.0	Targeting resources to achieve policy priorities.....	32
10.0	Tools to achieve the Policy.....	33
10.1	Promoting and Enabling.....	33
10.2	Direct Assistance Offered Through the Policy.....	35
10.2.1	Discretionary Assistance.....	35
10.2.2	Safer Homes Grant (SHG).....	37

10.2.3	Safer Homes loan (SHL).....	38
10.2.4	Project Loan or Grant (PL or PG).....	39
10.3	Trusted Advice	42
10.4	Mandatory Assistance.....	42
10.4.1	Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG's – Mandatory Direct Financial Assistance).....	42
10.4.2.1	Rented Properties (private and social).....	43
11.0	Fees and Charges	44
12.0	Eligibility and Conditions for Assistance.....	44
12.1	Applications for Assistance in Exceptional Circumstances.....	44
Service Standards		
13.0	Service Standards.....	45
14.0	Complaints and Appeals.....	45
14.1	Complaints	45
14.2	Appeals.....	46
15.0	Review of this policy	47
Appendices		
	APPENDIX A - CONDITIONS FOR ALL FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE	48
	APPENDIX B - CONDITIONS FOR SAFER HOMES GRANT (SHG).....	53
	APPENDIX C - SAFER HOMES LOAN (SHL)	55
	APPENDIX D - PROJECT LOAN/GRANT.....	58
	APPENDIX E - DISPOSAL	59
	APPENDIX F - DEFINITION OF VULNERABLE.....	61
	APPENDIX G - CONSULTATION (summary).....	55

1.0 Executive Summary

This policy is an update to the Watford Borough Council's Private Sector Renewal Policy which was last updated in 2006. The 2006 surveys principles and approach were informed by the 2004 stock condition survey information. This current update uses the very detailed 2017 Stock Modelling and a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) carried out for the council by the Building Research Establishment (BRE). The stock modelling makes use of the vast amount of data about homes in the borough now accessible and more widely available and gives the council a much clearer picture of the condition of the housing stock in Watford.

Headline modelling shows that Watford has 39,157 dwellings. Of these 56% are owner occupied, 28% private rented and 16% are social rented. Over the last 10 years there has been significant growth in Watford's population and dwelling numbers, as well as the proportion of homes within the rented sector. The rented sector has a higher proportion of fuel poverty and lower income households than owner occupied dwellings. In addition the private rented sector dwellings have an increased element of disrepair. These issues are further exasperated within the Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO's), which represent 4% of the housing stock in Watford.

There is now evidence which shows the strong link between poor housing and poor physical and mental health. The government's white paper "[Choosing Health](#)" states that the key to success in health inequalities will be effective local partnerships led by councils and the NHS working to a common purpose. Housing is a key determinant of health, and poor housing conditions continue to cause preventable deaths and contribute to health inequalities. In Watford (and nationally) 'Falls' and 'Excess cold' are by far the most common housing related defects in the home that affect health.

The aim of this policy is to improve and maintain private sector housing standards in Watford, to promote health, wellbeing and sustainability in which available resources are targeted at those most in need.

The basis for all assistance is to remove or reduce housing related defects that are detrimental to an occupant's health, in terms of physical and mental wellbeing.

This policy supports the Councils vision in the Corporate Plan and contributes to its priorities, namely, its number one priority to manage the borough's housing needs as well as providing for its vulnerable and disadvantaged communities. It also contributes to the priority of championing smart growth and economic prosperity by helping homes to become more energy efficient with cheaper bills. This policy forms part of the council's Housing Strategy 2015-2020.

With limited resources the policy seeks to provided added value and greater impact by making use of external and other sources of funding in conjunction with exploiting the opportunities to work with our partners. The council already has an excellent track record in this area such as using Energy Company Obligation funding and government grants and initiatives to improve housing conditions in Watford. Current financial

assistance is limited in its reach and ability to help large numbers of residents. To broaden the number of people it can help, the policy will use a pro-active project based approach for some of the financial assistance. . The council now has more information available on housing conditions in the borough and can specifically target projects based on housing characteristics and household need. Alongside this project based approach, other individual grants and loans will be targeted at our most vulnerable residents with applications for assistance via a referral from a housing or health based professional.

As well as making substantial savings to the NHS and to society, this policy has the potential to improve economic prosperity and also reduce the demands for services provided by the council.

Background to the Update of the Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy

1.1 Background to the Update of the Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy

Watford Borough Council's first Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy (PSHRP) was written, following the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance, England and Wales) Order 2002, was adopted in April 2003. A revision followed in 2006. It was developed using mainly information from a Private Sector House Condition Survey, last carried out in 2004.

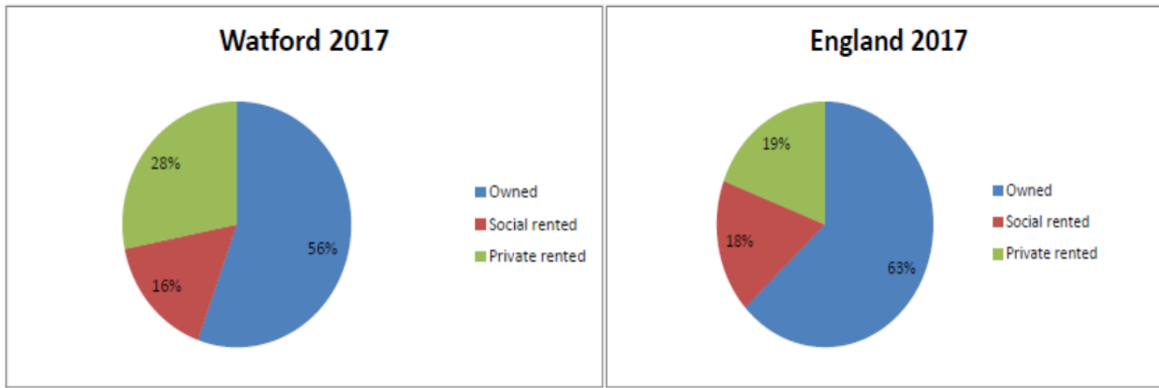
Under the [Housing Act 2004](#) Local Authorities are required to understand the condition of their housing stock and to develop strategies/approaches to address issues of concern. The Act states that: *"A Local Authority (LA) must keep the housing conditions in their area under review with a view to identifying any action that may need to be taken by them"*.

Since 2006 there is now significantly more data available, both freely and for purchase on aspects of housing in local authority (LA) areas. The council also keeps its own records on housing conditions in the borough and has incorporated it into its Geographical Information System (GIS) mapping. Making use of this wealth of data, the BRE has developed an alternative to the traditional House Condition Survey, known as the Housing Stock Modelling Service. This modelling adds to our own information and is used in conjunction with a number of recognised high quality national surveys and data sources, including the English House Condition Survey. Data is then extrapolated down to the local area level by establishing relationships between the national survey data and local area data such as the census and credit rating data. The BRE report provides statistical information about housing conditions and the occupants of those houses which can then be used to inform local housing strategies, policies and programmes. Further information on the survey is referenced in 1.3 and throughout this policy.

The council also commissioned BRE to produce a Health Impact Assessment (HIA). The HIA report highlights the potential impact of intervention measures, shows the likely savings in terms of health costs and provides a cost benefit analysis of interventions over a 10 year period. The HIA will be a useful tool in evaluating outcomes of activities under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 including the impact of Health & Wellbeing Boards' activities.

The BRE 2017 stock model identified a number of housing statistics which have been referenced throughout this document. Headline modelling shows that Watford has 39,157 dwellings. Of these 56% are owner occupied, 28% private rented and 16% are social rented. There has been a large increase in the number of dwellings over the last 10 years (a 10% increase compared to Hertfordshire and England averages at 6%).

The greatest change in dwelling tenure is in the private rented sector. Compared to the region and England averages Watford's private rented sector is more in keeping with a London based authority, which relates to the position of the town as a commuting borough and is reflected in the high costs of housing in Watford.



Increases to Watford's population have also been ahead of national and regional averages. In the same 10 year period 2007 to 2017 there has been a 14% increase to 96,800 people, compared to 8% growth for the east of England and a 7% increase for Great Britain.

The population increases in Watford are being supported in part by significant large scale housing developments that are in the process of being built. Some of these include:

- 1) The proposed housing developed by Hart Homes - a joint venture partnership between the council and Watford Community Housing Trust. This scheme received planning for 36 residential apartments and 40 dwellings for temporary accommodation (built on the land off Tolpits Lane in Watford). The apartments include a mixture of one- and two-bedroom homes, the majority of which will be available for affordable rent.
- 2) 408 Homes and a retirement village are planned at the first development for the Riverwell site (part of the Watford Health Campus site).
- 3) Watford Junction and Clarendon Road schemes have proposals and pre planning applications for flats and a high rise development (The building will be 23 stories, providing 154 new homes).
- 4) A proposal for nearly 500 homes in Ascot Road (including a tower block).

Some of the developments are also complemented by policies such as the Build to Rent and the New Homes Bonus are aimed at increasing the supply of properties. As the private rented sector is already growing in Watford it is reasonable to assume that many of the new properties being built will be rented to private tenants. This is likely to increase the demand for services placed upon the Council in this area.

1.2 Key Housing Strategy Policy Areas and Influences to the Housing Agenda

1.2.1 Private rented sector

There has been significant growth in the private rented sector in Watford in recent years, from 9% of the total stock in 2001 to 21% in 2011. The sector now stands at 28% in 2017. National statistics data estimates England’s average to have had a 19% growth.

The BRE data shows us that in Watford the private rented sector is broadly the same as the owner occupied sector in terms of the proportion of properties containing category 1 hazards (15% against 16%). However there are more noticeable differences between the private rented and owner occupied sectors on disrepair, proportions of low income households and those in fuel poverty. The private rented sector performs less favorably in all these areas compared to the owner occupiers. This is shown in the table below:

	Private Sector Stock in Watford			
	Owner Occupied		Private Rented	
	No	%	No	%
No of dwellings	21,747	-	11,040	-
Disrepair	592	3%	527	5%
Fuel Poverty (Low income, high cost)	1,058	5%	1,151	10%
Low income households	1,633	8%	1,490	13%

Another area often associated with low income and fuel poor households are Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs). Watford has an estimated 1,600 HMOs. This number is above the national average but not unexpected for the area as it is influenced by high housing demand and housing costs associated with London and the south.

In Watford the proportions of households on low income and who are in fuel poverty within the stock as a whole are between 3% and 4%. Within the HMOs the proportions of households in these categories is significantly higher at 14% and 15%.

1.2.2 Central Government policy on addressing health inequalities

The government's white paper "[Choosing Health](#)" states that the key to success in health inequalities will be effective local partnerships led by local government and the NHS working to a common purpose. Housing is a key determinant of health, and poor housing conditions continue to cause preventable deaths and contribute to health inequalities. This is set out in the report '[The health impacts of poor private sector housing, LACORS, 2010](#)'.

It has been recognised by central government that to fully address the health needs of the population, services need to become more integrated and there needs to be better communication between different providers. Housing is a key aspect of this.

The report, [Integrated Care: Our Shared Commitment, Department of Health, 2013](#), states that "Many people with mental and physical disabilities, complex needs, long-term conditions and terminal illness also need to access different health care, social care,

housing and other services, such as education, and often simultaneously".

It is therefore essential that departments providing or regulating housing work with other council departments and health organisations to provide services that are integrated and take full account of the needs of the individual.

The Public Health Outcomes Framework, "[Healthy lives, healthy people: Improving outcomes and supporting transparency](#)", sets out desired outcomes for public health and how they will be measured. Local authorities must have regard to these documents in the exercise of their public health functions.

Many of the measurements have links to housing, some of the more relevant being:

- Falls and injuries in over 65's
- Fuel poverty
- Excess winter deaths

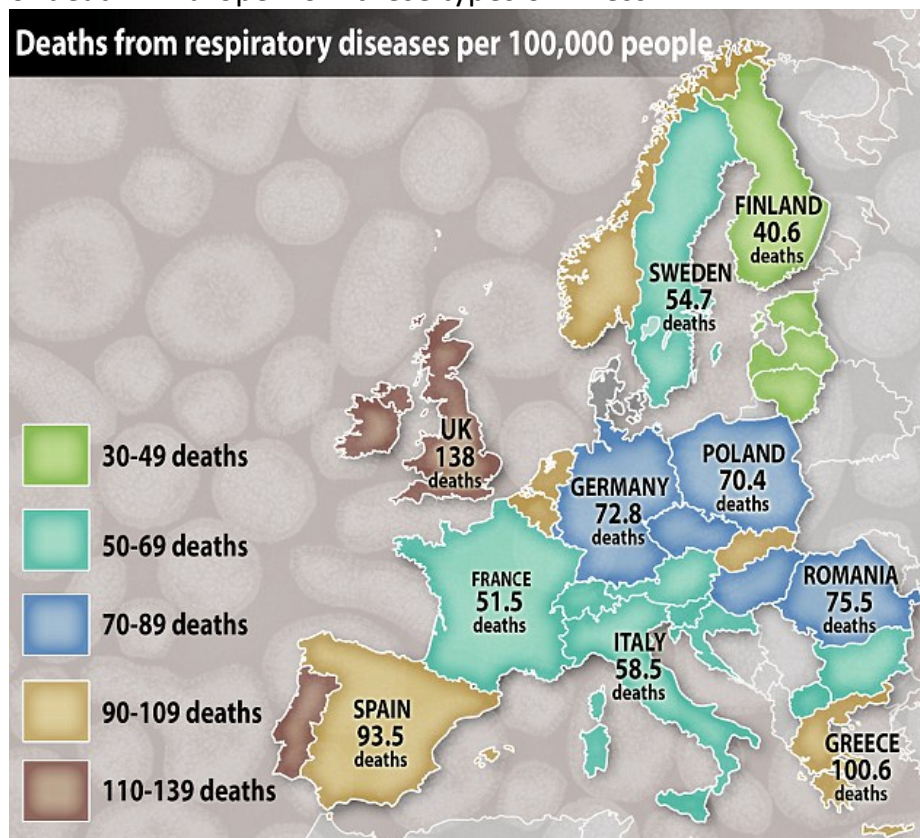
1.2.3 Regional strategy on addressing health inequality - Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategies

Hertfordshire County Council's JSNA and Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy require local Health and Wellbeing boards to analyse the health needs of their local populations and decide how to make best use of collective resources to achieve the priorities that are formed from these. (See the Department of Health document [Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and joint health and wellbeing strategies explained - Commissioning for populations](#)).

Hertfordshire's current [JNSA](#) profiles that are most relevant to Housing are:

- a) [Housing Quality & Health](#) which outlines the evidence of poor housing and its association with poor physical and mental health. In Watford around 14% (5,640) of properties have a category 1 hazard and 1,215 properties have an incidence of disrepair (both comparing similarly to the national average).
- b) [Environmental Health](#) Practitioners (EHPs). Environmental Health practitioners and Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) operate at a district level and are the only health practitioners in local government who view health holistically, focusing on maintaining health rather than curing illness. Their professional strength lies in the ability to make essential links between environmental stressors and ill health prevention. Their role includes the enforcement of housing standards and therefore they have a key part to play in maintaining and improving quality of life and contributing to a range of health outcomes. Poor quality housing can have significant negative effects on many health problems including respiratory illness, hypothermia, heart attacks and strokes. These negative effects have more significance for older vulnerable people, for example, conditions such as arthritis can be exacerbated by cold and damp conditions which in turn increase the risk of falls. Associated stress and anxiety caused by substandard housing can also increase the risk of mental health conditions. Cold or overcrowded

conditions can have negative effects on children’s educational development and achievement which presents a risk for their long-term opportunities of sustained employment. [The cold weather plan for England](#) underlines the link between poor housing standards and health by noting that “Cold temperatures predominantly affect older age groups, children and those with chronic illnesses ... it is thought that about 40% of cold-related mortality is due to cardiovascular disease and 33% to respiratory disease”¹ Data shows that compared with the rest of Europe, the UK has high rates of excess winter deaths and associated disease exacerbated by the cold. The map below compares deaths from respiratory diseases across Europe. The UK has the highest rates of death in Europe from these types of illness.



From an [article](#) depicting how the UK compares to Europe – Deaths from respiratory diseases

- c) [Respiratory Diseases](#) JSNA Needs Assessment in Hertfordshire states these are very common and a major cause of disability and premature mortality. It is the third leading cause of death in England after circulatory disease and cancer. It is also one of the principal reasons for emergency admission to hospital and as a result, it accounts for a substantial proportion of NHS expenditure.

¹ Public Health England/NHS England, 2017, “The Cold Weather Plan for England: Protecting health and reducing harm from cold weather”, Pg 15

1.2.4 Energy Act 2011

The [Energy Act 2011](#) required that from 2016 reasonable requests by tenants for energy efficiency improvements will not be able to be refused. Furthermore from 2018 it will be unlawful for landlords to rent out properties that do not reach a minimum standard of energy efficiency (Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of an F or a G). In Watford approximately 11,000 (28%) of dwellings are private rented, including 1,600 HMOs. Of these there are an estimated 618 private rented properties having an F/G rating.

1.2.5 Empty homes

The council provides The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG - formerly the Department for Communities and Local Government) annual [data on empty homes](#) within the borough, using information from the council tax database.

The latest information submitted as at 3/10/2017 showed 611 homes classed as empty in the borough of which 48 had been vacant for more than 2 years. The figure for all empty homes represent a low vacancy rate of 1.6% whilst homes vacant for more than 2 years make up only 0.1% of all homes in the borough. The low vacancy rate is due to high housing demand in Watford. The council will regularly monitor homes that are empty for more than two years. It will also undertake research to better understand the reasons why these homes remain empty for long periods as well as determine interventions that may be relevant to bring them back into use. The council will continue to deal with empty homes on an individual basis where they are having a negative impact on the neighbourhood.

1.2.6 Housing Act 2004

[The Housing Act](#) sets out the standards and the regulatory role of local authorities to enforce housing standards. Local authority Environmental Health teams carry out the function of ensuring housing standards are met. Under this policy Watford Borough Council's Environmental Health service will seek to work with landlords and wherever possible adopt an informal approach to encouraging compliance with legislation and ensuring their properties meet the required standards. Where this informal approach fails or there is serious threat to health and safety or imminent risk of harm, then appropriate enforcement action will be sought to achieve compliance in line with Environmental Health and Licensing Compliance Policy.

The Housing Act 2004 also covers HMOs. From April 2006 a new set of definitions for HMOs in England were introduced. The definition is complex and the bullet points below, which are adapted from web pages provided by [the National HMO Network](#), provide a summary:

- An entire house or flat which is let to 3 or more tenants who form 2 or more households and who share a kitchen, bathroom or toilet
- A house which has been converted entirely into bed sits or other non-self-contained accommodation and which is let to 3 or more tenants who form two or more households and who share kitchen, bathroom or toilet facilities

- A converted house which contains one or more flats which are not wholly self-contained (i.e. the flat does not contain within it a kitchen, bathroom and toilet) and which is occupied by 3 or more tenants who form two or more households
- A building which is converted entirely into self-contained flats if the conversion did not meet the standards of the 1991 Building Regulations and more than one-third of the flats are let on short-term tenancies

The Government proposes to extend mandatory licensing to cover all relevant HMOs regardless of the number of storeys ([DCLG Government response document](#)). The requirement for the HMO to be occupied by five or more persons in two or more households will remain.

There are an estimated 1,606 HMOs in Watford, of which approximately 120 come under the mandatory licensing scheme using the current definition. Using the proposed new mandatory licensing scheme definition, a further 133 would be required to be licensed making a total of 253 mandatory license HMOs.

1.2.7 The Housing and Planning Act 2016

In terms of tackling housing standards and management in the private rented sector, the [Housing and Planning Act 2016](#) includes a package of measures to help tackle rogue landlords in the private rented sector. This includes:

- Allowing local authorities to apply for a banning order to prevent a particular landlord/letting agent from continuing to operate where they have committed certain housing offences
- Creating a national database of rogue landlords/letting agents, which will be maintained by local authorities
- Allowing tenants or local authorities to apply for a Rent Repayment Order where a landlord has committed certain offences (for example continuing to operate while subject to a banning order or ignoring an improvement notice). If successful, the tenant (or the authority if the tenant was receiving universal credit) may be repaid up to a maximum of 12 months' rent (now enacted)
- Introducing a new regime giving local authorities an alternative to prosecution for offences committed under the Housing Act 2004, including all HMO offences. Effectively local authorities will have a choice whether to prosecute or impose a civil penalty, with a maximum fine of £30,000. The local authority can also retain the money recovered, which is not currently the case with fines imposed in the magistrates' court. The council has developed separate guidelines to this policy to determine the appropriate level of penalties to impose and when these are appropriate to use as opposed to prosecution (now enacted).

1.2.8 The Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm (England) Regulations 2015

Private rented landlords to have at least one smoke alarm installed on every storey of their properties and a carbon monoxide alarm in any room containing a solid fuel burning

appliance (e.g. a coal fire or a wood burning stove). After that, the landlord must make sure the alarms are in working order at the start of each new tenancy. The requirements are enforced by local authorities who can impose a fine of up to £5,000 where a landlord fails to comply with a remedial notice.

1.2.9 The Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016 and the Welfare Reform Act 2012

[The Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016](#) gained royal assent in March 2016 and had the following key provisions:

- Overall reduction in benefits - a four year freeze on a number of social security benefits.
- Benefit cap reduction - the total amount of benefit which a family on out of work benefits can be entitled to in a year will not exceed £20,000 for couples and lone parents, and £13,400 for single claimants, except in Greater London where the cap is set at £23,000 and £15,410 respectively
- Local Housing Allowance rent cap - this is the locally agreed maximum benefit threshold for a dwelling or household type within a defined geographical area. Therefore, if rises in rent outstrip growth in income, renters may find it increasingly difficult to pay
- A 1% reduction in social rents per year for 4 years to reduce the housing benefit bill

The reduction in benefits may cause hardship for vulnerable households containing young children particularly those living in poor quality private rented homes.

The [Welfare Reform Act 2012](#) (which is in parts amended by the 2016 Act discussed above) impacts on the work of Environmental Health services; in particular the provisions relating to the under occupation of social housing, and the benefit cap. Whilst these provisions will mainly affect tenants in the social rented sector it will undoubtedly have an impact on households in the private rented sector. Those presenting in housing need to a local housing authority like Watford, are increasingly finding themselves offered private rented homes as a settled housing option because of the lack of supply of reasonably affordable housing association homes. Private rented homes offer less security, and in Watford are usually less affordable for persons on low incomes.

1.2.10 Localism Act 2011

The [Localism Act](#) allows social housing providers to offer fixed term for new tenancies, rather than secure lifetime, tenancies. As with the Welfare Reform Act, this has a greater direct impact on the social rented sector, however there is some concern this may lead to greater turnover of tenancies, meaning that some traditional social tenants may find themselves in the private rented sector and potentially become the concern of environmental health services.

Both of these policy changes above may increase the number of vulnerable persons in

private sector properties. If this occurs any properties in this sector in poor condition are likely to have a far greater negative impact on the health of those occupiers.

1.2.11 Energy Efficiency - The Energy Company Obligation (ECO)

[The Energy Company Obligation \(ECO\)](#) is a government energy efficiency scheme to help reduce carbon emissions and tackle fuel poverty. The scheme began in 2013 and over time it has been amended, with the latest changes applied on 1st April 2017. The latest version of the scheme is a transition (ECO2t) before the longer term scheme is developed. The future ECO scheme is planned to run from 2018-2022.

Currently under ECO the larger energy suppliers have set targets to meet two distinct obligations;

1. Carbon Emissions Reduction Obligation (CERO); where obligated suppliers must promote 'primary measures', including roof and wall insulation and connections to district heating systems. Some CERO must also be delivered in rural areas.
2. Home Heating Cost Reduction Obligation (HHCRO); where obligated suppliers must promote measures which improve the ability of low income and vulnerable households to heat their homes. This includes actions that result in heating savings, such as the replacement or repair of a boiler.

Watford has made substantial use of ECO over the years, as well as previous Government energy schemes, subsidies and grants. The previous 5 years has seen nearly £5 million of capital investment taking place in the Watford, with around 1,470 homes benefiting with energy renovations. This has led to residents having warmer homes and cheaper bills. ECO2t gives LA's an opportunity to determine how 10% of the HHCRO funding is spent by publishing a statement of intent (SOI). Watford has been working with Hertfordshire County Council and the 9 other Local Authorities in Herts to have a standard SOI across the region. At the time of this policy energy measures to dwellings, in part using this SOI, are being delivered through the [Herts Warmer Homes](#) project.

1.2.12 The Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA)

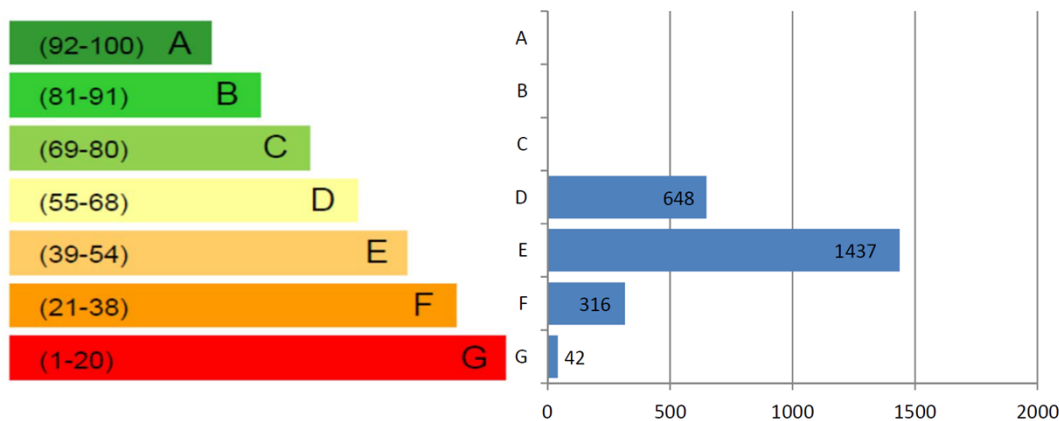
[The Home Energy Conservation Act](#) was updated in 2017. The Act specifically concerns domestic energy efficiency and states 'Local authorities are uniquely placed to assess the needs of their areas and local residents and to act as catalysts for change. The Act recognises 'local authorities' ability to use their position to improve the energy efficiency of all residential accommodation (such as owner-occupied, privately rented and social housing) in their areas.' The Act requires local authorities to report on what is being done to improve energy efficiency in all residential accommodation in their area and to report to the Secretary of State every 2 years on progress in implementing the measures. [Watford's latest report was in 2017](#). Watford has stated that it will continue to access ECO and grant funding opportunities and make use of the benefits of partnership working.

1.2.13 Fuel Poverty Strategy

The Government's fuel poverty strategy, [Cutting the cost of keeping warm](#) is underpinned by the target set out in the [Fuel Poverty \(England\) Regulations 2014](#).

The target is for as many fuel poor homes as reasonably practicable to be upgraded to achieve an energy efficiency standard of band C by 2030, with mid-term targets of band E by 2020 and to band D by 2025.

The graph below shows the number of Watford's households living in properties of an EPC rating of D or below suffering from fuel poverty². Totalling 2,433 households this is equivalent to 6.2% of all homes in Watford.



Typically a fuel poor household's income is around half (about £10,000) to that of an average non fuel poor household (after tax and housing costs). In addition a fuel poor household typically pays 20% more for their annual energy needs (a total of around £1,500 annually) due to living in poorly insulated households.

Statistical analysis also shows that of the fuel poor households around 45% are families with children, 25% are single adults, 21% are couples, with other household compositions making up the remaining 9%.

² The fuel poverty definition used here is low income, high cost with statistics taken from the BRE stock model

Building Research Establishment Modelling

2.0 BRE Modelling

Integrated Dwelling Level Housing Stock Modelling and Quantitative Health Impact Assessment (by the Building research Establishment BRE)

A survey of the housing stock was completed in August 2017 and its findings influence this policy. The BRE have modelled Watford’s housing by using the councils own data, national census information, lodged EPCs, Ordnance Survey, Mosaic (with electoral role information) as well as English House condition survey data. This data is modelled into software to provide the expected attributes of individual properties within Watford. In addition a report detailing the costs and influences the stock condition has in relation to assessing health impact has been completed.

The results of the key indicators are as follows;

Indicator		Private sector stock				Social stock	
		Owner occupied		Private rented			
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
No. of dwellings		21,747	-	11,040	-	6,370	-
HHSRS category 1 hazards	All hazards	3,306	15%	1,749	16%	484	8%
	Excess cold	423	2%	337	3%	64	1%
	Fall hazards	2,588	12%	1,267	11%	271	4%
Disrepair		592	3%	527	5%	96	2%
Fuel poverty (10%)		1,535	7%	937	8%	326	5%
Fuel poverty (Low Income High Costs)		1,058	5%	1,151	10%	270	4%
Low income households		1,633	8%	1,490	13%	3,826	60%

The results show a breakdown of hazards (category 1 hazards - that are defined under the [Health and Hazard Safety rating System](#)) as likely to be a serious and immediate risk to a person's health and safety. Consistent with the national picture, the most common hazards are excess cold and that of falls (with over 60% of fall hazards expecting to occur on stairs, 25% on the level with the remainder expected to occur for falls between levels).

The Health & Safety Executive HSE predicted from 2011 figures that 15% of all UK homes have a category 1 hazard. Notably around 1/3 of these hazards occur in households where the occupants are aged 55 or more.

Consultation

3.0 Consultation Analysis

Two surveys were undertaken using e-mail distribution and advertising on the council's web and intranet sites, which led to receiving a total of 177 respondents. An Internal survey of staff returned 26, with a public resident surveys returning 151. The survey gathered data on the existing financial assistance offered as well as seeking views on new assistance determined under this policy. In addition to the wider consultation various officers within different council departments have helped inform this policy.

Further summaries of the questions and results can be found in Appendix G, with a summary below.

3.1 Survey with Watford residents

The survey with Watford residents was conducted in the month of October 2017. The survey contained 25 closed and open questions. Some 151 responses were received. The majority of respondents at 74%, were homeowners. Just 11 respondents had previously used a form of council housing assistance (2 of which were disabled facilities grants, 2 had general advice with a further 7 having used 'Other Council schemes'. Of these other schemes 5 were from an insulation scheme).

Of those that responded to the survey the majority came from the age banding of between 45 and 54. There were few respondents below the age of 34, probably in part due to low ownership rates in this age group. Retired households feature in 40% of the respondents (with just under 30% having a person working in the household).

The responses produced a mixed opinion on how easy the process was for applying for financial assistance and how well the assistance met the expectations. Due to overall small numbers of grant users we cannot determine which assistance was rated well. However it is known that Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) can be complex and involve other organisations such as Hertfordshire County Council Adult Care and Children's Services. From a resident point of view this complexity can lead to difficulties, especially for more vulnerable groups. In the past the DFGs have been supported by assistance from an in-house home improvement agency and external surveyors due to these complexities.

84 responses were received when asking about the most pressing housing related concerns for residents. Nearly 30% of these were about getting repairs done or managing the cost of those repairs. However, the vulnerability of respondents was not known. Another 14% found trusted builders an issue, where they had concerns about finding trusted trade persons. Other concerns raised included rent or the cost of housing at 14%. Completing small jobs (perhaps a handyperson service would cover) was at 12% of concerns (with a garden service a further 2%). Parking issues (lack of) was also featured quite strongly at 12%. Energy efficiency (or the cost of heating) was around 9% of respondents concern. Over development of the borough and housing needs followed at 7%.

Having trusted builders, trusted advice and general advice was a theme from most residents who responded when asked 'how could we resolve your housing issues?' There

are already vast amounts of resource with information and advice on where to get repairs or building works done published by various organisations as well as trusted builder web sites. The Council also offers housing defect related advice. Too much choice, though, can be overwhelming for people. Fifty percent of respondents thought the council should continue to offer advice and assistance on housing repair.

When asked what services residents would like to see 'Housing needs' featured strongly (including cost of rents, housing availability and getting on the housing ladder). Again trusted traders also featured.

A number of responses were around the lack of parking as well as regulation to landlords (tenanted properties).

Nearly 90% of respondents thought that the Council should continue with energy efficiency measures to vulnerable homes (just under 4% saying no and nearly 7% undecided).

With regards to what residents thought the council should prioritise or continue to do there were the following notable points; Over 50% supported the council in doing more work around regulation of landlords to improve standards in rented accommodation. Fire safety was of concern (with a possibility that this was influenced by the Grenfell Tower disaster and the dominance this has featured in the media around the time of the survey). Currently Herts Fire and Rescue are conducting free home assessments throughout the borough under the [Safe and Well scheme](#). Other notable concerns were around electrical safety and around 50% supported work around excess cold (and having working heating and hot water).

In the health related questions we asked if people's day-to-day activities were limited because of a health problem or a disability (which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months). In response around a quarter of respondents said 'yes'. This percentage was similar for those who had a fall in their home. This is important to note as falls constitutes many of the hazards found in a property. Of those who fell 88% had fallen more than once in the last two years.

3.2 The Internal Survey (Council staff)

Of the limited responses there were not many who had used the financial assistance offered by the Council for their clients (residents). Of those that had experience they were mostly in relation to the handyman service.

As well as general disrepair the most common housing defects that officers came across were 'cold, heating and the cost to heat; damp and mould and overcrowding'.

Overgrown gardens at 46% and the external appearance of the property at 38% as well as fire safety at 53% also strongly featured in responses.

Further regulation of landlords was a popular theme for the internal survey, with no desire to offer financial incentives. However, incentives such as a 'star rating' for landlords and

their properties based on their compliance with legal requirements and the standard of their property were also suggested.

Comments on helping to create and offer affordable housing and good quality rental properties also featured.

The current financial assistance is limited in its reach and in its ability to help large numbers of residents. This policy therefore looks to broaden the number of people it helps by using a project based approach. We already know from the current grant assistance and our previous project work that the projects reach many more residents than the direct financial enquires lead to. The assistance we offer to the ad hoc enquires will be very focused on those most vulnerable and be through a professional referral led approach.

Structure, Aim, Framework and Principles of the policy

4.0 Structure of the policy

The Policy is set out to:

- Provide an overall aim
- Provide a framework of principles within which the private sector renewal work will operate
- Identify policy priorities that need to be addressed in Watford
- Identify tools and partnerships that will be used to address these priorities within the principles framework in order to meet the overall aim
- Specify policy objectives and budget allocation with agreed specific, measurable, realistic and focused policies

5.0 Policy Aim

To improve and maintain housing standards to support an accessible private sector housing stock in an environment which promotes health, wellbeing and sustainability, which is targeted to those most in need.

Improvement of housing standards and support may include (but not be limited to) the following headings:

- Removal of category 1 hazards as identified under the [Health & Hazard Safety Rating System](#) to create safer homes and safer housing environments.
- Enabling and encouraging access to home interventions (social prescribing and the linking and referring to voluntary and charitable services).
- Improving to achieve affordable and warm homes (safe, warm housing)
- Improving suitability and accessibility (including regular repairs, adaptations and support to handyperson services)
- Housing Support (enabling people to continue to live independently in their home).

6.0 Policy Framework

The policy takes into account the Council's vision within the current [corporate plan to 2016-2020](#), national government strategies and legislation as well as influences around local housing factors and conditions. Local conditions have recently been ascertained from the BRE stock model exercise completed in 2017, combined with nationally available statistics and information available through our own corporate information.

6.1 The Councils Vision

The vision reflects the current challenges and opportunities facing the Council as an organisation and the town as a place to live, work, visit and study. The Council seeks to champion our town so that it is a place where all communities thrive and prosper, benefiting from strong economic growth and good quality local services and facilities. In delivering the vision the council aims to be both BOLD: working as a team to make things happen; and PROGRESSIVE: Being ambitious, innovative and welcoming.

Supporting this vision, the Council has 5 priority areas of work.

1. Identify ways to manage the borough's housing needs
2. Champion smart growth and economic prosperity
3. Provide for the boroughs vulnerable and disadvantaged communities
4. Deliver a digital Watford to empower the community
5. Secure the councils financial future

This renewal policy update forms part of the [Watford Housing Strategy 2015-2020](#): "Improving the condition and management of housing; Priority 1: To revise the Private Sector Renewal Policy (which includes grant and loan assistance) to make homes decent and adapt them for disabled access."

7.0 Policy Principles and Priorities

7.1 Principles

- **Responsibility:**
The owner is responsible for repair and maintenance and needs to make provision for this. This policy will aim to enable residents to improve their housing through enabling, facilitation and encouragement.
- **Prevention:**
The Council will provide advice, information and facilitation to sustain the housing stock and help owners' prioritize their investment in repairs and improvement. Pro-active work will be used to meet this principle.
- **Targeting:**
By targeting to those clients, areas, properties, sectors and themes most in need the policy works to make use of more effective re-sourcing. Pro-active work will be used to concentrate on particular needs and opportunities (for example where external funding is available or a health priority has been identified).
The policy will be delivered by:
 - A Project Based Approach – to make use of scale of economies and best use of resources. Projects also encourage and lend themselves to additionality achieved through external funding.
 - Working with individuals most in need due to their vulnerabilities. This is to provide a very specific targeted approach through professional referrals and be tailored to individual needs. This is a move away from a reactive service based on set criteria.
- **Partnership:**
The Council will continue to work with partners; to develop and make use of partnership working to optimize resource and bring added value to projects. Partners may be internal departments within the council or external partners (such as Watford Community Housing Trust or Public Health as

examples).

- **Fairness, transparency, consistency and accessibility:**
Council policy and action will aim to be fair, transparent, consistent and accessible.
- **Linkage with strategic aims and objectives:**
Private Sector Housing renewal work aims to reflect national, regional and local priorities and policies; including those detailed within this policy.
- **Wider community benefit:**
The work undertaken aims to impact on the wider community where possible, having a broader impact. Examples maybe where aesthetic housing improvements help to improve wellbeing or where energy efficiency measures reduce fuel bills; helping to increase resident prosperity and reduce poverty.
- **Choice:**
The Council aims to provide choices and create incentives for private sector owners, landlords and occupiers to encourage responsibility and self-empowerment.
- **Prudent use of Council resources (including the recycling of money, cost recovery and income generation for services):**
 - Encouraging homeowners to use own resources first.
 - Provide targeted loans to release equity where vulnerable households are in poor and unhealthy homes.
 - Grant aid will be targeted at vulnerable and low income groups and/or those identified within project areas or criteria.
 - Recycling assistance through charges on property (or works in default where enforcement is used).
 - Charging for enforcement action where the legislation allows.
 - Charging fees to help keep discretionary services within this policy sustainable
 - Covering the cost of HMO licensing through ensuring that the fees charged are at a cost recovery level.
 - Development of assisted housing application policy and resource (for example charging fees for aiding an HMO license application).

7.2 Policy Priorities

- In summary the priorities and reasons for these being chosen are as follows:

Priority	Reason
<p>1. Improve the health and wellbeing of the borough’s residents through housing improvement; with a focus on those most in need (vulnerable households)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Links between housing quality and health • Health and Wellbeing Boards establishment and priorities • Stock modelling shows that 21% of the private sector stock is deemed to be occupied by a low income household (representing 3,123 households; comparing with an additional 3,826 households in the social sector). Distribution is borough wide but pockets of concentration are apparent throughout different areas of the borough • Supporting the principles within the Councils’ vision and priorities
<p>2. Improve the Energy Efficiency of the Borough’s housing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government targets exist with supported financial support (such as ECO) which provides additional external investment in the borough – therefore proving good added value for any resource allocated • After the combined falls hazards, excess cold by far has the ability to save the NHS and Society the most. (Within Watford mitigating excess cold cases would provide combined savings of £2,403,613 (comparing to the next highest hazard mitigation of crowding & space at £529,448). Improving Energy Efficiency will reduce this hazard. • Over 2,200 private sector households are deemed to be in fuel poverty in the borough and energy efficiency measures alleviate this. • This work area lends well to partner working as it has an established prior track record of government supported projects, contractors and managing agents combined with the available subsidies mentioned above. • Home Energy Conservation Act 1995 requires local authorities to reduce energy consumption within its boundaries • 66% of Watford’s private sector properties have an Energy Performance Certificate Rating (EPC) of D or below (on the scale of A to G where A is the best). • England has one of the highest excess winter death rates in Northern Europe with EWD contributing to 1 in 20 of all deaths per year.

Priority	Reason
3. Enforcement of housing standards in the Rented Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large increase in the private rented sector rapidly growing over the last 15 years in Watford • Rented sector accounts for 44% of the housing stock • Higher proportions of vulnerable residents in the rented sector (In Watford low income households live in 60% of the social stock, 13% of the private rented and 8% of the owner occupied homes). • Create and maintain a level playing field in this sector. • Ensure tenants are safe and protected and live in
4. Provision of Disabled Facilities Grants (and a supported service to deliver them)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandatory requirement to consider DFG applications • National and Regional focus on improving home facilities for disabled people and to reduce the length of time they wait for these adaptations • Links with supporting people agenda • To prevent falls and ensure that residents are able to live safely and independently in their own homes.

8.0 Discussion and Reasons for Choosing These Priorities & Principles

In 2004 Watford comprised of an estimated 39,157 (an increase of 10,000 dwellings since the last policy was written back in 2004). This policy therefore has an influence on a very large section of Watford Borough's residents and visitors.

Setting the principles and priorities has needed to incorporate a wide remit of factors. The policy has been aligned with the Councils' own policies and priorities as well as influences by legislation and the information obtained by our recent stock model and health impact assessment surveys.

The influential legislation in determining the contents of this policy are:

- New legislation around Energy Efficiency and the influences to wellbeing it has through: The Home Energy Conservation Act (updated in 2017), Fuel poverty targets (Cutting the cost of keeping warm 2015), changes to the Energy Company Obligation (ECO 2t from April 2017).
- In conjunction with the large increase in the rented sector in Watford, the national legislation affecting this sector: The Housing Act 2014 and Housing and Planning Act 2016, The Localism Act 2011, The Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016, The Housing and Planning Act 2016.
- Health influences; the detrimental effects to health poor housing leads to as well as cost implications to society and the NHS – demonstrated by Watford's recent Health Impact Assessment.

- **Evidence including the stock model survey**

With the move to digitalization and the increase in available data the Council has been able to compile comprehensive data and modelling around the condition of its housing stock. This has provided the council with an accurate picture of house conditions as well as social and economic factors (such as crime and health statistics and demographic trends), pulled together from a number of sources. A summary of this information is available from the Environmental Health Service upon request.

- **Consultation**

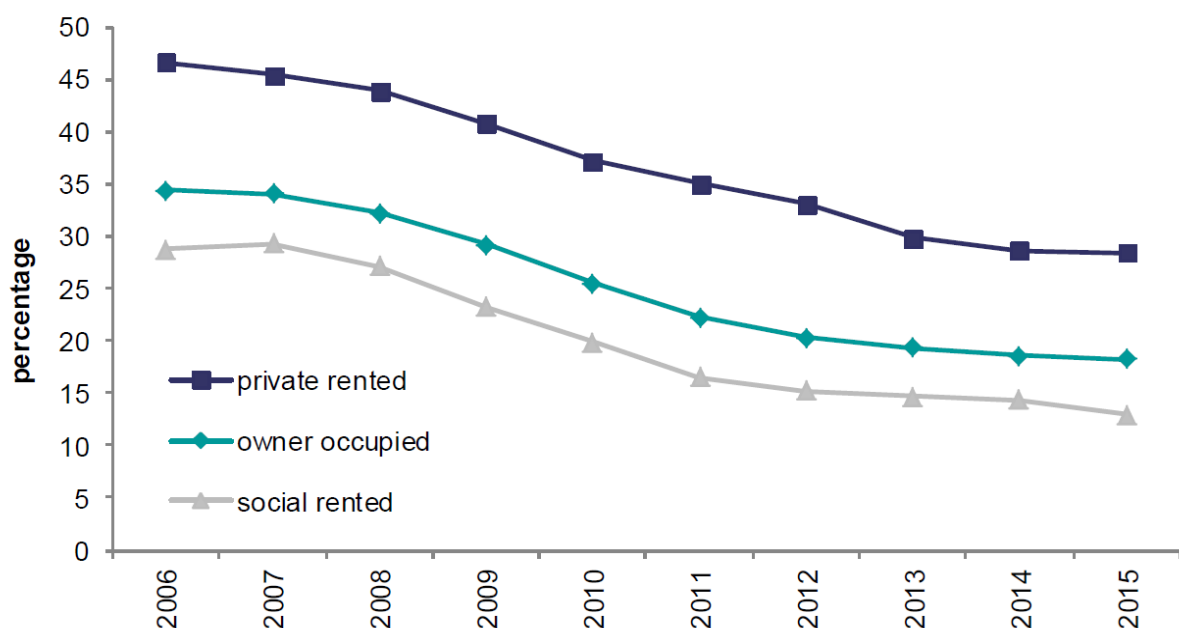
The consultation exercise has helped inform the policy update having consulted a wide range of Watford’s residents as well as internal officers, staff, decision makers and Councilors.

- **Strategic context**

The Regulatory Reform Order (RRO) on Housing Renewal which came into force on 18 July 2002 and gave Local Authorities a general power to introduce policies for assisting individuals with renewals, repairs and adaptations in their homes through grants or loans. As such the first Council policy was adopted in 2003.

The RRO provided detailed advice on how a private sector housing renewal policy should be developed as an integral part of the authority’s overall housing strategy. The Government expects Private Housing Renewal policies to link with national, regional and local strategies including the Councils priorities. The following are the main strategic priorities that have influenced policy development.

At the time, as part of the 2002 Spending Review, the Public Service Agreement 7 (PSA) target to make all homes in the social sector decent by 2010 was extended to include private sector homes. The old policy was therefore influenced by this target. However significant progress continues to be made towards this Decent Homes target, as depicted by the chart below.



Non Decent Homes by Tenure in England (2006-2015) from [English Housing Survey](#)

The Decent Homes Standard has four elements. For a property to be decent it should have no category 1 Housing, Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) hazards, be in a reasonable state of repair, have reasonably modern facilities and have a reasonable degree of thermal comfort.

This policy moves away from focusing on the decent homes standard for a number of reasons. From the previous graph it can be seen that nationally there is a decline in the numbers of non-decent properties. In Watford the disrepair statistics gathered from our stock model show 3% of Watford's housing stock (1,215 properties) were found to be in disrepair (with the definition used for disrepair aligned with the definition used in the Decent Homes Standard). The English Average is at 5%. By combining data with private sector housing and low income households this reduces to just 184 properties. Often the disrepair element of the decent homes standard can be mitigated by removing one of the HHSRS hazards.

Therefore the policy is more focused on vulnerable residents and elements of the housing that relate to health and those that have the biggest impact. These are addressed through HHSRS. This is to ensure the resources are more focused into delivering benefits that offer best value for money. As the previous example notes; there is a strong evidence base that shows the most significant HHSRS issues relate to cold homes and falls. After the combined fall hazards, action to mitigate excess cold has by far the most ability to save NHS resources make the largest contribution to savings to society.

National priorities

Nationally the private rented sector is an important and growing part of the housing market, with 3.8 million households in England. The quality of privately rented housing has improved rapidly over the past decade. In relation to this agenda the government conducted a [Review of Property Conditions in the Private Rented Sector](#) and in February 2014 the Government published the results of a consultation exercise in reviewing conditions. The report acknowledges that, while most landlords are reputable and provide decent and well maintained homes, a small proportion of landlords neglect their properties and do not provide a good service to their tenants. These landlords, together with lettings agents who provide a poor quality service, should be the focus of policy action. Proposals included:-

- Making tenants aware of their rights through a Tenants' Charter
- Providing and publicising information on local authority websites.
- Imposing a statutory duty on local authorities to investigate and deal with housing complaints, and not closing the case when the tenant leaves the property; the case will remain open until the property is fixed generally. This could assist in reducing retaliatory evictions as there is no benefit to the landlord in evicting the tenants.
- Information sharing between local authorities on so-called "rouge landlords."
- Providing tenants with a holistic approach to handle issues including financial advice, housing advice, mediation with landlords and referrals to other agencies.

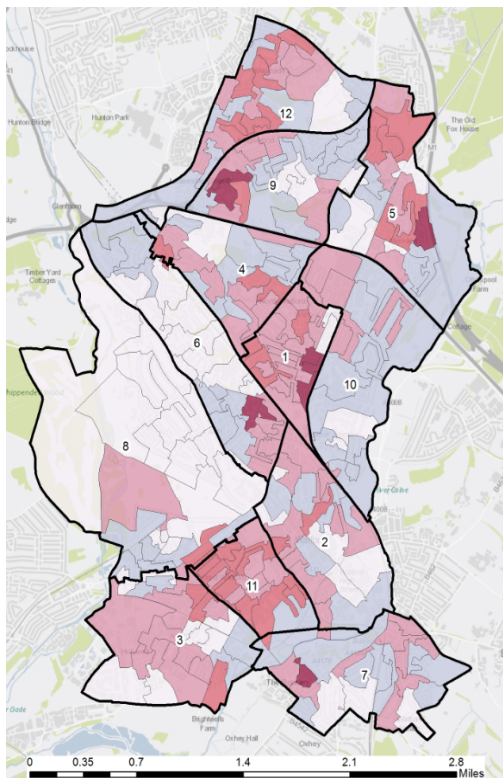
Local priorities

This document is a policy update as set out in the [Watford Borough Councils Housing Strategy 2015-2020](#) (under improving the condition and management of housing) - one of the strategy priorities is to revise the Private Sector Renewal Policy.

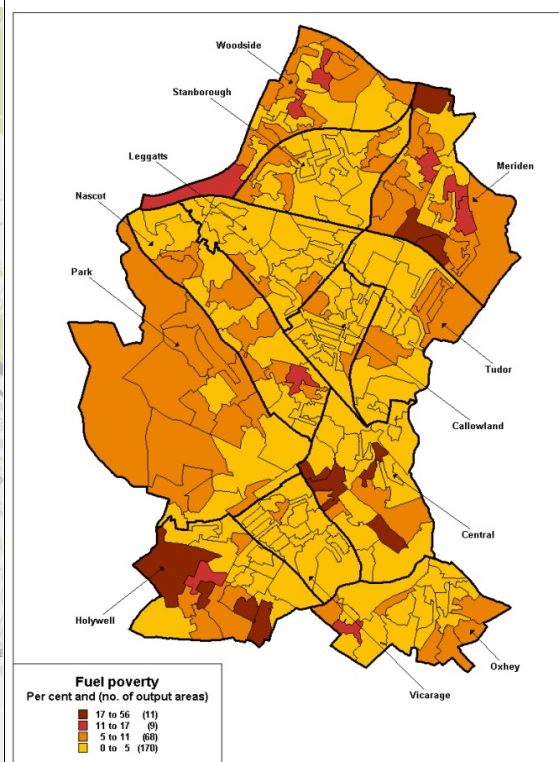
The vision of the strategy states that it aims to improve the well-being of local people by making Watford a better place to live, with sustainable and healthy homes, and a balanced, vibrant community.

As previously stated there has been a significant increase in the private rented sector in Watford. The Council recognizes that this is an important sector as part of the housing supply within the borough. Watford is a busy vibrant town with good links to London and the Home Counties. Therefore it is an important commuter town and hub within the region. The private rented sector is helping to support housing demand within the borough. In support of a well-managed private rented sector the council wishes to promote good standards and regulation.

The BRE Stock Model 2017 has helped inform and influence this policy. Since the last stock condition survey in 2009 Watford's housing conditions have become less polarized in that patterns of housing condition indicators have become more spread across the Borough. More accurate representation of data has also influenced these patterns. As an example the maps below plot concentrations of fuel poverty from the 2017 survey and the 2009 survey.



2017 – Fuel Poverty (LIHC)

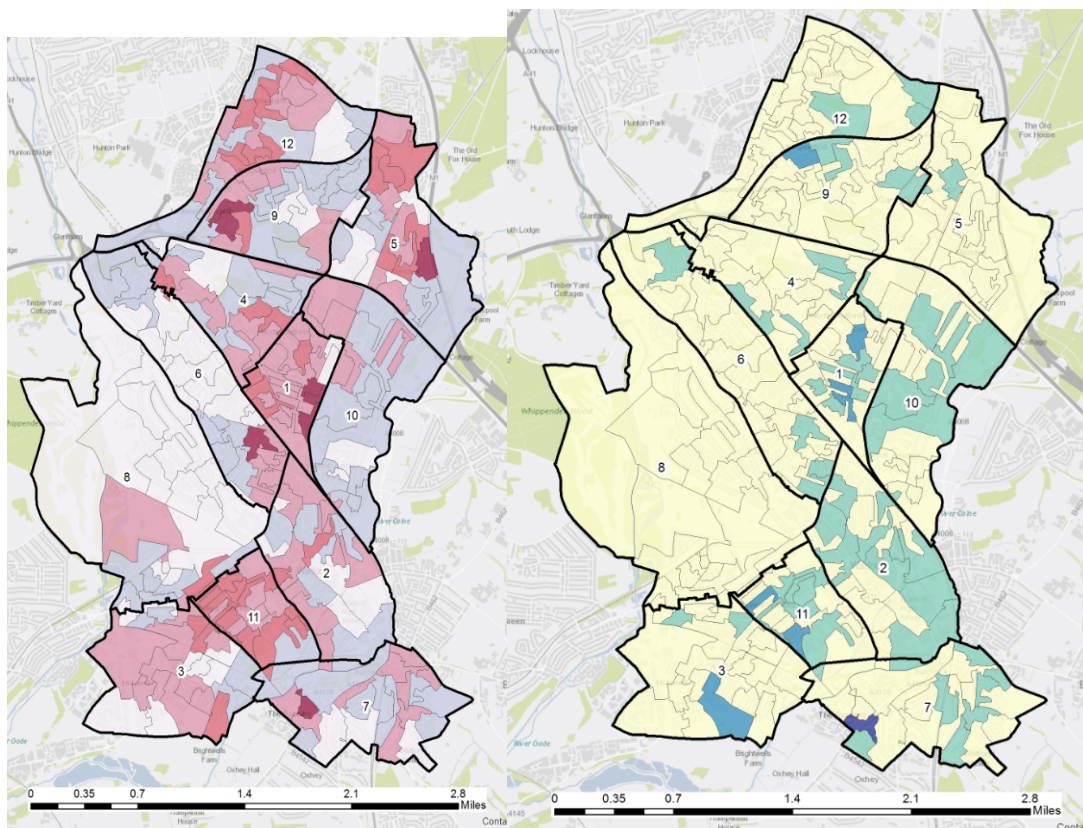


2009 – Fuel Poverty (10% rule³)

³ Where a household that needs to spend more than 10% of its income on fuel to heat to an adequate standard

As well as generalised information showing concentrations of housing related conditions the new stock model has the ability to model each household individually. Therefore this policy moves away from targeting specific wards but instead makes the assistance available borough wide and project dependent. The Council now has more information and ability to specifically target projects based on housing characteristics and need, relevant to each target audience of any project.

This example is further demonstrated by comparing two maps from the 2017 survey; the first map shows concentrations of fuel poverty in the Borough whilst the second map shows a combination of properties with excess cold and low income households. This ability to combine data sets to provide more detailed information enables better focusing and targeting of available resources for housing improvement in the borough. As a result, the policy therefore moves away from Ward prioritisation but instead can be targeted more specifically towards the chosen need(s).



A further example is demonstrated by the next map extract which shows concentrations of the governments new licensing for HMOs. The ward boundary line between 11 (Vicarage) and 2 (Central) lies on Cassio Road. It can be seen that the shaded areas depicting the concentrations can be different depending on which side of the road properties fall as well as areas of indicated concentrations crossing ward boundaries. This gives us more detailed knowledge of chosen target data as opposed to generalizing properties into ward areas.



Generalisation of wards by averages is inaccurate for targeting purposes as the data we now have is at household level (such as the different concentrations depicted by the dark colours in Vicarge that cross ward boundaries). Ward averages would in some instances water down concentrations of need.

Previous surveys have often used housing ages and averages to determine housing conditions. The BRE Stock Condition data we now have means we are better able to accurately assess local housing conditions. Distributions of detrimental housing conditions have also had more rapid influences over recent years. In the past the age of a property was often linked to housing conditions; with averages showing that older properties are in worse repair than newer ones. However this is not always the case and other factors can make it a more complex issue. Greater generalisation and even distribution of the housing indicators across the borough are attributable to some of the following factors; Watford being a commuter town, whereby a high income city worker can be living next to a vulnerable older person, but both be living in a similar age property in differing states of repair. This is also influenced by the high house prices in Watford, meaning high income earners buying in traditionally poorer areas of the borough in poorer condition housing against a backdrop of long term homeowners having built significant amounts of property equity far greater than earnings potential has risen. The rapid change of tenure to more rented properties is serving a housing need matching this affordability. The concentrations of this demand are highly focused on town center (and train commuter routes). The rented sector is now providing accommodation for low paid key workers as well as young and well educated city dwellers.

Policy Delivery

9.0 Targeting resources to achieve policy priorities

It would be unrealistic to tackle all of the housing issues in Watford. From the BRE data the cost to remove all of 6,670 main HHSRS hazards in Watford's private sector stock assessed at £11,646,674. However, the costs to society and to the NHS⁴ of not mitigating these hazards is assessed at £11,233,427 annually (£9,998,917 plus £1,234,510 respectively). This shows that removing hazards has positive financial effects in the relatively near term, with pay back periods approaching just 1 year.

With limited resources for delivery it is more effective to concentrate on those hazards that have the potential to make the biggest savings. In addition this policy has a particular focus on vulnerable groups which aligns with one of the council 5 corporate priorities which is to provide for the borough's vulnerable and disadvantaged communities).

The definition and focus of vulnerable for the purposes of this policy will be the [affordable warmth group](#) from the energy company obligation. In addition the council includes those in receipt of [Housing Benefit](#) and benefitting from the [Watford Borough Council Tax Reduction scheme](#) in the definition of vulnerable. This is because these groups are more susceptible to health impacts associated with poorer housing conditions and have less ability to rectify these defects, due to lack of income. As part of this consideration the two most common housing related defects are falls and excess cold which both relate to some of the vulnerable groups within the affordable warmth criteria – which is also affected by income. (However, it should be noted that the borough only has a small number of residents that would qualify under this criteria, as they would need to live in the private rented sector).

It is proposed that the definition of vulnerability set out above will stay aligned with any changes to the criteria for the Affordable Warmth group, Housing Benefit and Watford's Council Tax Reduction Scheme definition, subject to those changes still delivering the principles and aims of this policy. Where any changes to definition of vulnerable made by government or by the council are deemed minor, the policy would be changed via delegated authority. If there is a fundamental change in the definition of vulnerability, then formal consultation will be undertaken.

In addition to offering assistance the council will seek to:

- Encourage homeowners and landlords to maintain and invest in their own property, thus protecting their asset (and its value) in the longer term.
- Target and recycle limited public funds at the most vulnerable households living in the worst housing conditions by providing a framework of support based on enforcement and interest free loans.

⁴ As well as the estimated savings to the NHS (health care costs), savings to society includes increased spending on benefits, loss of future earnings and demands on other services. It is also estimated that 105 [Quality Adjusted Life Years](#) (QALYs) could be saved if all serious housing hazards were mitigated.

- Utilise partnership working to lever in further funds for improvement works to increase project capabilities and improve service delivery. For example ECO monies , health monies and/or other grant funding.
- Continue to collect and use evidence, data and intelligence about the borough to target funding and enforcement, including information to inform the equalities agenda and the equalities impact assessment for this policy.
- Addressing small works at an early stage to prevent deterioration of properties in the future and to improve home safety and health.
- Proactively approaching priority households to publicise the service and inviting applications for assistance and to assess the need for enforcement. For example the [Street Improvement Project](#).

Proactively approaching priority households to assess the need for enforcement. For example by doing pro-active work in areas with high numbers of poor quality rented accommodation.

- Proactively targeting properties, areas and owners where accommodation presents the highest risk to health and safety of occupants and the most negative impact on local communities. For example area or ward action, rented properties, HMOs, etc.
- Focus resources on tackling issues of corporate importance and move to a targeted approach based on annual plans contained within the Environmental Health & Licensing Service Plan and Housing Service policies.
- Although some place must be given to a reactive service, we aim for 70% of resources to be allocated as a result of proactive prioritisation, planned visits and programs.

10.0 Tools to achieve the Policy

The tools that will be used fall into 4 categories:

- Promoting and Enabling
- Direct Assistance
- Disabled Facilities Grants (mandatory direct financial assistance)
- Enforcement

10.1 Promoting and Enabling

Work in this category includes, but is not limited to:

- Provision of advice and assistance in the form of web based information, leaflets and verbal advice to all Watford residents and property owners. Where appropriate the provision of written advice to vulnerable households and working with landlords to achieve compliance with standards in rental properties. The assistance offered will be appropriate for the circumstances of the individual concerned and the property condition and includes advice on:

- property repair
- Property maintenance
- Property condition
- How to get work carried out successfully to your home
- how to prioritise repairs
- any available discounts and schemes they may benefit from
- How to choose a builder such as [Which trusted traders](#) (currently supporting through the Hertfordshire County Council schemes)
- small building works
- Compliance with legislation

The council will also assist by making referrals to other agencies and schemes that may be able to assist or that the person may be eligible for.

- Provision of 'care and repair' type services for identified vulnerable households, who because of their age or infirmities are not able to manage the process of completing works to their property. The current intention is that this will be provided through the [Hertfordshire Home Improvement Agency](#) as well as the ability in some cases to include the cost of an external support service within any financial assistance award.
- Support and promotion of energy efficiency and renewable energy technology schemes and developments at a local and regional level that support the aim and priorities of this policy (for example the [Herts Warmer Homes scheme](#)).
- Facilitation of referrals to any supported and approved handyman schemes (for the completion of minor jobs that effect vulnerable peoples' safety and use of their home), such as [AgeUK Dacorum Handyman Service](#). This work stream is to be developed in the future to allow for potential assisted handyman provision. This may include limited funding to be provided to individuals; to be developed through a Project Grant.
- Other work that may support the delivery of the policy and its tools including obtaining reports, valuations and specialist advice as necessary for progressing cases.
- Possible funding to other projects and forming partnerships to achieve the policies' aim and priorities.
- Self-certification scheme(s) for landlords.
- Training courses for landlords.
- Landlord's forum, newsletters and focus groups.
- Joint working with organisations such as Herts Young Homeless Group, New Hope and Social Services to make sure that vulnerable people are placed in safe accommodation.

A person may (amongst other routes) access the assistance and services in this category offered by:

- Contacting Environmental Health direct (or via the Customer Services Centre).
- By being referred to the service by another agency or internal service area.
- Be brought to the attention of Environmental Health as the result of a complaint
- By proactive contact by Environmental Health.

10.2 Direct Assistance Offered Through the Policy

10.2.1 Discretionary Assistance

The basis for all of the discretionary assistance is to remove or reduce housing related defects that are detrimental to an occupant’s health, both in terms of their physical and mental wellbeing.

This can include housing related defects as indicated and assessed under the [Health & Hazard Safety Rating System](#) (HHSRS) produced by Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG).

The table below summarises the direct discretionary assistance offered through the policy, with all assistance available to the private sector.

Assistance	Qualification	Finance Offer	For
Safer Homes Grant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Referral by a health or housing professional (not open to general resident applications) Be eligible to qualify under the governments vulnerable definition as indicated by the affordable warmth group with the addition of Housing Benefit and Watford’s Council tax reduction OR in exceptional circumstances for consideration of the grants panel and whereby a loan is not appropriate (and the applicant is deemed as vulnerable or susceptible to a health condition and there is a housing related defect that that could lead to a class 1 or 2 harm outcome due to age or infirmity as defined under HHSRS guidance 	Up to £1,000 Grant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Removal of HHSRS Hazards Prevention of Category 1 HHSRS Hazards Work that leads to the enabling of HHSRS hazard mitigation Housing defect rectification that alleviates an individual’s state of physical, mental and social well-being As an incentive tool to encourage take up of other assistance such as a Safer Homes Loan or to engage vulnerable residents to work with other external agencies and services
Safer Homes Loan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Referral by a health or housing professional (not 	Up to £10,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Removal of HHSRS Hazards Prevention of Category 1

	<p>open to general open applications)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be part of the governments vulnerable definition as indicated by the affordable warmth group with the addition of Housing Benefit and Watford's Council tax reduction 	loan	<p>HHSRS hazards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work that leads to the enabling of HHSRS hazard mitigation • Housing defect rectification that alleviates an individual's state of physical, mental and social well-being
Project Loan or grant	<p>Determined by the scope of the project; (prior set and published) limited to housing related defects or improvements and include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geographically set dependent upon the project target outcomes • Have consideration to and have set criteria around an appropriate level of the applicant or tenants income • Be match funded supplementary to other sources of funding • Only be available within the private housing sector 	Up to £5,000 Loan or grant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To top up or provide supplementary funding where other sources of funding have been used first • To enable property improvements where the housing condition is detrimental to the occupants health and wellbeing
Trusted Advice	All Residents	Advice	<p>Help with trusted builder schemes and housing advice / support with applications. General advice on building works</p>

10.2.2 Safer Homes Grant (SHG)

This is a grant that enables removal or prevention of category 1 hazards as depicted and rated under the [Health & Hazard Safety Rating System](#) (HHSRS) as well as easing and preventing other hazards within a home that affect the persons wellbeing (both physically and mentally) caused by a defective housing condition. A category 2 hazard maybe considered to be included where this is likely to result in a category 1 hazard within 5 years if it were not addressed.

As well as those under HHSRS an example of a health related hazard that is detrimental to a person's mental wellbeing could be hoarding; leading to potential issues of unhygienic conditions (hoarding making cleaning very difficult), as well as encouraging rodent or insect infestations, increasing the likelihood of trips and falls, be a fire risk and potentially blocking exits. In assessing hoarding it is proposed to use the Hertfordshire Hoarding Protocol (currently about to be finalised). The grant maybe used to address Level 2 hoarding issues as detailed in the protocol but only where there is a risk to children or adults at risk of abuse or neglect. The grant may also be used to address any level 3 hoarding (in both cases where the applicant meets the other grant criteria).

As well as alleviation of a hazard this grant is also given to prevent future hazards occurring. For example works maybe included to secure the basic fabric of the property from the entry of wind or rain; where if left a future HHSRS hazard may occur. An example would be a leaking roof which if left unattended would lead to a category 1 hazard for damp and mould growth.

A SHG may be used as an incentive tool to encourage other assistance such as a Safer Homes Loan or to engage vulnerable residents to work with other external agencies and services on the principle that the work is to remove or reduce housing related defects that are detrimental to an occupant's health, both in terms of their physical and mental wellbeing.

The grant limit is up to £1,000. It is only accessed through a professional referral such as a social worker, health worker, occupational therapist, county or local authority officer (or those employed on their behalf. The referral should:

- Justify the need
- Set out the client's vulnerability
- Demonstrate a clear link between a housing defect and the occupants' health and wellbeing
- And/or demonstrate that the grant will contribute to future works or enable other funding to be leveraged to solve a resident's housing related issue affecting their health

The SHG is an entry level assistance grant aimed at quick resolutions or to prime/instigate other forms of funding, assistance and aid. An example could be where an emergency boiler repair takes place before more extensive works in the form of a Safer Homes Loan (SHL).

In terms of qualification the owner (or private rented tenant with repairing responsibilities) must be in receipt of (or be eligible to receive) a qualifying benefit at the time of full application from the governments [Affordable Warmth Group](#), or be in receipt of Housing Benefit or be in receipt of Watford Council Tax Reduction. The assistance is not open to other applicants such as those in the social rented sector.

In exceptional circumstances (for consideration of the grants panel – see 12.1) and whereby a loan is not appropriate (and the applicant is deemed as vulnerable or susceptible to a health condition and have a housing related defect that that could lead to a class 1 or 2 harm outcome due to age or infirmity as defined under HHSRS guidance) a Safer Homes Grant maybe considered.

The SHG should not be used where works are expected to take place under a Safer Homes Loan; where there is not a need for emergency works due to an immediate risk of a class 1 or 2 health outcome (from the HHSRS guidance from the 4 classes of harm).

Examples (but not limited to) of a SHG are indicated below:

- Repair of steps and handrails to remove the risk of falls.
- Part clearance of a hoarded property to remove fire and fall hazards and alleviate mental health distress or to allow other works to take place.
- A report to assess an HHSRS hazard such as a structural report to assess structural collapse.
- Garden clearance to enable access for subsequent HHSRS remedial works or for the purposes of improvement of a person’s mental and social well-being or as part of the hoarding protocol as before described.
- Top up funding to supplement a boiler replacement/installation (removing a category 1 hazard).
- A repair to a heating system (thereby removing a Cat 1 hazard).

Full conditions are set out in appendix A and B which include a qualifying checklist for this form of assistance.

10.2.3 Safer Homes loan (SHL)

The SHL is for the same works as the Safer Homes Grant but comes in the form of a loan. It is for qualifying works up to the value of £10,000 which is placed as an interest free charge on the property, in the form of a local land charge, until the property changes hands or is sold.

The SHL is only open to private sector homeowners and tenants with repairing responsibilities who are in receipt of Housing Benefit, Watford’s Council tax reduction or are part of the government’s vulnerable definition as indicated by the [affordable warmth group](#).

Applications must be made by a referral by a health or housing professional, The principle of fee charging also applies to this loan – see fees and charges in section 11.0.

An application for a SHL will not normally be considered if any type of financial assistance was granted under the previous 2006 Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy (with the exception of DFGs or handyperson) within the last 7 years, except in extenuating circumstances.

Where there are extenuating circumstances and not all the works necessary can be done under a single application then additional applications can be made. Examples where additional SHL applications may be needed include where it is due to a person's age or infirmity or because of other practical reasons agreed by the Council. Additional applications may be made up to a maximum of £10,000 over a 5 year period if eligibility criteria are still met. After the maximum is met, the owner or any other occupant of the dwelling may not re-apply for a SHL (or SHG) assistance for 7 years unless there is a change of ownership.

Applicants who do not qualify for these forms of assistance will still receive advice.

For full details of eligibility criteria and conditions see Appendix A and D which include a qualifying checklist for this form of assistance.

10.2.4 Project Loan or Grant (PL or PG)

All loans and grants will seek to improve housing conditions or improvements in housing related works that lead to a health improvement for the occupant. The principle of the loan or grant is to provide gap funding whereby the value offered does not exceed the capital expenditure of other supplementary funding (such as other grant funding or resident contributions). The loan or grant is subject to the availability of discretionary monies from the council and also health services or other government related schemes such as ECO funds which provide match funding.

The loan or grant will have set criteria dependent on the project it is linked to. Specific details of each available project loan or grant will be published online (and will be available in print on request). The projects will follow considerations made through the Project template (check list) in appendix D

Criteria will be set and approved by the Head of Environmental Health & Licensing in consultation with the Portfolio Holder and be aligned with the council's current corporate objectives and priorities.

Projects should encourage recycling of funds: a loan is preferred over a grant unless it is considered this would be too detrimental to the project, anticipated uptake would be adversely affected or of too small value to be a loan.

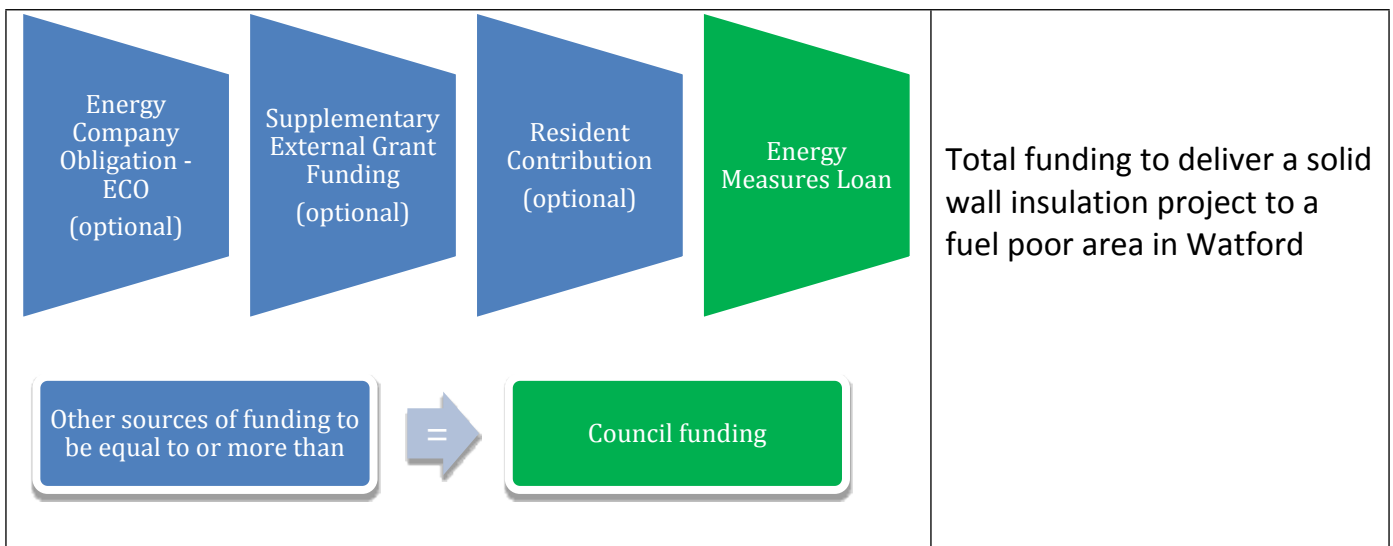
Any loan is added as a local land charge to a property and is interest free.

A SHL or SHG MAY also be subject to some of the following additional criteria, which are set by the terms of each project:

- Be means tested or available for 'able to pay' residents
- Made available for energy efficient measures and technologies such as insulation, heating appliances or renewable technologies.
- Have set geographical areas defined by a project.
- Be subject to completion of supplementary works – for example loft insulation may be required in conjunction with a loan for solid wall insulation.
- Be available for the private sector (owner occupiers, private rented tenant or private rented sector landlords as the project dictates).
- Not to be used when alternative financial grants or assistance outside of the organisation is practically viable and readily available.
- Provide match funded to ECO, grant and resident funding to enable high cost energy efficiency improvements such as external wall insulation.
- Targeted project to encourage improvements to the housing quality of private rented sector properties.

Below are three examples of Project Loans/Grants:-

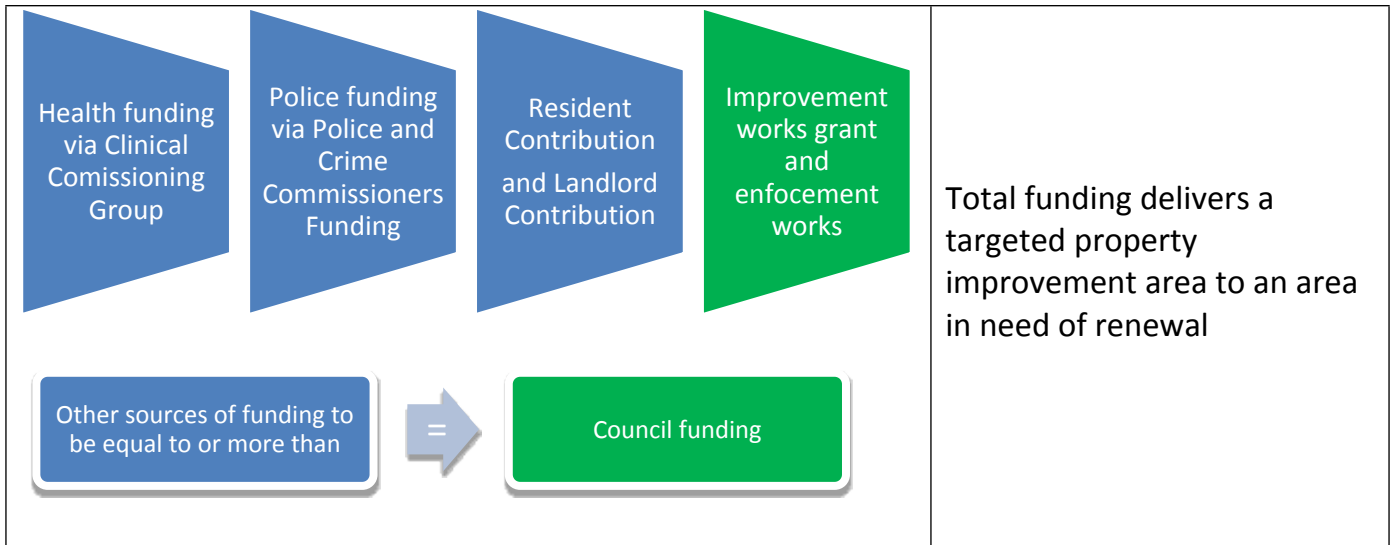
- a) An Energy Measures Project Loan** set up to support an energy scheme that the Council is going to participate in. The loan is designed to support shortfalls in other supporting funding and should always be used once all other available funding has been applied.



b) A Street Improvement Project Grant

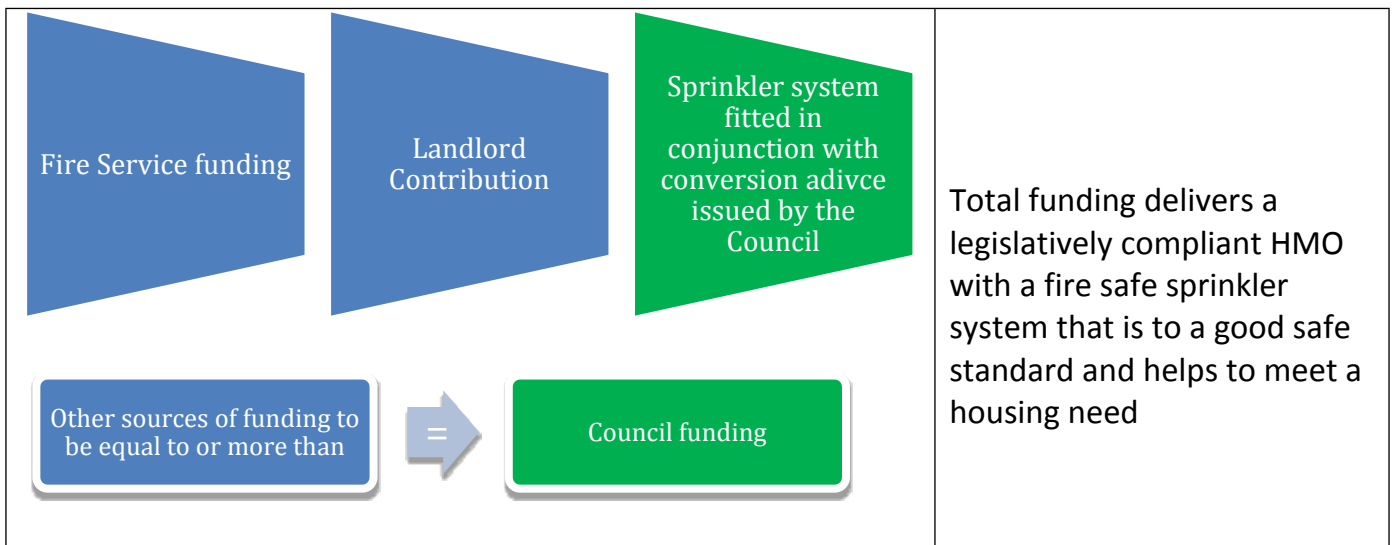
A grant given to homeowners and landlords to improve the external condition of housing in a defined project area; with the aim of improving all aspects of the home and the wellbeing of residents. The project seed funding and resource encourages external partner funding. The project work is carried out in conjunction with owners to complete necessary regulatory requirements without the need for enforcement where appropriate due to encouragement and participation. The

project improves the housing standard and reduces the probability of a detrimental health outcome to residents.



c) A House in Multiple Occupation Improvement Project (sprinkler systems)

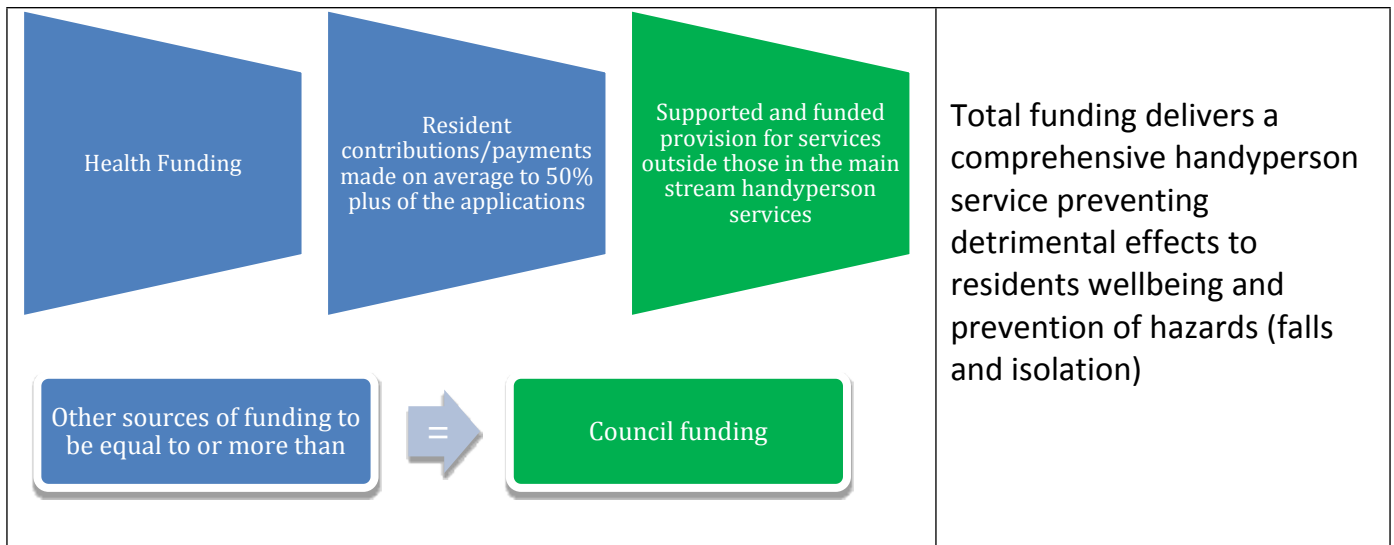
An incentive project to encourage sprinkler systems to be fitted to HMOs as there is a greater risk of fatality in the event of a fire. The project improves the housing standard, reduces the probability of a detrimental health outcome and helps to address the housing demand.



d) Development of a supported handyperson service

The principles of this specific service are further described under the promotion and enabling section – see 10.1. A small grant supported handyperson service to cover work deemed appropriate to vulnerable individual’s houses; to facilitate other works to take place or remove HHSRS hazards. In the first instance referrals are made to other agencies under this grant policy. Residents are asked for contributions/full payment towards this service. Where works are outside of the skill set and remit of the external agency, but are still required and meet the policy principles then in house funded referrals may take place. For instance, fitting of a

telecoms point so that another agency can fit a lifeline (in this case match funding in value is achieved through the client contribution and payment for the lifeline).



10.3 Trusted Advice

From the current proposals the trusted advice comes in the form of referral to web based information such as [Which trusted traders](#) (currently supported through Hertfordshire County Council Trading Standard schemes) and support via the [Hertfordshire Home Improvement Agency \(HIA\)](#). (The newly set up HIA will aim to develop schemes that use trusted builders).

10.4 Mandatory Assistance

10.4.1 Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG's – Mandatory Direct Financial Assistance)

[Disabled Facilities Grants](#) (DFGs) enable adaptations to be made someone's home so that they can continue living independently. Examples of works undertaken with DFGs include:

- Widening doors
- Installing ramps
- Improving access to rooms and facilities – e.g. installing stair lifts
- Providing access to the garden
- Providing a downstairs bathroom or wet room
- Providing a heating system suitable for an applicant's needs
- Adapting heating or lighting controls to make them easier for applicants to use

The grants are available nationally with criteria set outside of this policy. They are subject to conditions and eligibility (which includes a test of resources, except in case where eligible works are for a child or young person under the age of 19 where no means test is required).

On 7 November 2016 Watford Borough Council's Cabinet agreed to transfer its DFG service to the Housing Improvement (HIA) Service for Hertfordshire. The reason for transferring DFG work to the countywide HIA service was firstly, that costs, error and inconsistency in dealing with DFG applications across the county would be reduced and secondly, that communication about DFGs and allied services could be improved so that applicants could access them more easily. The key deliverables of the shared Home Improvement Service are set out below:

- Ensure that all individuals in Hertfordshire who need housing adaptations to support independent living will have access to an appropriate service that is timely, accessible, equitable and fit for purpose to address rising demographic pressures.
- Deliver a fully standardised service, enhancing operational efficiency, customer satisfaction and improving value for money.
- Implement robust monitoring arrangements against key performance indicators.
- Improve service resilience through joined up working, adopting a common methodology and service standards, sharing staff knowledge, skills and expertise.
- Open up future opportunities to expand into private sector adaptations and align to wider Clinical Commissioning Group activity in order to maximize income generation, efficiency and value and impact of the DFG element of the Better Care Fund.

Further information about applying for DFGs can be obtained from the [HIA](#) website or by calling them on 01438 843467 or 01438 843948.

10.4 Enforcement

10.4.1 Owner Occupiers

Where the owner has not taken action to remedy a category 1 hazard (or made use of any assistance offered) enforcement will be considered. This policy is aimed at ensuring that occupiers are not left in conditions that unacceptably affect their health and safety and to also protect the housing stock and Watford's living environment. Any enforcement would be taken in line with the current [Compliance Policy](#). Enforcement will also be considered where other approaches have failed, for example, where an adjoining property causes a housing-related nuisance or annoyance.

Use of legislation such as issuing Community Protection Notices under the [Anti-Social Behavior, Crime and Policing Act 2014](#) will also be considered.

10.4.2 Rented Properties (private and social)

As set out in section 1, various legislation provides powers for Environmental Health to enforcing housing standards in rented properties owned by private landlords as well as housing associations.

11.0 Fees and Charges

The principle within this policy is to charge cost recovery fees on Safer Homes and Project Loans where appropriate.

Grants are considered too small in nature and unreasonable for vulnerable clients to have the additional burden to fund. The Safer Homes Loan or Project Loan would incorporate fees which are added to the cost of the loan and to the charge put on the property. The fee is repayable in the same terms as the loan itself and remains interest free.

Details of the fees are set out in the fees and charges summary available on request.

12.0 Eligibility and Conditions for Assistance

The applicant must meet the Council's detailed eligibility conditions for the type of assistance they are requesting (detailed in the relevant appendices) unless there are exceptional circumstances.

12.1 Applications for Assistance in Exceptional Circumstances

Exceptional circumstances relating to eligibility and conditions not covered by any of the other provisions in this policy will be considered through the Policy Panel to whom the applicant will need to submit in writing a justification for exceptional treatment. This panel consists of the Head of Environmental Health & Licensing (or the Head of Community and Environmental Services in their absence) and one of the Environmental Health Managers.

Examples of a situation where the Policy Panel may consider cases include:

- In certain circumstances an applicant may not have applied to receive all of the benefits they are entitled to. Where an applicant would qualify to receive a benefit that would mean they would be considered under the terms of the normal policy then they may be considered under the exceptional circumstances policy.
- People with Special needs or for reasons of mental or social impairment; some owners neglect both themselves and their properties.
- Assistance to move to more suitable or supported accommodation may be appropriate instead of the offer of a loan to complete works to a property; where the cost of the work would be more than the cost of the expenses to move (such as solicitors fees, etc...) and where the new property or accommodation is free from hazards or defects.

- An application for assistance where the individual fails to meet the eligibility criteria but there are valid reasons why assistance should be considered. For example, there may be circumstances where an individual returns for assistance before the 5 year exclusion has elapsed because of valid reasons individual to that person.
- Where there is a risk of a class 1 or 2 health outcome (see [HHSRS guidance](#)) danger to an occupant, where the occupant is deemed physically vulnerable but may not meet the income qualification criteria. In this instance assistance will seek to mitigate the class 1 or 2 health outcome and seek to recover costs through a charge on the property.
- In specific circumstances where the occupant is deemed physically vulnerable but may not meet the income qualification criteria and where works may enable or unlock other funding; such as a property clearance to enable a DFG application to take place. In this instance assistance will seek to recover costs through a charge on the property.

Service Standards

13.0 Service Standards

The following Service standards aims apply to the provision of services under this strategy:

- [Current Customer standards](#)
- Once a **complete application** for financial assistance has been received (all paperwork, forms and evidence) the application will be determined within 6 months. This is subject to discretionary funding being available. (Please note that The Home Improvement Agency has its own standards)
- 90% customer satisfaction rating for the service.

14.0 Complaints and Appeals

14.1 Complaints

Complaints are where a service user is dissatisfied. For example they may feel they have been treated unfairly or disrespectfully, the council has not done something in this policy we should have done or delivered a poor service or failed to meet agreed timescales.

Where a service user is dissatisfied with the service that they have received and they have been unable to resolve the issue or are unsatisfied with the officers response, the following Council's Complaints Procedure should be followed:

1st Stage

To put their complaint in writing, by telephone, by email or via the Customer Service Centre. A written response will be provided within 10 working days. If further time is needed then the Council will advise the service user that they are not able to respond within these timescales or if they need to handle the complaint differently.

2nd Stage

If the service user is not satisfied with the response they receive at stage 1 then, within 15 working days of receiving that response, they can ask for their complaint to be escalated to the 2nd stage. A manager, usually from Environmental Health & Licensing will investigate and provide a written response will be provided within 10 working days. The service user can ask to have a meeting. If this happens then the service user will then receive a response within five working days from the date of the meeting.

3rd Stage

If the service user is still not happy with the way the Council has handled their complaint and they have already gone through both steps of the complaints procedure then they have exhausted the Council's complaint procedure and can

then contact the [Local Government Ombudsman](#)

The Local Government Ombudsman

Po Box 4771

Coventry

CV4 0EH

Tel : 0300 061 0614

<http://www.lgo.org.uk/>

14.2 Appeals

Appeals are:

- The complaint process above has been followed
- where a service user does not believe that the formal action that the Council has decided to take is correct (e.g. the service of an enforcement notice) or
- a service user does not believe that the correct decision has been made in relation to their application for assistance

14.2.1 Appeals against the service or contents of a formal notice are to be via the statutory appeals process associated with that notice.

14.2.2 The following mechanism is provided for appeals relating to decisions that have been made in relation to service users' application for assistance.

1st Stage

Inform the Head of Environmental Services of the reason why the service user believes an incorrect decision has been made. This can be done in writing, by telephone, by email or via the Customer Service Centre. The Head of Service will pass the appeal to the Manager responsible for implementing this policy to investigate. A written response will usually be provided within one month subject to the appellant providing any necessary information when requested. Timescales may increase where further information, referrals etc. are required.

2nd Stage

If the outcome is not satisfactory the appeal can be heard by the Policy Panel, consisting of the Head of Environmental Services and two other Environmental Services Managers (or their equivalent from another service) not associated with the case.

The policy panel will consider appeals only where they meet one or more of the grounds for appeal as follows:

- The decision contradicted the Council's stated policy
- There is evidence of a relevant change in circumstances

- There is new relevant factual information
- The decision contradicted the principles laid down for requests for financial assistance outside the policy

3rd Stage

The individual should take independent advice on the options available to them.

15.0 Review of this policy

This policy will be reviewed when there are legislative changes or changes in council strategy or policy, that impact on its contents. It will also be reviewed if evidence that changes are needed come to light. Minor changes during the lifetime of the policy may be made in consultation with the Portfolio Holder and the Head of Environmental Services. Major changes to this policy will need consultation.

Appendices

APPENDIX A - CONDITIONS FOR ALL FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

- All applicants must be aged 18 or over on the date of application
- The property must be in the Watford Borough Council area
- The Council will not accept applications from:-
 - Other local authorities
 - Any property owned by Watford Borough Council
 - Housing Action Trusts
 - Housing Trusts
 - Health Authorities
 - NHS Trusts
 - Police Authorities
 - Housing Associations/Registered Providers
 - (the only exception being DFGs; or for Projects loans where the specific conditions allow for them to receive the grant).
- All properties must be at least 10 years of age
 - with the exception of DFGs
 - where there are extenuating circumstances
- Applications will not be considered if works have already commenced or been completed (prior to an application being submitted and formerly approved)
 - unless the works have commenced in order to comply with a notice or HMO license document in circumstances where this is relevant to the assistance provided.
 - The terms set out in a Project Loan override this principle
- All applicants will be required to fill in the Council's application form and provide all supporting documentation. They must state the nature of the works that they wish to be undertaken and provide at least two competitive estimates from independent contractors that realistically reflect the cost of the works (unless expressly told by the officer that two quotes are not required). Where relevant, a party submitting estimates must be members of appropriate professional bodies e.g. GasSafe, NICEIC etc. In some circumstances, one estimate may be accepted if officers are satisfied that the estimate is reasonable for the work required. Applicants must also provide details of any preliminary or ancillary costs e.g. architects' or surveyors' fees.

The Council will recalculate approved financial assistance award if the actual cost of the work is lower or higher than the original approved award – for example where pre agreed changes to the award take place due to unforeseen works or any reassessment of the original work.

All applicants must either:

- own the property or
 - be a tenant* responsible for carrying out the work and have the owner's written consent for the work to be done and provide evidence of this in either case.
- For certain Project Loans in special circumstances be a tenant without responsibilities, in which case the landlord would be required to apply on the tenants behalf.

*For the purposes of the above 'tenant' includes :

- A secure tenant or statutory tenant
- A protected occupier under the rent (Agriculture) Act 1976 or a person in occupation under an assured agriculture occupancy within the meaning of Part I of the Housing Act 1998 and
- An employee (whether full time or part time) who occupies the dwelling or flat concerned for the better performance of their duties

But does not include a tenant of

- Other local authorities
- Any property owned by Watford Borough council
- Housing Action Trusts
- Housing Trusts
- Health Authorities
- NHS Trusts
- Police Authorities
- Housing Associations/Registered Providers
- (the only exception being DFGs; or for Projects loans where the specific conditions allow for them to receive the grant).

- Applications will not normally be considered if the Council has given financial assistance for the same property during the previous five years, unless the individual assistance conditions say otherwise. In some cases secondary assistance will be considered where the new assistance is for something different and the works were unforeseen at the time of the primary assistance was given (with the exception of project loans).
- Where the income or benefits of members of the household other than the applicant are to be taken into consideration same sex partners as defined in the Civil Partnership Act 2004 will be assessed in the same way as partners of opposite sex.
- For five years after the assisted works have been completed the property must be occupied as the only or main residence of the applicant or a member of his family. Failing this the Council will require repayment of the assistance.

- The Council will also require repayment of the amount of grant/loan paid including all installments and final payments if the property is “disposed of” either during completion of the works (i.e. before the certified date) or within 7 years of the completion of the works. Appendix E explains the meaning of “disposal”.
- The Council will also require repayment of the amount of grant/loan paid including all installments if the applicant fails to allow the works to be completed without a valid reason.
- The Council will also require repayment (full or proportionate) if the works for which the grant/loan was awarded are the subject of an insurance or legal claim which the applicant successfully recovers (fully or partly).
- The Council will not entertain an application for elements of work that are subject to insurance or legal claims until the claim is determined except in exceptional circumstances.
- The amount of assistance provided as a loan will be registered by the Council as a local land charge on the property for 7 years. The cost of this will be included in the Assistance amount and costs determined. Applicants need to sign their consent to the charge being placed.
- The Council will not consider applications if the applicant does not provide all the evidence reasonably requested by the Council.
- Applications will not normally be considered if the client or another member of the household who has previously received a grant/loan for the property has failed to service or maintain equipment, systems, services and building elements as previously recommended by any council specification. The exceptions are:-
 - DFGs
 - Extenuating circumstances
- All applicants will be required to complete the work within 12 months from the date that their application is approved.
- Any grant/loan may be paid by installment, with at least 10% being retained until the Council is satisfied that the works have been completed to their satisfaction. Any installments will be made payable directly to the contractor employed to undertake the work, who will have to be the named contractor on the grant/loan approval, unless the Council agrees in writing for a different contractor to be employed (this written permission must be obtained before they commence the works). The exception to this is in the case of Project loans where grants maybe paid directly to landlords, home owners or other agents according to the specifics of the scheme.

- No payment will be made without a valid invoice or receipt of payment.
- The Council will require the grant/loan to be repaid if the applicant ceases to be eligible for it before the works have been completed.
- If the applicant has supplied the Council with false, inaccurate or incomplete information in order to obtain the grant/loan, or if works have been started before it has been approved repayment will be required.
- In calculating time periods dates will be taken from the date that the works are deemed to be completed by the officer.
- No assistance is available for second homes or holiday homes.
- If the work for which financial assistance is approved is not completed then any interim payments that have been made will be reclaimed from the client.
- Where the cost of the work exceeds the maximum or a contribution is required the Council must be satisfied before approving the financial assistance that the applicant can raise the rest of the funds to do the necessary work and that any applicant contribution is made prior to any council funded contribution.
- The ownership, maintenance and running costs of improvements become the sole responsibility of the applicant upon completion (in the case of DFGs a maintenance agreement may be paid for by Watford Borough Council for some pieces of equipment and the client is to contact the person providing the agreement for further assistance)
- Works are to be completed in accordance with the standard specifications as produced by the Council.
- The Council will require repayment of the loan/grant if there is any breach of Development Control or Building Regulations requirements in relation to the assisted works.

House Boats and Mobile Homes

The above provisions apply to house boats* and mobile homes** subject to the following:

- Any person lawfully in occupation of the house boat or mobile home shall be treated as a person with an owner's interest in or a tenant of a dwelling
- The Council will only accept applications for assistance from house boats and mobile homes where the residence requirement is met.

- The residence requirement in the case of a house boat is that the Council are satisfied that :
 - The applicant has occupied the boat as their only or main residence for a period of at least three years immediately preceding the date of application;
 - The boat has for that period had its only or main mooring in the same locality on an inland waterway within the boundary of Watford Borough Council; and
 - The applicant has a right to moor their boat there.

- The residence requirement in the case of a mobile home is that Watford Borough Council are satisfied that :
 - The applicant has occupied the mobile home as their only or main residence for a period of at least three years immediately preceding the date of application;
 - The mobile home has for that period been on land forming part of the same protected site within the meaning of the Mobile Homes Act 1983; and
 - The applicant occupied it under an agreement to which that act applies or under a gratuitous agreement.

*‘House boat’ means a boat or similar structure designed or adapted for use as a place or permanent habitation which is a dwelling for the purposes of Part I of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (Council tax)

**‘Mobile home’ means a caravan within the meaning of Part I of the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960 (disregarding amendment made by section 13(2) of the Caravan Sites Act 1968) which is a dwelling for the purposes of Part I of the Local Government Finance Act 1992

APPENDIX B - CONDITIONS FOR SAFER HOMES GRANT (SHG)

In addition to the conditions that apply to all financial assistance (see Appendix A) the following applies to SHG's:

- The applicant must occupy the property and have occupied it as their only or main residence for the 3 years immediately preceding the date of application.
- To be eligible to receive this financial assistance the applicant's household must meet the Government's definition of vulnerable through the '[Affordable Warmth Group](#)' or be in receipt of Housing Benefit or Watford Borough Council Tax Reduction. The Council will follow any changes to this Government definition and to changes to their own set benefit criteria. The current definition is found in appendix F.
- An application for SHG will not normally be considered if any type of financial assistance (with the exception of DFGs and Project Loans) has been given in the previous 7 years except in extenuating circumstances (e.g. to enable early discharge from hospital) or where the works are part of an additional application
- Where there are extenuating circumstances and not all the works necessary can be done under a single application then additional applications can be made (for example a person's age, or infirmity, or because of practical reasons agreed by the Council.) Successive applications for this assistance may be made up to the maximum SHG limit of £1,000 over a 5 year period if eligibility criteria are still met. In calculating time periods dates will be taken from the date that the works are deemed to be completed by the Council officer. After that the owner or any other occupant of the dwelling may not re-apply for SHG for 7 years. The total cost of all the necessary works will be determined before any assistance is given.
- The financial assistance covers 100% of the necessary works up to a maximum of £1,000 and is given in the form of a grant awarded to the applicant* on completion. *Payments are made directly to the approved contractor nominated at the award of the grant on behalf of the applicant on satisfactory completion of the works.
- Where there are unforeseen works these will be included within a grant up to a maximum of a 100% increase (i.e. a total grant of up to £2,000) and be subject to pre-approval by the council before the works commence
- In order to receive the SHG the applicant must carry out all the work on the schedule that accompanies the approval. If they do not agree to the work being completed the grant will not be approved (unless there are extenuating circumstances for example ill health)
- The works that are classed as "eligible works" for SHG are :

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Removal of HHSRS Hazards• Prevention of Cat 1 HHSRS Hazards |
|--|

- Work that leads to the enabling of HHSRS hazard mitigation
- Housing defect rectification that alleviates an individual's state of physical, mental and social well-being as determined within the remit of this policy by the council
- As an incentive tool to encourage other assistance such as a Safer Homes Loan or to engage vulnerable residents to work with other external agencies and services

- Works will be given in the order of priority that alleviates the worst conditions that are the most detrimental to health, unless there are extenuating circumstances when the order of priority may be changed by the Council Officer. Where not all the works can be done within the grant limit then the lowest priority will be omitted from the approval works schedule.
- The works for which SHG is approved will be in the priority shown in the schedule that accompanies the approval. If additional unforeseen works arise then these will be prioritised along with all the other works. This may result in some works being pushed down the priority scale and if the cost of the works is greater than the grant limit then the lowest priority works may not be covered at all.
- Where a grant for up to £1,000 is approved if unforeseen works are required then they will be given as part of the grant up to a total cost for the works of £2,000. If additional works take the cost over £2,000 then the grant will be converted to a loan.

Safer Homes Grant checklist

Safer Homes Grant - Checklist	
a) Referral by a health or housing professional	✓
who	
b) Qualifying benefit*	✓
which benefit	
c) Or would be entitled to receive	✓
which benefit	Notes: why they have not applied or in the process of...
d) Owner or private rented tenant with repairing responsibilities	✓
e) >10 year old property	✓
f) Applicant has had no previous discretionary assistance within 7 years*	✓
g) Occupied for previous 3 years	✓
h) Approved works no more than £1,000 limit	✓
i) *Or in exceptional circumstances via Grant Panel; where there is a risk to a class 1 or 2 health outcome to a resident deemed vulnerable	✓
brief description of risk and vulnerability	
j) Meets the conditions as set out in the relevant grant appendices	✓

APPENDIX C - SAFER HOMES LOAN (SHL)

In addition to the conditions that apply to all financial assistance (see Appendix A) the following applies to SHL's:

- The applicant must occupy the property and have occupied it as their only or main residence for the 3 years immediately preceding the date of application.
- To be eligible to receive this financial assistance the applicant's household must meet the Government's definition of vulnerable through the '[Affordable Warmth Group](#)' or be in receipt of Housing Benefit or Watford Borough Council Tax Reduction. The Council will follow any changes to this Government definition and to changes to their own set benefit criteria. The current definition is found in appendix F.
- An application for SHL will not normally be considered if any type of financial assistance (with the exception of DFGs) has been given in the previous 7 years except in extenuating circumstances (e.g. to enable early discharge from hospital) or where the works are part of an additional application (see point below)
- The financial assistance covers 100% of the necessary works up to a maximum of £10,000 and is given in the form of a loan awarded to the applicant* on completion.

*Payments are made directly to the approved contractor nominated at the award of the grant on behalf of the applicant on satisfactory completion of the works.

- Where there are unforeseen works these will be included within a loan up to a maximum of a £2,000 increase (i.e. a total grant of up to £12,000) and be subject to preapproval by the council before the works commence
- In order to receive the SHL the applicant must carry out all the work on the schedule that accompanies the approval. If they do not agree to the work being completed the loan will not be approved (unless there are extenuating circumstances for example ill health)
- Where there are extenuating circumstances and not all the works necessary can be done under a single application then additional applications can be made (for example a person's age, or infirmity, or because of practical reasons agreed by the Council.) Successive applications for this assistance may be made up to the maximum SHL limit of £10,000 over a 5 year period if eligibility criteria are still met. In calculating time periods dates will be taken from the date that the works are deemed to be completed by the Officer. After that the owner or any other occupant of the dwelling may not re-apply for SHL for 7 years. The total cost of all the necessary works will be determined before any assistance is given.

- The works that are classed as “eligible works” for SHL are :

- Removal of HHSRS Hazards
- Prevention of Cat 1 HHSRS Hazards
- Work that leads to the enabling of HHSRS hazard mitigation
- Housing defect rectification that alleviates an individual’s state of physical, mental and social well-being as determined within the remit of this policy by the council

- Works will be given in the order of priority that alleviates the worst conditions that are the most detrimental to health, unless there are extenuating circumstances when the order of priority may be changed by the Officer. Where not all the works can be done within the grant limit then the lowest priority will be omitted from the approval works schedule.
- The works for which SHL is approved will be in the priority shown in the schedule that accompanies the approval. If additional unforeseen works arise then these will be prioritised along with all the other works. This may result in some works being pushed down the priority scale and if the cost of the works is greater than the grant limit then the lowest priority works may not be covered at all.
- The loan is interest-free indefinitely. It would be repayable only when the applicant disposes of the property. (Disposal is defined in Appendix E). Requests to defer repayment because of hardship/extenuating circumstances will be considered by the policy panel, which has the discretion to write off debts when there is no reasonable prospect of repayment.
- The applicant would be free to repay this loan fully or partly at any time without penalty.
- All reasonable fees associated with this loan are included in the loan, unless that would exceed the maximum loan: in which case the Council will bear any excess. Fees charges are detailed in our fee charging policy available on request.

Loans for House Boats and Mobile Homes

Definitions here are as before described under Safer Homes Grant

Safer Homes Loan checklist

Safer Homes Loan - Checklist	
a) Referral by a health or housing professional	✓
who	
b) Qualifying benefit*	✓
which benefit	
c) Or would be entitled to receive	✓
which benefit	Notes: why they have not applied or in the process of...
d) Owner or private rented tenant with repairing responsibilities	✓
e) >10 year old property	✓
f) Applicant has had no previous discretionary assistance within 7 years*	✓
g) Occupied for previous 3 years	✓
h) Approved works no more than £10,000 limit	✓
i) *Or in exceptional circumstances via Grant Panel; where there is a risk to a class 1 or 2 health outcome to a resident deemed vulnerable	✓
brief description of risk and vulnerability	
j) Meets the conditions as set out in the relevant grant appendices	

APPENDIX D - PROJECT LOAN/GRANT

- All loans and grants will seek to improve housing condition or improvements in housing related works that lead to a health improvement for the occupant.
- The loan or grant will have set criteria dependent on the project it is linked to. Specific details of each available project loan or grant will be published online (and are available in print on request). The projects will follow considerations made through the Project template (check list)
- Criteria will be set and approved by the Head of Environmental Health & Licensing in consultation with the Portfolio Holder and be aligned with the current Councils corporate objectives and priorities.
- A fee is charged for cost recovery and added to the cost of the loan or grant if appropriate in accordance with our fee charging policy. The loan or grant limit of a maximum of £5,000 excludes the cost of any fee.

Project Loan/Grant - Checklist	
a) Improves the condition of the home(s)	
how	
b) Has a positive effect on the health of the occupant(s) through improvement of the housing condition	✓
how	
c) The loan or grant is at least match funded; where the amount offered does not exceed the capital expenditure of other supplementary funding (such as other grant funding or resident contributions)	✓
Loan/grant limit (no more than £5,000)	Other funding details
d) Preference is for this project assistance to be given as a loan	✓
If it is to be a grant, explain why: n/a (for a loan) or give reason for grant	
e) Geographic area of the project	
Define the project area (i.e. whole Watford borough)	
f) The loan is available for Owner Occupiers	✓
or private rented tenants with repairing responsibilities	
or to a private rented sector landlords (assistance is not available to any other landlords or organisations)	
g) Approved by portfolio holder and head of environmental health	✓
h) Meets conditions set out in the relevant grant appendices	✓
i) Other loan criteria details as defined by the project brief	✓
j) Other loan criteria details as defined by the project brief	✓
k) Other loan criteria details as defined by the project brief.....	✓

APPENDIX E - DISPOSAL

Definition of disposal

- (1) A disposal (whether of the whole or part of the dwelling) is a relevant disposal for the purposes of the provisions of this policy relating to grant or loan conditions if it is –
- (a) a conveyance of the freehold or an assignment of the lease, or
 - (b) the grant of a lease (other than a mortgage term) for a term of more than 21 years otherwise than at a rack rent.
- (2) For the purposes of subsection (1) (b) it shall be assumed –
- (a) that any option to renew or extend a lease or sub-lease, whether or not forming part of a series of options, is exercised, and
 - (b) that any option to terminate a lease or sub-lease is not exercised.
- (3) The grant of an option enabling a person to call for a relevant disposal shall be treated as such a disposal made to him.

Exempt disposals

- (1) A disposal is an exempt disposal for the purposes of the provisions of this policy relating to grant or loan conditions if it is a disposal of the whole or part of the premises to which the application relates of any of the following descriptions-
- (a) a conveyance of the freehold or an assignment of the lease where the person, or each of the persons, to whom it is made a qualifying person (as defined in subsection (2));
 - (b) a vesting in a person taking under a will or on an intestacy (this exemption applies only to grants, not to loans);
 - (c) a disposal in pursuance of any such order as is mentioned in subsection (3);
 - (d) a compulsory disposal (see subsection(4));
 - (e) a disposal of property consisting of land included in the dwelling by virtue of section 184 of the Housing Act 1985 (land let with or used for the purposes of dwelling-house);
 - (f) a disposal under which the interest of a person entitled to assistance by way of repurchase under Part XVI of that Act (assistance for owners of defective housing) is acquired in accordance with Schedule 20 to that Act;
 - (g) a disposal by way of enfranchisement or lease extension under Part I of the Leasehold Reform Act 1967;
 - (h) a disposal in pursuance of an obligation arising under Chapter I or II of Part I of the Leasehold Reform, Housing and Urban Development Act 1993;

- (i) a disposal on the exercise of a right of first refusal under Part I of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1987 or in accordance with an acquisition order under Part III of that Act;
- (j) a disposal on the exercise of –
 - (i) the right to buy under Part V of the Housing Act 1985, or
 - (ii) the right conferred by section 16 of the Housing Act 1996 (right of tenant of registered social landlord to acquire dwelling);
 - (iii) a conveyance of the freehold or an assignment of the lease where -
 - (iv) the person making the disposal is aged at least 70,
 - (v) the disposal is to provide an annuity income, and
 - (vi) the person concerned is entitled to continue to occupy the premises as his only or main residence.

(2) A person is a qualifying person for the purposes of subsection (1)(a) if –

- (a) in the case of an individual, he is –
 - (i) the person, or one of the persons, by whom the disposal is made;
 - (ii) the spouse, or former spouse, of that person or one of those persons; or
 - (iii) a member of the family of that person or one of those persons; or
- (b) in the case of a company, it is an associated company of the company by whom the disposal is made.

Section 416 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 (meaning of associated company) applies in determining whether a company is an associated company of another for the purposes of paragraph (b).

(3) The orders referred to in subsection (1)(c) are orders under –

- (a) section 24 or 24A of the Matrimonial Causes Act 1973 (property adjustment orders or orders for the sale of property in connection with matrimonial proceedings);
- (b) section 2 of the Inheritance (Provision for Family and Dependents) Act 1975 (orders as to financial provision to be made from estate);
- (c) section 17 of the Matrimonial and Family Proceedings Act 1984 (property adjustment orders or orders for the sale of property after overseas divorce, etc.); or
- (d) paragraph 1 of Schedule 1 to the Children Act 1989 (orders for financial relief against parents).

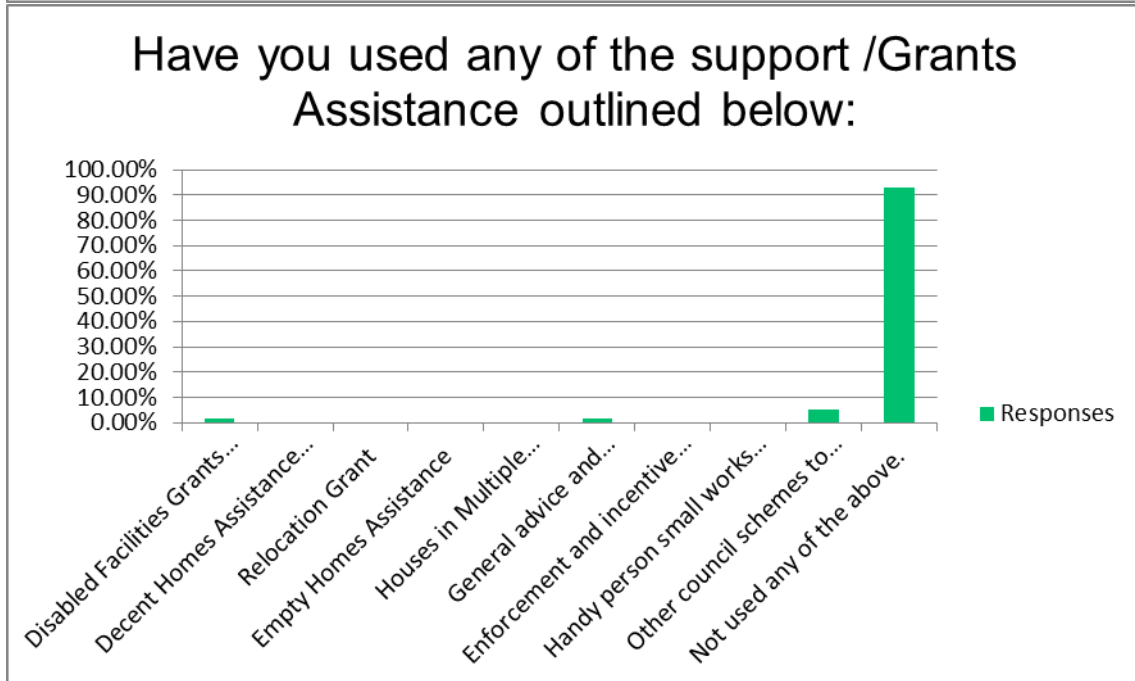
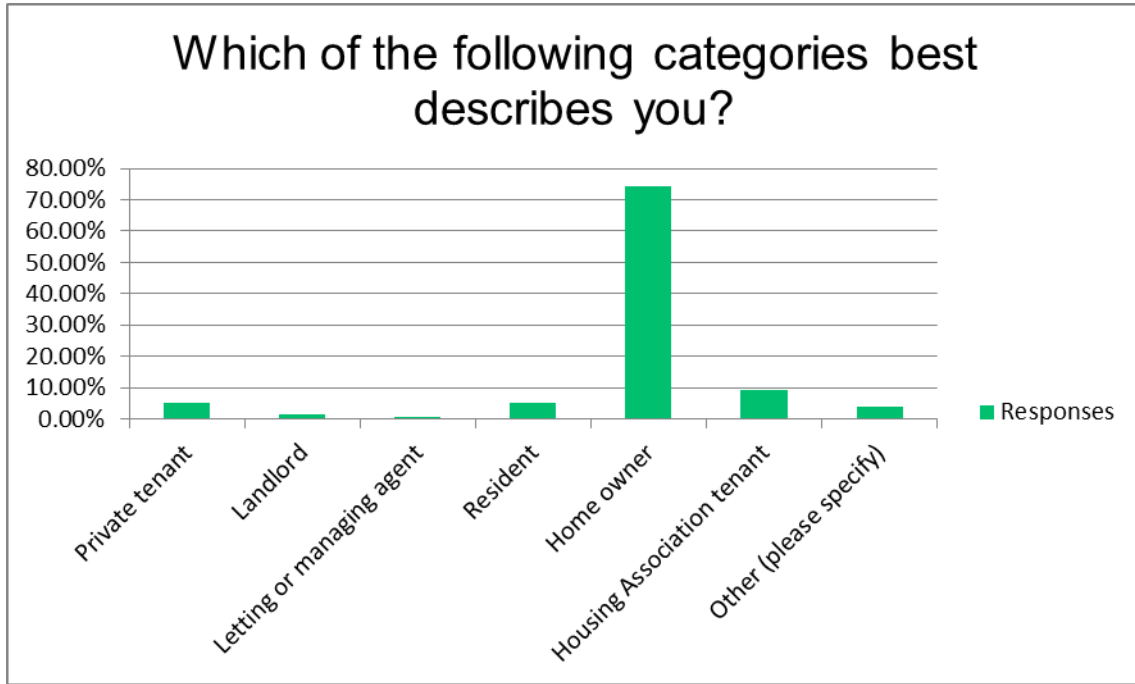
(4) For the purposes of subsection (1)(d) a compulsory disposal is a disposal of property which is acquired compulsorily, or is acquired by a person who has made or would have made, or for whom another person has made or would have made, a compulsory purchase order authorising its compulsory purchase for the purposes for which it is acquired.

APPENDIX F - DEFINITION OF VULNERABLE

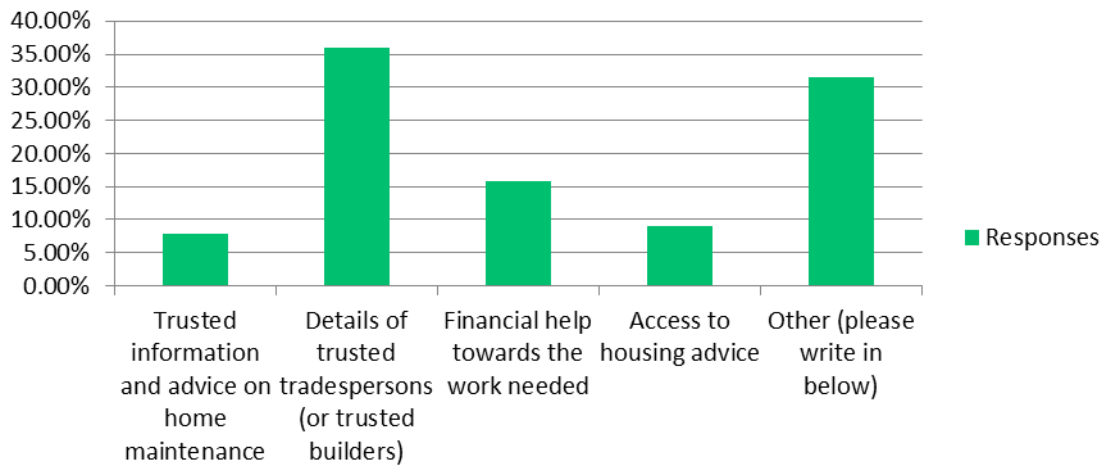
- It is proposed that this policy will stay aligned with any changes to the Affordable Warmth group, Housing Benefit and Watford's Council Tax Reduction Scheme definition, subject to these changes still delivering the principles and aims of this policy.
- Following any changes to these groups made by government or by the Council is deemed a minor change and would be subject to delegated authority under this policy; unless the changes make for a fundamental change in position.
- The table below summarises the definition

April 2017																												
Housing benefit																												
OR																												
Watford Council Tax Reduction																												
OR																												
Income-related Employment and Support Allowance																												
Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance																												
Income Support																												
Pension Guarantee Credit																												
OR																												
Tax Credits; On the condition that the household's relevant income does not exceed the amount set below:																												
<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th rowspan="2">Type of claim</th> <th colspan="5">Number of children or qualifying young persons for whom the claimant is responsible</th> </tr> <tr> <th>0</th> <th>1</th> <th>2</th> <th>3</th> <th>4 or more</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Single claim</td> <td>£13,200</td> <td>£17,400</td> <td>£21,600</td> <td>£25,800</td> <td>£30,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Joint claim</td> <td>£19,800</td> <td>£24,000</td> <td>£28,200</td> <td>£32,400</td> <td>£36,600</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>						Type of claim	Number of children or qualifying young persons for whom the claimant is responsible					0	1	2	3	4 or more	Single claim	£13,200	£17,400	£21,600	£25,800	£30,000	Joint claim	£19,800	£24,000	£28,200	£32,400	£36,600
Type of claim	Number of children or qualifying young persons for whom the claimant is responsible																											
	0	1	2	3	4 or more																							
Single claim	£13,200	£17,400	£21,600	£25,800	£30,000																							
Joint claim	£19,800	£24,000	£28,200	£32,400	£36,600																							
OR																												
Universal Credit; On the condition that the household's relevant income does not exceed the amount set out below:																												
<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th rowspan="2">Type of claim</th> <th colspan="5">Number of children or qualifying young persons for whom the claimant is responsible</th> </tr> <tr> <th>0</th> <th>1</th> <th>2</th> <th>3</th> <th>4 or more</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Single claim</td> <td>£1,100</td> <td>£1,450</td> <td>£1,800</td> <td>£2,150</td> <td>£2,500</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Joint claimant</td> <td>£1,650</td> <td>£2,000</td> <td>£2,350</td> <td>£2,700</td> <td>£3,050</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>						Type of claim	Number of children or qualifying young persons for whom the claimant is responsible					0	1	2	3	4 or more	Single claim	£1,100	£1,450	£1,800	£2,150	£2,500	Joint claimant	£1,650	£2,000	£2,350	£2,700	£3,050
Type of claim	Number of children or qualifying young persons for whom the claimant is responsible																											
	0	1	2	3	4 or more																							
Single claim	£1,100	£1,450	£1,800	£2,150	£2,500																							
Joint claimant	£1,650	£2,000	£2,350	£2,700	£3,050																							

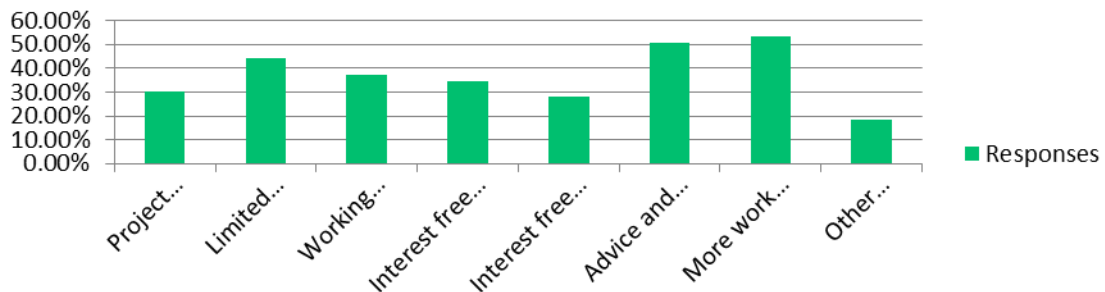
APPENDIX G - PUBLIC CONSULTATION (summary)



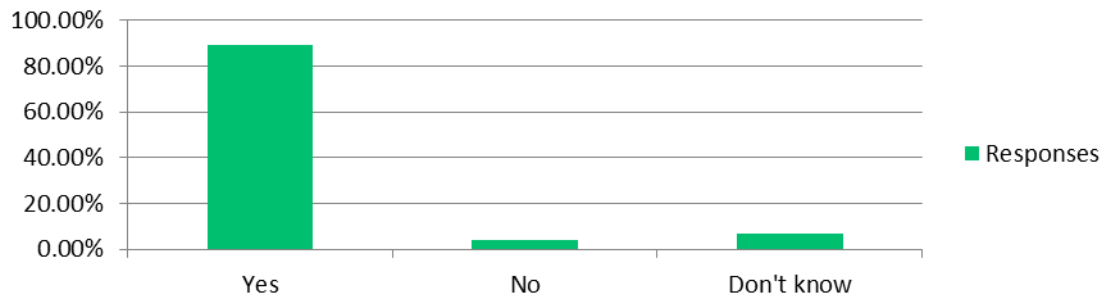
Thinking about your most difficult / pressing housing issues, what would help you resolve these?



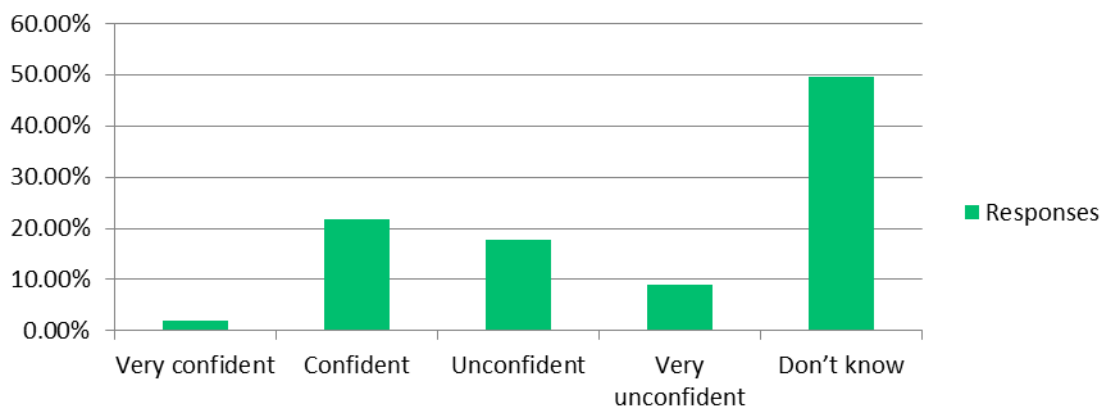
Considering financial pressures, but also taking into account the council's role within the town and its commitment to its more vulnerable residents, what do you think the council should continue to offer in terms of housing assistance? (tick all...)



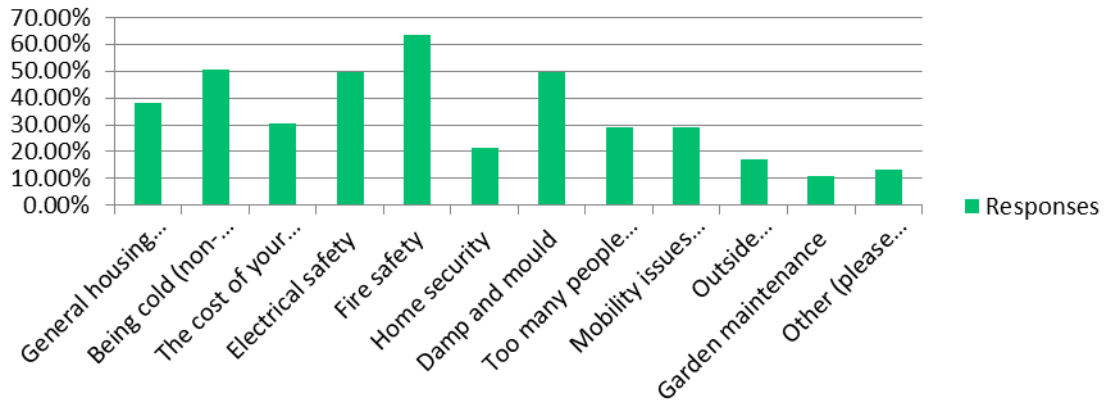
Do you think the council should continue to improve energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions to homes in Watford which helps to address fuel poverty (where people are unable to afford to adequately heat their home)?



How confident are you that the council's current policies deal with the poor housing conditions that affect the most vulnerable households?



What housing related issues are most important to you that you think the council should prioritise?(tick all that apply up to a maximum of 5 choices)



References

[Choosing Health](#)
[Housing Act 2004](#)
[Housing white paper](#)
[Laying the Foundations: A Housing Strategy for England](#)
[Choosing Health](#)
[The health impacts of poor private sector housing, LACORS, 2010](#)
[Integrated Care: Our Shared Commitment, Department of Health, 2013](#)
[Healthy lives, healthy people: Improving outcomes and supporting transparency](#)
[Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and joint health and wellbeing strategies explained](#)
[Housing Quality & Health](#)
[Environmental Health](#)
[The cold weather plan for England](#)
[Respiratory Disease](#)
[information for Watford collected by DCLG](#)
[The Housing Act](#)
[the National HMO Network](#)
[DCLG Government response document](#)
[Watford's current Local Plan](#)
[The Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016](#)
[Welfare Reform Act 2012](#)
[Localism Act](#)
[The Energy Company Obligation \(ECO\)](#)
[Herts Warmer Homes](#)
[Watford's HECA report 2017](#)
[Cutting the cost of keeping warm](#)
[Fuel Poverty \(England\) Regulations 2014](#)
[Health and Hazard Safety rating System](#)
[Safe and Well scheme](#)
[Health & Hazard Safety Rating System](#)
[Corporate plan to 2016-2020](#)
[Watford Housing Strategy 2015-2020](#)
[Home Energy Conservation Act 1995](#)
[English Housing Survey](#)
[Review of Property Conditions in the Private Rented Sector](#)
[Watford Borough Councils Housing Strategy 2015-2020](#)
[Quality Adjusted Life Years](#)
[affordable warmth group](#)
[Housing Benefit](#)
[Watford Borough Council Tax Reduction scheme](#)
[Street Improvement Project](#)
[Which trusted traders](#)
[Hertfordshire Home Improvement Agency](#)
[Herts Warmer Homes scheme](#)
[AgeUK Dacorum Handyperson Service](#)
[Health & Hazard Safety Rating System](#)

[affordable warmth group](#)
[affordable warmth group](#)
[Health & Hazard Safety Rating System](#)
[Affordable Warmth Group](#)
[affordable warmth group](#)
[Which trusted traders](#)
[Hertfordshire Home Improvement Agency](#)
[Disabled Facilities Grants](#)
[Compliance Policy](#)
[Anti-Social Behavior, Crime and Policing Act 2014](#)
[data on empty properties](#)
[Local Government Ombudsman](#)
<http://www.lgo.org.uk/>
[Current Customer standards](#)
[Housing Strategy](#)
[Affordable Warmth Group](#)
[Affordable Warmth Group](#)

For further information contact the Environmental Health and Licensing Service,
Town Hall, Watford, Herts, WD17 3EX. Telephone 01923 278503.
e-mail: envhealth@watford.gov.uk

BRE Client Report - SUMMARY

BRE Integrated Dwelling Level Housing Stock Modelling and Database for Watford Borough Council

Prepared for: Neil Walker, Energy and Renewal Surveyor

Date: 15 August 2017

Report Number: P104090-1010 Issue: 2 - Summary only

BRE
Watford, Herts
WD25 9XX

Customer Services 0333 321 8811

From outside the UK:
T + 44 (0) 1923 664000
F + 44 (0) 1923 664010
E enquiries@bre.co.uk
www.bre.co.uk

Prepared for:
Neil Walker, Energy and Renewal Surveyor
Watford Borough Council
Town Hall
Hempstead Road
Watford
Hertfordshire
WD17 3EX



Prepared by

Name Chris Johnes

Position Principal Consultant, Housing and Health

Date 15 August 2017

Signature

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Johnes', is written over a horizontal line.

Authorised by

Name Rob Flynn

Position Director, Housing and Health

Date 15 August 2017

Signature

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Flynn', is written over a horizontal line.

This report is made on behalf of Building Research Establishment Ltd. (BRE) and may only be distributed in its entirety, without amendment, and with attribution to BRE to the extent permitted by the terms and conditions of the contract. BRE's liability in respect of this report and reliance thereupon shall be as per the terms and conditions of contract with the client and BRE shall have no liability to third parties to the extent permitted in law.



Executive summary

- Watford Borough Council commissioned BRE to undertake a series of modelling exercises on their housing stock which required BRE to produce an integrated stock model which includes Local Land and Property Gazetteer (LLPG) data, Energy Performance Certificate (EPC)¹ data, benefits data, Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) data and other data relating to social housing, energy efficiency and dwelling age provided by Watford. As a result of this, 13,412 addresses have had their imputed energy characteristics replaced with observed characteristics from the EPC data for the purposes of the energy model. The use of this observed data will lead to more accurate energy models for these 13,412 cases, which account for 35% of the total stock in Watford.
- This report describes the work and the results obtained from the integrated model and database. The database is also provided to the council to enable them to obtain specific information whenever required.
- Watford Borough Council have chosen to have annual updates of the BRE Model for 3 years, this being year 1.
- The council also commissioned BRE to carry out a Health Impact Assessment (HIA), the results of which are provided in a separate report.
- The detailed housing stock information provided in this report will facilitate the delivery of Watford's strategies and enable a targeted intervention approach to improving housing. In addition to this there are also several relevant government policies – the Housing Act 2004, Housing Strategy Policy, Local Authority Housing Statistics (LAHS) and the Energy Companies Obligation (ECO).
- The main aims of this work were to provide estimates of:
 - The percentage of dwellings meeting each of the key indicators² for Watford overall and broken down by tenure and then mapped by Census Output Area (COA) (private sector stock only)
 - Information relating to LAHS reporting for the private sector stock - category 1 hazards and Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) as well as information on EPC ratings
 - Energy efficiency variables for the private sector stock (wall and loft insulation)
 - Energy planning variables (SimpleCO₂, energy and heat demand, energy and heat cost)
 - Improvement scenarios

¹ EPCs are an indication of how energy efficient a building is - with a rating from A (very efficient) to G (inefficient). They are required whenever a property is built, sold or rented.

² Presence of a HHSRS category 1 hazard, presence of a category 1 hazard for excess cold, presence of a category 1 hazard for falls, dwellings in disrepair, fuel poverty (10% and Low Income High Cost definitions), dwelling occupied by a low income household and SimpleSAP rating.



- BRE Housing Stock Models were used to provide such estimates at dwelling level and focussing on private sector housing. The key indicators provide Watford with detailed information on the likely condition of the stock and the geographical distribution of properties of interest.
- A stock modelling approach has been developed and used by BRE for many years and the most recent 2016 models have been updated to make use of the results of the 2012 English Housing Survey (EHS)³. The new models also make more use of Ordnance Survey (OS) data. OS Address Premium is used as a basis for the list of all dwellings in the authority, and applying improved geo-modelling⁴ is used to determine the dwelling type and floor area from OS Mastermap. The energy model that lies at the heart of the modelling process has been replaced with an updated model based on the 2012 version of SAP, and the methods for imputing the inputs to this model have also been upgraded, including the incorporation of some new information sources. These include the age of postcodes (to improve dwelling age data) and data from Xoserve to determine whether the dwelling is on the gas network. These dwelling level models are used to estimate the likelihood of a particular dwelling meeting the criteria for each of the key indicators. These outputs can then be mapped to provide the authority with a geographical distribution of each of the key indicators which can then be used to target resources for improving the housing stock.
- Furthermore, Watford provided several additional sources of “local data” - Local Land and Property Gazetteer (LLPG) data, Energy Performance Certificate (EPC)⁵ data, benefits data, Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) data and other data relating to social housing, energy efficiency and dwelling age. These data sets were then incorporated into the BRE Housing Stock Model to produce an integrated housing stock database.
- The headline results are provided on the following page:

³ 2012 is the latest available data. Prior to the 2016 models EHS 2011 data was used.

⁴ The OS data has been used to update a number of the model inputs – the main value of the OS data is the ability to determine the dwelling type with much greater confidence – see **Appendix B** for more information.

⁵ EPCs are an indication of how energy efficient a building is - with a rating from A (very efficient) to G (inefficient). They are required whenever a property is built, sold or rented.



Headline results for Watford

There are 39,157 dwellings in Watford, 56% are owner occupied, 28% private rented and 16% social rented.

5,055 dwellings in the private sector have category 1 Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) hazards. This equates to 15% of properties. *See full results*

1,749 dwellings in the private rented sector have category 1 HHSRS hazards. This equates to 16% of properties in the private rented sector. *See full results*

The highest concentrations of all HHSRS hazards in the private sector are found in the wards of Vicarage, Callowland and Oxhey. *See full results*

The highest concentrations of fuel poverty (Low Income High Costs definition) in the private sector are found in the wards of Vicarage, Callowland and Meriden and for excess cold the highest concentrations are in Oxhey, Vicarage and Callowland. *See full results*

The average SimpleSAP rating for all private sector dwellings in Watford is 59, which is better than both England (57) and East of England (57). For owner occupied stock the figure is 57 and for private rented stock it is 61. *See full results*

Maps by Census Output Area (COA) have been provided for the above key indicators. *See maps*

The total cost of mitigating category 1 hazards in Watford's private sector stock is estimated to be £12.17 million. *See full results*

There is an estimated total of 1,606 HMOs in Watford, of which approximately 120 come under the mandatory licensing scheme using the current definition. Using the proposed new mandatory licensing scheme definition, there are 253 HMOs *See full results*

4.3% (1,425) of *private sector* dwellings and 4.8% (531) of *private rented* dwellings in Watford are estimated to have an EPC rating below band E. *See full results*

In the private sector stock, there are an estimated 6,064 (18%) dwellings with un-insulated cavity walls and 5,060 (15%) dwellings with less than 100mm of loft insulation. *See full results*

Analysis of the energy planning variables indicates that the owner occupied stock has the highest average figures for SimpleCO₂ emissions, energy and heat demand, energy and heat cost. *See full results*

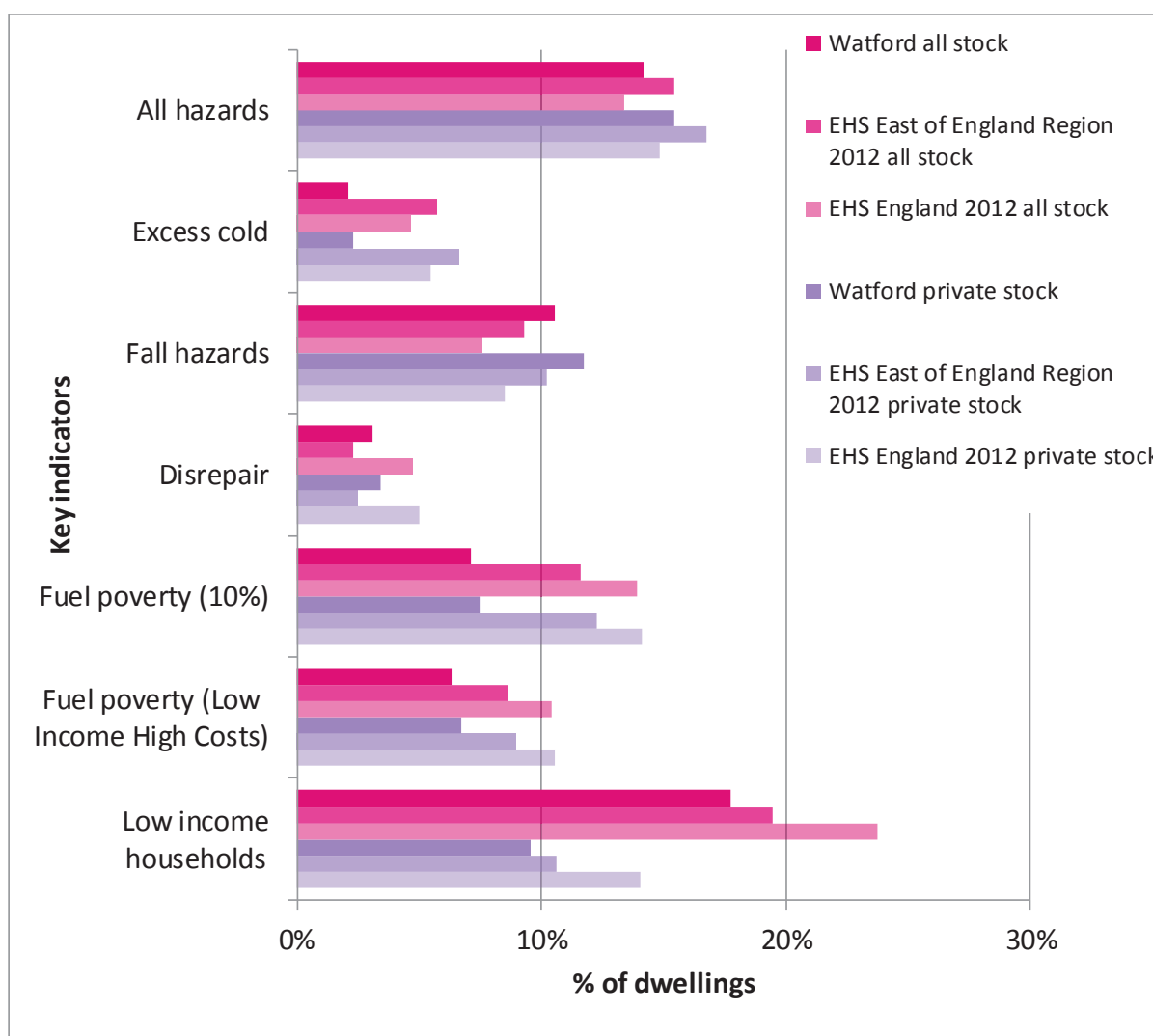
An improvement scenario involving a package of work with low cost measure, heating, double glazing, solid wall insulation and solar hot water provides high levels of savings – a 36% reduction in energy demand. However, simply implementing low cost measures and heating would provide a reduction of 17%. *See full results*



Key illustrations of headline results

- The table below shows the results for 7 of the key indicators in Watford compared to regional data and England (EHS 2012) - split into all stock and private sector stock. The data shows that the performance of the housing stock in Watford compared to the EHS England average is generally better for most indicators with the exception of all hazards and fall hazards where Watford performs worse. Compared to the regional average there is a similar picture with Watford also performing slightly worse for disrepair, but slightly better for all hazards.

Estimates of the percentage of dwellings meeting the key indicator criteria assessed by the housing stock models and database for all stock and private sector stock – Watford compared to the East of England and England (EHS 2012)





- The table below shows the number and percentage of Watford's private rented stock falling into each of the EPC ratings bands (based on SimpleSAP). The number of private rented dwellings in Watford with a rating below band E (i.e. bands F and G), is estimated to be 531 (4.8%). Compared to England, there are a greater proportion of dwellings in bands A – C.

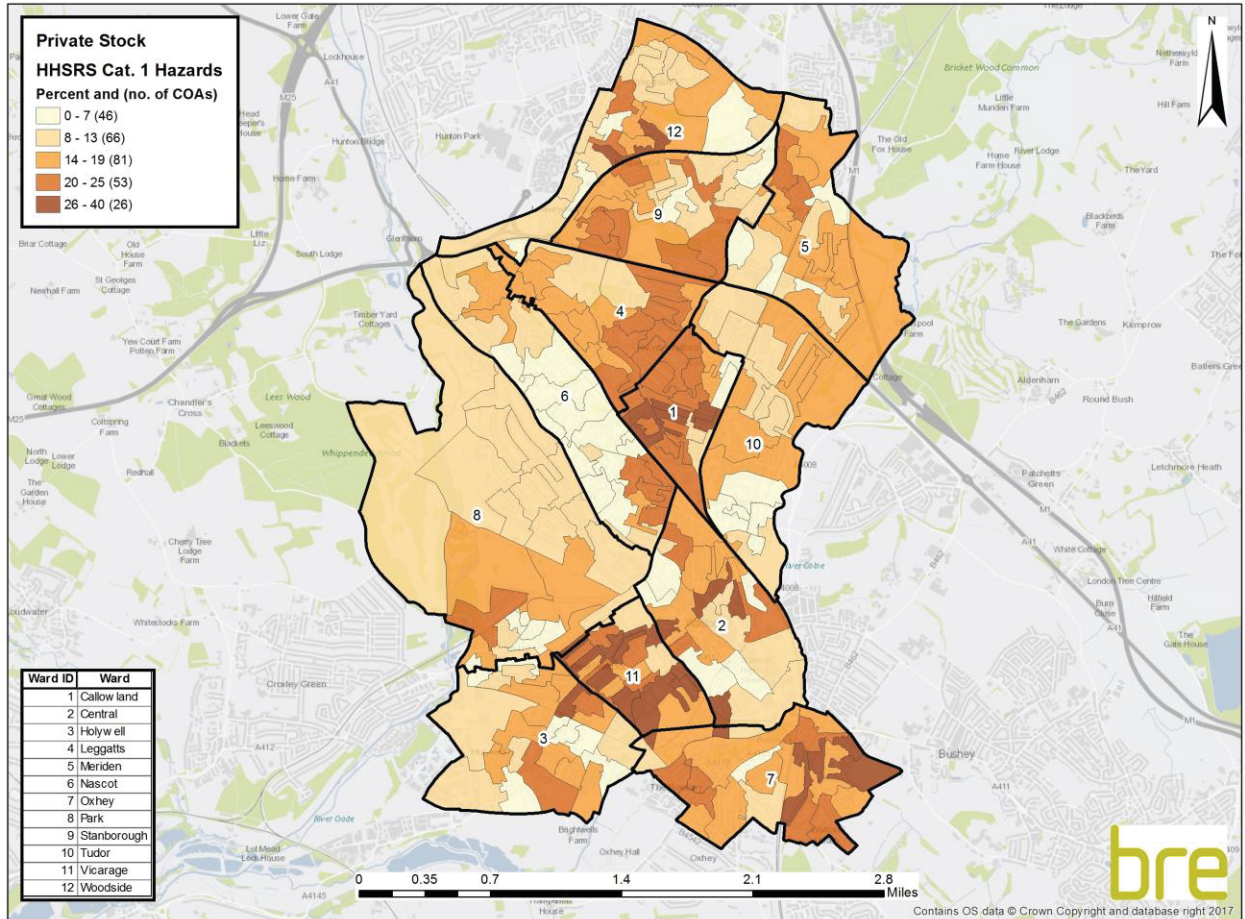
Number and percentage of Watford's private rented stock falling into each of the EPC ratings bands (based on SimpleSAP)

	Watford		2012 EHS England
	Count	Percent	Percent
(92-100) A	0	0.0%	1.0%
(81-91) B	159	1.4%	
(69-80) C	3,526	31.9%	18.9%
(55-68) D	4,254	38.5%	46.2%
(39-54) E	2,570	23.3%	24.5%
(21-38) F	456	4.1%	7.0%
(1-20) G	75	0.7%	2.5%

- The map overleaf shows the distribution of category 1 hazards, as defined by the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS). The highest concentrations overall are in Vicarage, Callowland and Oxhey wards, although there are COAs in other wards with higher concentrations – for example in parts of Central and Woodside ward .



Percentage of private sector dwellings in Watford with the presence of a HHSRS category 1 hazard



PLEASE NOTE THIS IS A SUMMARY OF THE DOCUMENT ONLY. THE FULL REPORT IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST. Please contact EnvHealth@watford.gov.uk

BRE Client Report - SUMMARY

A Quantitative Health Impact Assessment: The cost of private sector housing and prospective housing interventions in Watford Borough Council

Prepared for: Neil Walker, Energy and Renewal Surveyor

Date: 15 August 2017

Report Number: P104089-1005 Issue: 2

BRE
Watford, Herts
WD25 9XX

Customer Services 0333 321 8811

From outside the UK:
T + 44 (0) 1923 664000
F + 44 (0) 1923 664010
E enquiries@bre.co.uk
www.bre.co.uk

Prepared for:
Neil Walker, Energy and Renewal Surveyor
Watford Borough Council
Town Hall
Hempstead Road
Watford
Hertfordshire
WD17 3EX



Prepared by

Name Chris Johnes

Position Principal Consultant, Housing and Health

Date 15 August 2017

Signature

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Johnes', is written over a horizontal line.

Authorised by

Name Rob Flynn

Position Director, Housing and Health

Date 15 August 2017

Signature

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rob Flynn', is written over a horizontal line.

This report is made on behalf of Building Research Establishment Ltd. (BRE) and may only be distributed in its entirety, without amendment, and with attribution to BRE to the extent permitted by the terms and conditions of the contract. BRE's liability in respect of this report and reliance thereupon shall be as per the terms and conditions of contract with the client and BRE shall have no liability to third parties to the extent permitted in law.



Executive summary

- Watford Borough Council has recognised that poor housing has an important effect on health as most occupiers spend longer in their own home than anywhere else. Additional information is also required concerning private sector housing in order to inform the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA).
- The council has commissioned BRE to produce housing stock models to help understand the condition of the private sector housing within their area (these are provided in a separate report). The housing stock model is based on data gathered from a number of sources (including the English Housing Survey (EHS)) and includes an assessment of dwelling hazards using the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS). This data from the housing stock model has then been used as a basis for this Health Impact Assessment (HIA) to better understand the effect of private sector housing hazards and intervention strategies on the health of residents in Watford.
- A Health Impact Assessment (HIA) is a formal method of assessing the impact of a project, procedure or strategy on the health of a population. This HIA draws on evidence of the health impact of hazards identified using the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS¹) and a methodology developed by the BRE Trust and published in the “Real Cost of Poor Housing”² and in the more recent “The Full Cost of Poor Housing”³. The HHSRS is the method by which housing condition is now assessed in accordance with the Housing Act 2004. A dwelling with a category 1 hazard is considered to fail the minimum statutory standard for housing and is classified as “poor housing”.
- This report provides a quantitative HIA for Watford Borough Council which covers:
 - The condition of private sector housing and the estimated effect on the health of occupiers
 - The cost of prospective interventions to reduce the number of hazards
 - The costs to the NHS and wider society of treating these health issues
 - The health cost benefit analysis of interventions to reduce some of these hazards
 - An analysis of Quality Adjusted Life Years (QALYs) relating to housing hazards

¹ Housing Health and Safety Rating System Operating Guidance, Housing Act 2004, Guidance about Inspections and Assessments given under Section 9, ODPM, 2006

² The Real Cost of Poor Housing, M Davidson *et al.*, IHS BRE Press, February 2010

³ The Full Cost of Poor Housing, Roys M, Nicol S, Garrett H and Margoles S, IHS BRE Press, 2016



- The main results are shown in the summary table overleaf and the headline results are as follows:

HIA for Watford Borough Council, private sector stock

There are an estimated 6,670 category 1 hazards in Watford's private sector stock, of which 2,326 are within the privately rented sector. *See full results*

The estimated total cost of mitigating all these hazards is £11.6 million with £4.4 million in the private rented sector. *See full results*

It is estimated that poor housing conditions are responsible for over 319 harmful events requiring medical treatment every year. *See full results*

If these hazards are mitigated then the total annual savings to society are estimated to be £10 million, including £1.1 million of savings to the NHS. *See full results*

Poor housing in Watford is estimated to cost around 105 quality-adjusted life-years (QALYs). *See full results*



Summary of results, private sector stock (N.B. due to data availability, some hazards are excluded from the cost benefit analysis)

Housing hazard type	Numbers of hazards (total private sector stock)	Estimated number of instances requiring medical intervention	Cost of mitigating all hazards	Potential annual costs of not mitigating hazards		Potential annual savings from mitigating hazards		Cost benefit analysis		
				Costs to NHS	Costs to society	Savings to NHS	Savings to society	Cost benefit to NHS	Cost benefit to Society	
								Positive cost benefit year where 20% works are carried out	Positive cost benefit year where 50% works are carried out	
Damp and mould growth	65	33	£497,674	£103,448	£22,080	£103,442	6	15	2	4
Excess cold	760	4	£3,967,186	£2,290,025	£114,970	£2,288,643	4	12	1	1
Crowding and space	28	3	£505,625	£494,608	£34,770	£494,602	15	15	2	2
Entry by intruders	43	14	£52,529	£44,934	£9,170	£44,880	4	5	1	1
Domestic hygiene, Pests and Refuse	3	1	£3,231	£1,169	£350	£1,169	Excluded	Excluded	Excluded	Excluded
Food safety	39	6	£123,709	£18,935	£7,320	£18,934	Excluded	Excluded	Excluded	Excluded
Personal hygiene, Sanitation and Drainage	35	6	£44,976	£17,122	£6,620	£17,121	Excluded	Excluded	Excluded	Excluded
Falls associated with baths etc	444	25	£256,022	£1,000,731	£89,260	£1,000,689	1	3	1	1
Falling on level surfaces etc	1,382	77	£1,458,141	£293,080	£821,769	£820,076	2	4	1	2
Falling on stairs etc	3,411	107	£3,813,779	£580,580	£539,720	£4,682,507	2	4	1	1
Falling between levels	266	27	£266,740	£29,910	£29,750	£143,997	2	7	1	2
Electrical hazards	20	1	£36,379	£4,900	£4,880	£19,234	Excluded	Excluded	Excluded	Excluded
Fire	97	2	£498,257	£300,457	£17,580	£300,438	4	11	1	1
Flames, hot surfaces etc	46	8	£101,261	£6,590	£6,400	£31,068	1	1	1	1
Collision and entrapment	33	5	£21,164	£25,279	£3,120	£25,254	2	7	1	1
TOTAL	6,670	319	£11,646,674	£9,998,917	£1,149,710	£9,992,055	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

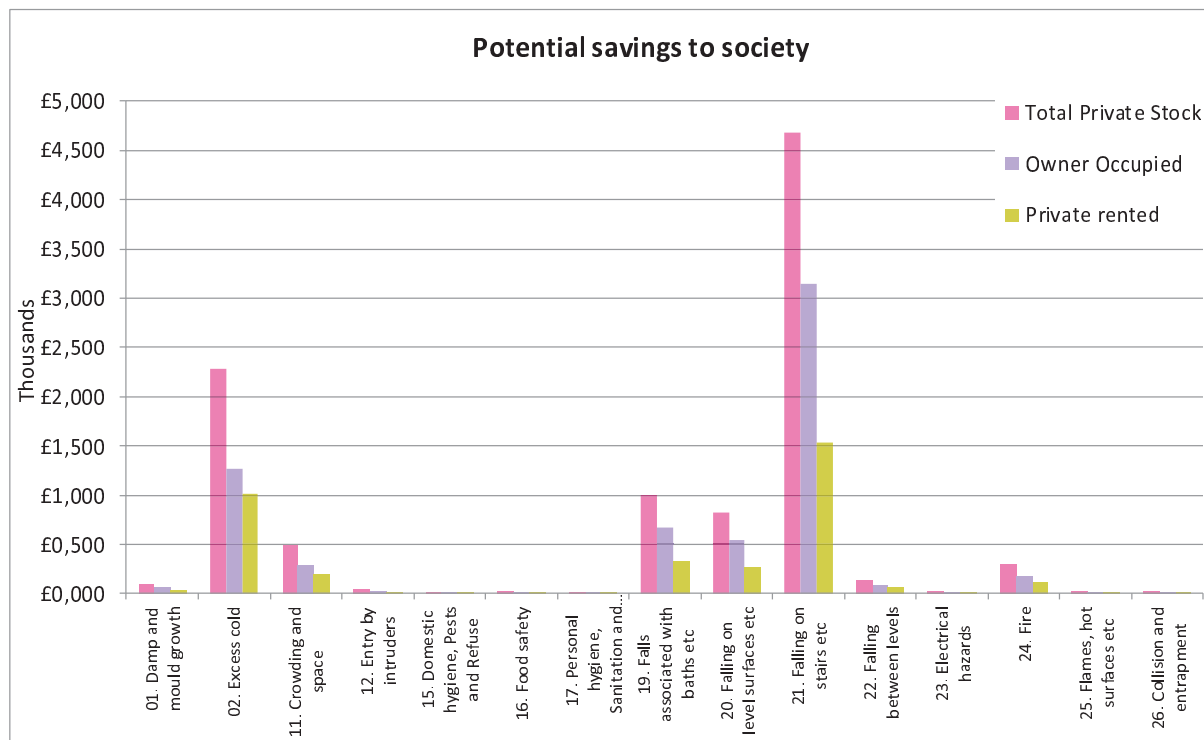
N.B. there are 6,670 hazards in total spread across 5,055 dwellings as some dwellings have more than one hazard. Positive cost benefit year refers to the payback period – i.e. the number of years it would for the savings to payback the mitigation costs.



- The housing stock models estimate that there are 6,670 category 1 hazards in 5,055 dwellings across the private housing stock. This Health Impact Assessment estimates that poor housing conditions in the private sector are responsible for over 319 harmful events requiring medical intervention each year. These almost completely avoidable events range from respiratory diseases like COPD associated with cold homes, to fractures and injuries associated with homes containing fall hazards. It would cost £11.6 million to mitigate all of these serious housing hazards, but would return savings to the NHS of £1.1 million per year, with further savings to wider society of £10 million per year (which includes increased spending on benefits, loss of future earnings, demands on other services etc. as well as the estimated NHS savings). It is also estimated that 105 Quality Adjusted Life Years (QALYs) could be saved if all serious housing hazards were mitigated.
- The health cost benefit analysis of interventions to reduce some of these hazards has been developed to show the costs and savings to the NHS and to society as a whole from carrying out work in dwellings with the least expensive 20% and 50% of required works. By focussing on the less expensive works, the expected payback periods (the number of years to reach the break-even point) are shorter. The summary table on the previous page shows that the shortest payback periods are for the hazards of collision and entrapment and some of the falls hazards. The longest payback periods are associated with the more complex hazards of damp and mould, excess cold and crowding and space.
- The return on investment when all hazards are mitigated may seem rather limited and modest. However, this report considers a number of different scenarios where the mitigation of different hazards and mitigation costs are further investigated to identify more compelling scenarios. For example, mitigating all damp and mould hazards in the owner occupied stock would cost approximately £299,448. The least costly half of all these hazards could be mitigated by investing around £19,845 per year for 5 years. The return on investment, or payback period, when costs to society are considered is 4 years; therefore, 4 years after the repairs are carried out, the savings to society will be greater than the mitigation costs. For falls associated with baths, all hazards in the owner occupied sector could be mitigated for £171,877. This would save the NHS £59,920 per year thus giving a payback period of less than 3 years.
- The estimated annual savings to society of fall hazards associated with older people is estimated at £6.5 million. This indicates that repairs and improvements to stairs, floors and paths, plus additional safety arrangements for baths are likely to be the most cost effective.
- The estimated costs and savings can be shown by tenure. The largest costs and savings are within owner occupied dwellings but the estimated savings to society when all category 1 hazards in the privately rented sector are mitigated is £3.6 million as shown in the graph below.
- The quantitative information provided in this HIA on the impact of private sector housing on health, will provide an invaluable contribution to the JSNA. The results will contribute to the provision of evidence of the costs, savings and benefits of improving housing in the private sector, and the costs to health of not doing so. Some recommendations are provided which look at possible interventions in order to assist the council in making decisions concerning where resources can best be targeted to improve private sector dwellings in Watford Borough Council. Local knowledge will be key in targeting resources to gain the greatest benefit in both geographical areas and population profile. The importance of a Home Improvement Agency or a Handy Person Service to help take action is identified by this report.



Potential savings to society following mitigation work, by hazard and tenure, all private sector stock and split into tenure



Main recommendations:

- The owner occupied sector contains the greatest number of category 1 hazards requiring an estimated £7.2 million to mitigate. The most common hazards are falling on stairs etc. (2,290), falling on level surfaces etc. (927), and excess cold. (423). Therefore there should be appropriate services to assist owner occupiers in addressing these most common hazards - this may range from financial assistance to support with the specification of remedial works and finding appropriate contractors.
- This report recognises the importance of a Home Improvement Agency or a Handy Person Service to help take action. Not only will there be a need for help to be available, there should also be systems in place to identify those needing assistance; for example, setting up referral pathways between housing and health professionals so that occupational therapists or health visitors are aware and can make referrals to housing support services.
- Within the private rented sector, the annual cost to society of category 1 hazards is estimated to be £3.6 million. Work to mitigate these hazards will need to be carried out by landlords in accordance with legislation in the Housing Act 2004. To facilitate this, an active housing enforcement strategy will be necessary.
- Landlord Accreditation Schemes can help to educate landlords on the need to mitigate hazards.
- The hazard of damp and mould particularly affects children and can cause long term effects that may well be underestimated by this work (the evidence is not available to quantify the true cost over a long time period). Flames and hot surfaces and falling between levels also specifically affect children.



Education using a multi-agency approach with Health Visitors or through Children's Centres and accessing local knowledge will be crucial to reducing these hazards. Professionals working with families in the private rented sector should be made more aware of landlord duties.

- The evidence indicates that initiatives to reduce the incidence of falls at home should be one of the more cost effective strategies. The cost benefit scenarios show that the best value initiatives will be small-scale repair or improvement works to stairs, trip hazards within the home and to uneven paths. Targeting this initiative towards dwellings occupied by persons over 60 will bring the greatest benefit.
- The quantitative information provided in this HIA on the impact of private sector housing on health should be fed into the JSNA and Health and Wellbeing strategy. This will allow evidence on the costs, savings and benefits of improving housing in the private sector, and the costs to health of not doing so, to be compared with other areas and contribute to informed discussions identifying commissioning priorities.
- The scenario tables in **Appendix D** show the expected costs of work to mitigate the individual hazards over a period of 3, 5 and 10 years along with the payback period in terms of savings to the NHS and society. These tables can be used to give some financial quantification towards planning a strategy.

PLEASE NOTE THIS IS A SUMMARY OF THE DOCUMENT ONLY. THE FULL REPORT IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST. Please contact EnvHealth@watford.gov.uk



**WATFORD
BOROUGH
COUNCIL**

Equality Impact Analysis

Title of policy, function or service	The Private Sector Renewal Policy Update
Lead officer	Neil Walker
Person completing the EIA	Neil Walker
Type of policy, function or service:	Existing (reviewed) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New/Proposed <input type="checkbox"/>
Version & Date	9 th January 2017, version 1

1. Background

The Private Sector Renewal Policy is an update to the 2006 policy. The update is informed by the 2017 Stock Modelling and Health Impact Assessment (HIA) carried out by the Building Research Establishment (BRE) on behalf of the Council.

The aim of the policy is to improve and maintain housing standards to support an accessible private sector housing stock in an environment which promotes health, wellbeing and sustainability, which is targeted to those most in need.

The basis for all assistance is to remove or reduce housing related defects that are detrimental to an occupant's health, in terms of physical and mental wellbeing.

The policy is open to applications from residents in the borough that are in need and meet the qualification criteria.

2. Focus of the Equality Impact Analysis

This EIA therefore considers the potential equality related impacts, both positive and negative of the policy update on the people in the groups or with the characteristics protected in the Equalities Act 2010.

These are:

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.

3. Engagement and consultation

Two surveys were undertaken using e-mail distribution to the Council's resident consultee group as well as being advertised on the council's web and intranet sites. Internal consultation also took place; which led to receiving a total of 177 respondents (with the internal survey of staff returning 26 and the public

resident surveys returning 151). The survey gathered data on the existing financial assistance offered as well as seeking views on new assistance determined under this policy. In addition to the wider consultation various officers within different council departments have helped inform this policy.

A wide range of responses were received from the various tenures, with the majority at 74% being homeowners. Just 11 responses had previously used assistance (2 of which were disabled facilities grants, 2 had general advice with a further 7 having used 'Other Council schemes').

Of those that responded to the survey the majority came from the age banding of between 45 and 54 (forming a bell curve with this bracket at the peak). Very few responded from below the age of 34, probably in part due to low ownership rates of younger residents and as could be expected from surveys in relation to housing there are often more responses from retired households. Retired households feature in 40% of the respondents (with just under 30% having a person working in the household).

In the health related questions we asked if people's day-to-day activities were limited because of a health problem or a disability (which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months). In response around a quarter of respondents said 'yes'. This percentage was similar for those who had a fall in their home. This is important to note as falls constitutes many of the hazards found in a property.

The existing policy's financial assistance is limited in its reach and in its ability to help large numbers of residents. This policy update therefore reflects this by looking to broaden the number of people it helps. This will be achieved by including project based approaches; so that more residents benefit from assistance. We already know from the current grant assistance and our previous project work that the projects reach many more residents than the direct financial enquires lead to. The assistance we offer to the ad hoc enquires will be very focused on those most vulnerable and be through a professional referral led approach.

4. What we know about the Watford population

To inform this policy with up to date information an Integrated Dwelling Level Housing Stock Modelling and Quantitative Health Impact Assessment were carried out by the Building research Establishment BRE.

The BRE have modelled Watford's housing by using the councils own data, national census information, lodged EPCs, Ordnance Survey, Mosaic (with electoral role information) as well as English House condition survey data. This data is modelled into software to provide the expected attributes of individual properties within Watford. In addition a report detailing the costs and influences the stock condition has in relation to assessing health impact has been completed.

Various other sources of information have been used to inform this EIA and the policy. An Economic, Social and Environmental Summary Profile of Watford was completed by Grant Thornton in 2016 with some of the notable differences in Watford's population that differ significantly from the national averages detailed below.

With an average age of 36.46 years, Watford is in the lowest 20% of districts nationally and is in a sub region that has an average age in the lowest 40% of sub regions nationally.

The proportion of the resident population aged 0-14 was estimated at 19.34% in 2011, which is very high by national standards, with Watford ranking in the top 20% of districts. By comparison, the Hertfordshire figure was 18.75%

The proportion of the resident population aged 25-44 was estimated at 33.8% in 2011, which is very high by national standards, with Watford ranking in the top 20% of districts. By comparison, the Hertfordshire figure was 27.92%

The proportion of the resident population aged 45-64 was estimated at 22.32% in 2011, which is very low by national standards, with Watford ranking in the bottom 20% of districts. By comparison, the Hertfordshire figure was 25.72% and the national average was 25.44%.

The proportion of the resident population aged 65 and over was estimated at 12.35% in 2011, which is very low by national standards, with Watford ranking in the bottom 20% of districts. By comparison, the Hertfordshire figure was 15.58% and the national average was 16.45%.

The number of live births per 1000 of the resident population was 16.93 in 2010, which is very high by national standards. This placed Watford in the top 20% of districts

With around 30% of its residents classified as Non-White, Watford is in the top 20% of districts and is in a sub region that is in the top 40% of sub regions nationally on the proportion of the population that is Non-White.

The Census 2011 shows the following more detailed breakdown for the top five ethnicity groups as being:

Groups: White British (61.9%), White other (7.7%), Pakistani (6.7%), Indian (5.5%) and Other Asian (4.4%).

From the census the religious breakdown between the main belief groups was: Christian (54.1%), Muslim (9.8%), Hindu (4.8%), with no religion stated at 21.4%.

5. How will the council ensure equality is promoted through the update to the policy?

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

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

A. Positive impacts

1) The grant and loan assistance qualification criteria is open to all vulnerable owner occupiers or private rented tenants with repairing responsibilities in the borough, regardless of any other characteristics of the applicant. Referrals are to be from a health related professional and therefore there is a wide net to include referrals from all sections of the community (for example via the GP surgeries, Hertfordshire County Council social services and other various care workers in the communities). This therefore has a good potential to enable applications for those in need, regardless of their backgrounds and characteristics.

2) The update to the policy now includes the potential to include project work as part of assistance delivered. Previous experience of projects show that one of the best ways to increase engagement and referrals is through the existing community groups in the project areas. Examples have been faith groups, resident associations and community groups. In small projects with defined geographical areas these groups are often minorities within the borough as a whole.

3) This policy includes details of how the council processes Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG's). There is now an improvement to the services the council offers with the inclusion of assistance offered by the newly formed Herts Home Improvement Agency. The purpose of the agency is to help vulnerable persons to live more independently and safely at home (with an initial focus on the discharge of the statutory duty placed on the Council in relation to Mandatory DFGs). Therefore the service plans to evolve should offer better assistance to all vulnerable residents with housing improvement or adaptations needs. The key deliverables of the shared Home Improvement Service are set out below;

- Ensure that all individuals in Hertfordshire who need housing adaptations to support independent living will have access to an appropriate service that is timely, accessible, equitable and fit for purpose to address rising demographic pressures.
- Deliver a fully standardised service, enhancing operational efficiency, customer satisfaction and improving value for money.
- Implement robust monitoring arrangements against key performance indicators.
- Improve service resilience through joined up working, adopting a common methodology and service standards, sharing staff knowledge, skills and expertise.
- Open up future opportunities to expand into private sector adaptations and align to wider Clinical Commissioning Group activity in order to maximize income generation, efficiency and value and impact of the DFG element of the Better Care Fund.

B. Negative impacts

1) The update to the policy will still heavily rely on referrals for the direct financial assistance as well as those residents the service comes across in their day to day activities. Therefore there is still a potential for under-represented minorities to be excluded; where their engagement with authorities is less than the majority of other residents in the borough. Some mitigation is possible by outreach work with minority community groups to advertise the services offered through this policy. Where specific projects take place targeted awareness will be undertaken to ensure minority groups are included and represented.

6. Overall conclusion

This update to an existing policy has the potential to improve the number of referrals from minorities due to the wider referral routes expected as well as through the targeted project work. The policy is non-discriminatory in its nature; being open to

all vulnerable residents and those considered 'able to pay' with some of the expected project based work. In addition advice and help to choose reputable builders is to be offered to all of the boroughs residents.

Through project based work the policy should advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it as all selected households are targeted in a project area regardless, of the characteristics of those living in them. In addition the community involvement and creation will help foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not. An example of this in practice is the work through the Street Improvement Project in Cassio Road, which has brought neighbours together through their proximity to one another to act as a community. Other examples that would fall under this policy are the two areas that were recently targeted for external solid wall insulation – where extensive works have been completed to whole areas at Boundary Way estate and the Harebreaks area. Participation, regardless of resident characteristics was aided by community engagement such as via the residents groups, faith groups and other organisations in the area like the scout group.

Summary of potential positive impacts and ways in which they can be ensured

Positive Impact	Protected characteristics	Ways to ensure the positive impact
<p>The grant and loan assistance qualification criteria is open to ALL vulnerable owner occupiers or private rented tenants with repairing responsibilities in the borough, regardless of any other characteristics of the applicant.</p>	<p>All vulnerable residents</p>	<p>Referrals are to be from a health related professional and therefore there is a wide net to include referrals from all sections of the community. Promotion of the assistance will be provided to the diverse health professional practitioners.</p>
<p>Project work will enable better inclusive applications within a set geographical area (i.e. everyone in that area would be pro-actively targeted as opposed to reliance on a reactive referral from an individual)</p>	<p>All residents in the targeted areas</p>	<p>Previous experience has enabled us to achieve good results and inclusivity in our project related work to ensure inclusivity. We will continue to use this learning in future work.</p>
<p>Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG's): There is now an improvement to the services the council offers with the inclusion of assistance offered by the newly formed Herts Home Improvement Agency.</p>	<p>Any disabled applicant</p>	<p>Streamline the referral mechanism and look at how we work jointly together with information exchange.</p>

Summary of potential negative impacts and ways in which they can be removed or mitigated

Negative Impact	Protected characteristics	Ways to mitigate the negative impact
As with the existing policy this policy will still heavily rely on referrals for the direct financial assistance. Therefore there is still a potential for under-represented minorities to be excluded	Minority groups	Ensure community groups and relevant professional services are aware of the offers. It is proposed to offer training to some of the health professionals to support the professional referral led approach.

This EIA has been approved by:-

Name: Ayaz Maqsood

Date: 9th January 2018

PART A

Report to: Cabinet
Date of meeting: 5 March 2018
Report of: Head of Democracy and Governance
Title: Ombudsman’s Decision

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 Under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 the Council’s Monitoring Officer is legally obliged to make a report to Cabinet of any finding by the Local Government Ombudsman of maladministration.
- 1.2 On 13 February 2018 the Council received the Ombudsman’s final decision in a matter relating to recovery action the Council took in respect of business rates. The Ombudsman’s Decision is attached at Appendix 1

2.0 Risks

2.1

Nature of Risk	Consequence	Suggested Control Measures	Response <i>(Treat, tolerate, terminate, transfer)</i>	Risk Rating (the combination of severity and likelihood)
The Council does not comply with the Ombudsman’s recommendation	The Council gets a bad reputation with the Ombudsman	The Council complies with the recommendation	1	1
The Council does not learn lessons from this case	Further findings of maladministration by the ombudsman	Revenues and Benefits reviews its procedures on undertaking recovery action	2	1

3.0 Recommendation

That the decision be noted.

Contact Officer:

For further information on this report please contact: Carol Chen, Head of Democracy and Governance
telephone extension: 8350 email: carol.chen@watford.gov.uk

4.0 Detailed proposal

- 4.1 Under s5A of the Local Government Act 1989 the Council's Monitoring Officer is legally obliged to report to cabinet any findings of maladministration by the Local Government Ombudsman.
- 4.2 On 13 February 2018 the Council received the final decision of the Ombudsman in relation to a complaint about how the Revenues and Benefits Department had instigated recovery action for business rates in a case where the complainant had told the council that he was converting the premises to residential.
- 4.3 A copy of the Ombudsman's decision is attached as Appendix 1. Following the investigation of the complaint the Council has accepted the Ombudsman's recommendations and has also accepted that in this case it should have put recovery action on hold until it had received the decision of the Valuation Office.
- 4.4 The Head of Revenues and Benefits comments that whilst we are disappointed with the Ombudsman's overall decision, given that the Council has to legally demand either business rates or council tax on properties, domestic or non-domestic, that are listed by the Valuation Office Agency (VOA), lessons have been learned with regards having a better working relationship with the VOA, and by placing temporary holds on any such accounts with similar circumstances with immediate effect.
- 4.5 The Ombudsman now publishes all decisions so her decision will be available on Local Government Ombudsman web site.

5.0 **Implications**

5.1 **Financial**

5.1.1 The Shared Director of Finance comments that the payment can be accommodated within existing budgets.

5.2 **Legal Issues** (Monitoring Officer)

5.2.1 The Head of Democracy and Governance comments that as stated in the report all findings of maladministration are required to be reported to cabinet by virtue of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989

5.3 **Equalities/Human Rights**

5.3.1 There are no direct equalities impacts arising from this report.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Ombudsman's final decision

Background Papers

No papers were used in the preparation of this report

File Reference

None.

The Ombudsman's final decision

Summary: The Council failed to put recovery of business rates collection on hold while it awaited a decision by the Valuation Office Agency. The Council wrongly issued a final notice for non-payment of council tax. This led to avoidable distress, time and trouble for Mr B. The Council will apologise, pay £350.00 and review procedures.

The complaint

1. The complainant, who I will call Mr B says, the Council took recovery action for business rates when it knew the property was converting to residential. Mr B paid the outstanding amount on a credit card to avoid the threat of bankruptcy; he has incurred interest charges as a result. It then took around a year from July 2016 to June 2017 for the Council to refund money owing to Mr B; there has been no explanation for this delay. Mr B is concerned that the Council and the Valuation Office Agency do not work collaboratively and both blame the other.

The Ombudsman's role and powers

2. We investigate complaints about 'maladministration' and 'service failure'. In this statement, I have used the word fault to refer to these. We must also consider whether any fault has had an adverse impact on the person making the complaint. I refer to this as 'injustice'. If there has been fault which has caused an injustice, we may suggest a remedy. (*Local Government Act 1974, sections 26(1) and 26A(1), as amended*)
3. If we are satisfied with a council's actions or proposed actions, we can complete our investigation and issue a decision statement. (*Local Government Act 1974, section 30(1B) and 34H(i), as amended*)

How I considered this complaint

4. I considered:
 - Information provided by Mr B, and discussed the complaint with him.
 - Information provided by the Council in response to my enquiries.
5. I shared a draft of this statement and considered the Council's response; Mr B did not respond.

What I found

6. In September 2015 Mr B bought an empty business property to convert it to residential.
7. National Non-Domestic Rates (Business rates) are a tax charged on most non-domestic properties. Business rates are worked out on the property's 'rateable value' which is decided by the Valuation Office Agency (VOA).
8. Mr B applied to the VOA to remove the building from its business rates list as he was converting it to residential. Once a residential property it would no longer be liable for business rates, but would need to be listed with the VOA for council tax. The VOA would determine what council tax band the property is and therefore how much Mr B would have to pay for council tax.
9. Councils have a duty to collect business rates and council tax. While someone is applying to the VOA to alter either of these a council would usually continue to bill. The individual would usually be liable to pay until a decision is made by the VOA. A council would then refund any amounts overpaid.
10. On 21 September 2015, the Council wrote to Mr B setting out his business rates liability for that financial year; the first payment was due on 1 November 2015. Mr B did not pay, so the Council followed process and sent a reminder and a final reminder. Mr B did not pay, so the Court issued a summons.
11. The case went to Court in February 2016; the Court adjourned until April 2016. Mr B chose to pay the amount rather than await the April hearing. Mr B says this is because a Council officer put pressure on him; there is no evidence of this and the officer has since left the Council's employment. Mr B paid the full amount on his credit card.
12. The VOA then made its decision and told the Council to remove the property from the business rates list with effect from 16 February 2016. The Council refunded Mr B in June 2016.
13. In November 2016 Mr B contacted the Council asking why he only received a part refund. The Council explained this was due to the date the VOA gave, February 2016. So, Mr B was still liable for business rates from September 2015 to February 2016. Mr B wrote to the VOA. It was not until June 2017 that the VOA decided to zero rate the property from 20 September 2015. The Council refunded the remaining money shortly after in July 2017.
14. In October 2016, the Council wrote to Mr B advising his property was yet to be banded by the VOA for council tax. It advised the average band was band D and gave details should he wish to make payments in the interim.
15. In November 2016, the VOA valued the property in band B, effective from 29 February 2016. The Council issued a council tax bill to Mr B the next day.
16. Mr B overpaid his council tax because of earlier advice he would likely be band D, and because he later applied for a single person discount. It was Mr B's responsibility to amend the standing order with his bank to reduce his payments. The Council refunded any overpayment in August 2017 when Mr B brought the issues to its attention.
17. Mr B involved the local Mayor in August 2017 as he received a final notice from the Council about unpaid council tax. The Council apologised for the error in sending the final notice, and confirmed Mr B's council tax account was paid for the year and his overpayment would be refunded the next day.

-
18. On 11 September 2017, the Council said that on reflection the enforcement action should have been withdrawn. The Council refunded Mr B the £100 court costs.
 19. Mr B says this does not cover all of his costs, but has not provided evidence to the Ombudsman of his costs as a result of the recovery action.

Was there fault causing injustice?

20. It was the VOA's responsibility to decide on the removal of the property from the business rates list and to band it for council tax. Any delays by the VOA are outside of the Ombudsman's jurisdiction. Although the Council has a duty to collect business rates and council tax, in a case like this it would be sensible to put collection on hold until the VOA's decision, as if the VOA nil rate the property a refund would be due. The Council has accepted it should have put the recovery action on hold in this case. The Council has refunded the £100.00 Court costs, which is appropriate.
21. Had the Council put the recovery action on hold, as it says it should have done, Mr B would not have had the stress, time and trouble of going to Court and would not have made a lump sum payment of over £3000.00. Mr B was without that money for over a year whilst the VOA made its decision. Mr B has had the avoidable time, trouble and stress of pursuing a complaint.
22. The Council added to Mr B's stress by sending a final notice for council tax in error.
23. Mr B says he had to make the lump sum payment on a credit card and has had associated interest fees. Mr B has provided no evidence in support, so the Ombudsman has not considered this a financial injustice.
24. The Council accepts there could be better working between the Council and the VOA. The Council met with the VOA and went through concerns. The Council now has direct access to certain named VOA officers to help improve working relations. If the Council received a similar case to this in future it would contact the named VOA officers to ask to fast track the case, though the Council can provide no guarantees. I commend the Council for recognising there is a problem, and taking steps to try and resolve future problems.

Agreed action

25. To acknowledge the avoidable distress, time and trouble caused by the Council's actions, the Council will:
 - a) Apologise to Mr B and pay £350.00 within two weeks of the Ombudsman's final decision.
 - b) Consider the Council's approach to similar cases, based on it saying on reflection the recovery action should have been withdrawn in this case. The Council should reach a clear view in what instances it should put recovery action on hold, and cascade this to relevant staff. This should be completed within three months of the Ombudsman's final decision.
26. The Council should evidence to the Ombudsman it has complied with the above recommendations within three months of the Ombudsman's final decision.

Final decision

27. I have closed the case on the basis the recommended action is sufficient to acknowledge the impact on Mr B from the Council's action, and prevent future problems.

Investigator's decision on behalf of the Ombudsman

Agenda Item 10

PART A

Report to: Cabinet
Date of meeting: 5 March 2018
Report of: Committee and Scrutiny Officer
Title: Tackling Loneliness Task Group

1.0 **Summary**

1.1 This report provides Cabinet with the final report and recommendations of the Tackling Loneliness Task Group. The report is attached as Appendix A.

1.2 Cabinet is asked to consider the report and recommendations.

2.0 **Risks**

No risks have been identified as a result of the task group's recommendations.

3.0 **Recommendations**

3.1 that the following Tackling Loneliness Task Group recommendations be agreed

- i) To provide signposting to appropriate organisations for those experiencing loneliness, through the use of:
 - a dedicated page on the council's website
 - leaflets and publications from relevant organisations in the customer service centre at the Town Hall and in other council owned facilities e.g., community centres, Watford Museum and the leisure centres
 - information from external organisations displayed on community noticeboards
- ii) to provide training for councillors to help them to recognise and assist people vulnerable to loneliness in the course of their work in the local community
- iii) to provide best practice guidance for councillors – to be included as a downloadable document on the council's intranet
- iv) that the Mayor writes to

- HCC underlining the importance of tackling loneliness amongst Watford residents and encouraging them to ensure the issue remains a priority and is reflected in the allocation of resources
 - the MP for Watford underlining the importance of tackling loneliness and encouraging him to take an active part in cross-party efforts to address the issue and to speak out on behalf of residents who may be affected
- v) that the Mayor encourages councillors to be mindful of local organisations and events which attempt to tackle loneliness in their ward when allocating money from their Neighbourhood Locality Funds
- vi) that Cabinet notes the Task Group Chair is to write and encourage the Portfolio Holder for Community to be mindful of local organisations and events which attempt to tackle loneliness in Watford in their consideration of the council's Small Grants Fund applications.

Contact Officer:

For further information on this report please contact: Sandra Hancock,
Committee and Scrutiny Officer

telephone extension: 8377

email: legalanddemocratic@watford.gov.uk

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

4.0 Detailed proposal

4.1 In March 2017 Councillor Mauthoor moved a motion at Council calling for strategic ways to be found to help tackle loneliness in the borough. The motion was seconded by Councillor Taylor. Council unanimously agreed to set up a task group to look at the prevalence of loneliness within the borough and to address ways in which Watford Borough Council might make a difference.

4.2 Councillor Mauthoor completed the scrutiny proposal form which was presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 22 June 2017. The scrutiny committee agreed to the establishment of the task group. In addition it agreed the following membership –

- Councillor Bilqees Mauthoor (elected as Chair at the task group's first meeting)
- Councillor Stephen Bolton
- Councillor Stephen Cavinder
- Councillor Kareen Hastrick
- Councillor Rabi Martins

- 4.3 Prior to the first meeting councillors were provided with various documents and links to websites that covered the subject of loneliness and campaigns to tackle the issue. They were also provided with details of several radio programmes that had been broadcast about loneliness and its impact.
- 4.4 The task group held two formal meetings. The first meeting took place on 22 September, when the councillors considered the issue of loneliness and social isolation in Watford. It was acknowledged that Watford Borough Council did not have a specific remit in this area. However councillors were interested in the well-being of the local Watford community. They agreed to hold a second meeting which would be held during the day.
- 4.5 The second meeting was held on 1 December 2017, commencing at 10.30 a.m. The task group had agreed to invite representatives from a range of organisations to provide evidence against a list of agreed questions. The evidence helped the task group to understand the extent of the problem in the local community and ways in which the organisations were tackling the issue.
- 4.6 As part of the review Councillors Mauthoor and Cavinder attended a seminar ‘Tackling Isolation and Loneliness in the UK: Improving Well Being and Social Inclusion at all Ages’, which had been organised by the Public Policy Exchange. Speakers included representatives from local government, Public Health England and charitable organisations.
- 4.7 Cabinet is asked to consider and agree the recommendations set out in paragraph 3.1 above.
- 5.0 **Implications**
- 5.1 **Financial**
- 5.1.1 The Head of Finance comments that there are no further direct budget implications from the recommendations in the report or the Appendix.
- 5.2 **Legal Issues (Monitoring Officer)**
- 5.2.1 The Head of Democracy and Governance comments that there are no legal implications in this report.
- 5.3 **Equalities/Human Rights**
- 5.3.1 Loneliness can affect all sectors of the community and all ages. The aim of the task group’s recommendations is to ensure that people have access to information and organisations that can help in this issue.

Appendices

Appendix A – Tackling Loneliness Task Group report

Background Papers

There are no specific background papers for this report. All background information used during the task group's work is referenced in the final report.

File Reference

None



Tackling Loneliness Task Group

January 2018

Contents

	Page
Task Group members	03
Proposed recommendations	04
Background to the task group	05
Overview of the task group's work	06
Recommendations and comments	07
Bibliography/background papers	12
Appendix	13
1. Task group scope and proposal	

Task group members

Councillor Bilqees Mauthoor	Chair, Councillor for Leggatts Ward
Councillor Stephen Bolton	Councillor for Central Ward
Councillor Stephen Cavinder	Councillor for Woodside Ward
Councillor Kareen Hastrick	Councillor for Meriden Ward
Councillor Rabi Martins	Councillor for Central Ward

Officer support

Ishbel Morren	Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer
Sandra Hancock	Committee and Scrutiny Officer
Jodie Kloss	Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer

External organisations

Age UK	Mark Hanna and Deborah Lee
Youth Connexions, Hertfordshire	Mary Walsh
Disability Watford	Leigh Hutchings
Hertfordshire County Council	Sue Darker
Home Start	Emma Power
New Hope	Pete Belfield
The Silver Line	David Dingley
Small Acts of Kindness	Lynne Misner
Watford & Three Rivers Trust	Bob Jones

Proposed recommendations to present to Overview and Scrutiny Committee

To provide:

- signposting to appropriate organisations for those experiencing loneliness, through the use of:
 - a dedicated page on the council's website
 - leaflets and publications from relevant organisations in the customer service centre at the Town Hall and in other council owned facilities e.g., community centres, Watford Museum and the leisure centres
 - information from external organisations displayed on community noticeboards
- training for councillors to help them to recognise and assist people vulnerable to loneliness in the course of their work in the local community
- best practice guidance for councillors – to be included as a downloadable document on the council's intranet

Also to:

- ask the Mayor to write to
 - HCC underlining the importance of tackling loneliness amongst Watford residents and encouraging them to ensure the issue remains a priority and is reflected in the allocation of resources
 - the MP for Watford underlining the importance of tackling loneliness and encouraging him to take an active part in cross-party efforts to address the issue and to speak out on behalf of residents who may be affected
- encourage councillors to be mindful of local organisations and events which attempt to tackle loneliness in their ward when allocating money from their Neighbourhood Locality Funds
- the Task Group Chair to write and encourage the Portfolio Holder for Community to be mindful of local organisations and events which attempt to tackle loneliness in Watford in their consideration of the council's Small Grants Fund applications.

Background to the task group

There has been a growing focus on the potentially harmful effects of loneliness and social isolation on health and longevity, especially among older adults. This has been supported by various studies and surveys, including a major study by The Co-op and the British Red Cross (2016) which revealed that over 9 million people in the UK across all adult ages – more than the population of London – were either always or often lonely.

The impact of loneliness on health is equivalent to smoking 15 cigarettes a day (Holt-Lunstad, 2015). It is not confined to particular groups, although is most prevalent amongst the elderly. The task group learnt that:

- 200,000 older people said they had not had a conversation with friends or family for a month, while 3.9 million older people agreed the television was their main form of company (Age UK, 2014)
- 1 in 5 GP visits were for non-clinical purposes (Citizens Advice, 2015)
- 43% of 17 – 25 year olds who used the Action for Children service had experienced problems with loneliness (Action for Children, 2009)
- 24% of parents surveyed said they were always or often lonely (Action for Children, 2015)
- 50% of disabled people were lonely on any given day (Sense, 2015)
- 58% of refugees and migrants surveyed in London described loneliness and isolation as their biggest challenge (The Forum, 2014)
- 8 out of 10 carers have felt lonely or isolated as a result of looking after a loved one (Carers UK, 2014)
- almost 10% of people with dementia leave the house once a month or less (Alzheimer's Society, 2014).

The Jo Cox Commission on Loneliness was established in January 2017 to continue the work of the murdered MP, Jo Cox. It brings together a group of 13 charities and businesses to respond to the challenge of loneliness. Inspired by the late MP, their vision is to encourage people to work together to make a real difference to the lives of those affected by loneliness.

Against this background, in March 2017 Councillor Mauthoor moved a motion at Council calling for strategic ways to be found, across party lines, to help tackle loneliness in the borough. The motion was seconded by Councillor Peter Taylor. Council unanimously agreed to set up a task group to look at the prevalence of loneliness within the borough and to address ways in which Watford Borough Council might make a difference.

Councillor Mauthoor's proposed review observed that being alone or living alone or in total isolation was a public health issue and a risk that should be tackled at a local level. It further noted that feelings of loneliness and social isolation could affect people at any stage of their lives, but were most acute in older age.

In addition, the review proposed the need to consider loneliness in terms of its detrimental impact on health and well-being as well as the effects on individuals and public services.

The task group was agreed by Overview and Scrutiny Committee in June 2017, when its membership was approved.

Councillor Mauthoor was elected chair by the task group.

Overview of the task group's programme of work

At their first meeting on 22 September, the task group considered the issue of loneliness and social isolation in Watford. It was reflected that the issue could affect anyone at any stage and was experienced by a range of different groups within the community often at pinch points in their lives. These included, young new mums, individuals with mobility limitations, health issues or who were recently divorced or separated, those living without children at home, retired people and the recently bereaved.

Task group members considered that understanding the issue of loneliness was important both to them in their role as councillors and to council officers who, in the course of their work, might come into contact with members of the public experiencing loneliness problems.

The task group acknowledged that Watford Borough Council did not have a remit in this area. However, councillors took a keen interest in the wellbeing of their constituents and wished to understand and support their communities.

In order to understand fully the extent of the problem in the local community and ways that they might respond positively, the task group proposed a full fact finding day inviting a range of representative organisations to provide evidence against a list of defined and previously agreed questions. Additional comments were sought from other organisations playing an important role in the community to inform the task group's work.

A full list of the organisations which provided evidence to the task group for this review is listed on page 3 of this report.

The task group met formally on two occasions.

Additional research work was carried out by officers to inform the task group and to produce this report.

In addition, Councillors Mauthoor and Cavinder attended a Public Policy Exchange seminar “Tackling isolation and loneliness in the UK” on 4 October 2017, reporting back its conclusions and recommendations to the task group.

Recommendations and comments

To provide:

- **signposting to appropriate organisations for those experiencing loneliness, through the use of:**
 - **a dedicated page on the council’s website**
 - **leaflets and publications from relevant organisations in the customer service centre at the Town Hall and in other council owned facilities e.g., community centres, Watford Museum and the leisure centres**
 - **information from external organisations displayed on community noticeboards**

All of the organisations questioned sought channels to promote the help and advice they offered to lonely and socially isolated people. In addition to word of mouth, they advised that one of the most effective means of getting their message out was the use of leaflets and magazines at obvious points of contact. These included public buildings, community halls and health establishments (GP surgeries, hospitals and opticians).

The task group considered the council should commit to ensuring that relevant leaflets and publications were displayed in the customer service centre at the Town Hall and in other council owned facilities, such as community centres, Watford Museum and the leisure centres. In addition, community noticeboards around the borough should be used to display further information and organisations offering support.

It was noted that not all groups experiencing loneliness and social isolation accessed information in the same way and a wide ranging communications strategy was therefore required. This should include the internet and, where appropriate, social media. The task group proposed establishing a dedicated page on the council’s website which would signpost people to information and relevant websites.

The task group acknowledged that not all groups had access to, or the skills to use, the internet. As a consequence, despite the council's drive to use digital solutions for information, the task group proposed that the internet should not replace the availability of paper-based information over time.

- **training for councillors to help them to recognise and assist people vulnerable to loneliness in the course of their work in the local community**

The task group considered the great variety in Hertfordshire's social, cultural and racial mix. It was reported that the loneliness problem was particularly acute amongst the elderly (especially when housebound), those with learning disabilities and mental health issues.

All of the organisations which provided evidence to the task group were keen to promote a better understanding of the loneliness problem in Watford. To this end, all offered to provide practical advice and assistance in devising and running a training programme for councillors to help them to recognise and assist people vulnerable to loneliness in the course of their work in the local community.

One of the key areas of evidence provided to the task group was the indicators that councillors might look for to suggest that an individual was lonely or socially isolated. The task group learnt that there were three recognised scales to assess potential loneliness: Campaign to End Loneliness Measurement tool, the De-Jong Giervald 6-Item Loneliness Scale and the UCLA 3-Item Loneliness Scale.

Practical indicators that they might look for whilst carrying out their work included:

- people who undertook only single visits outside their houses e.g., to the shops or GP, where contact with the GP or health services was for only minor complaints
- individuals isolated in their communities, who had limited social networks and could not name friends or family with whom they were in touch, who watched TV constantly and tended to lack awareness, who said too little or too much (because they were unused to company) and who adopted strategies to stop visitors leaving
- those living in untidy, poorly maintained properties, who might be housebound or lacked mobility and the means to get out
- individuals who were deaf, or were suffering from mental health issues or who had communication difficulties.

This was by no means an exhaustive list. Generally, people did not wish to self-identify, feeling a sense of shame or inadequacy and the complete picture of loneliness in Watford was therefore unclear. All of the task group's witnesses spoke of the difficulty of developing a full picture of the loneliness problem. The task group therefore considered that training to identify and assist people vulnerable to loneliness in the course of their work was important.

Recognising the wide-reaching implications of the problem of loneliness in society, task group members suggested that the training would also be relevant to officers, particularly those who came into regular contact with members of the public.

- **best practice guidance for councillors – to be included as a downloadable document on the council's intranet**

As a part of the above training, task group members suggested that some best practice, quick reference guidance, drawing from a wide range of resources, should be produced for councillors. This should summarise what to look out for and how to help when councillors encountered lonely people whilst carrying out their work in the local community.

The best practice guidance should take the form of a downloadable document, which would be accessible on the council's intranet. A number of organisations providing evidence advised that 'real stories' provided a useful means of illustrating the issues. This might form part of any guidance material.

As noted above, the task group considered that any training and best practice advice should be available to all council officers, but particularly to front-line staff who had greater direct contact with members of the public.

Also to:

- **ask the Mayor to write to**
 - **HCC underlining the importance of tackling loneliness amongst Watford residents and encouraging them to ensure the issue remains a priority and is reflected in the allocation of resources**
 - **the MP for Watford underlining the importance of tackling loneliness and encouraging him to take an active part in cross-party efforts to address the issue and to speak out on behalf of residents who may be affected**

The task group was mindful of Watford Borough Council's limited remit in regard to policies which might impact on tackling the loneliness problem in Watford. Greater policy influence and resources were available at county level. In addition, task group members recognised the considerable focus the issue was receiving at a national political level, not least from the Jo Cox Commission on Loneliness which had attracted cross party support in Parliament.

With this in mind, the task group considered that it would be appropriate for the council's elected Mayor to write to both Hertfordshire County Council and to the MP for Watford to underline the importance of tackling loneliness in Watford and to promote actions within their powers to enable solutions to the benefit of local residents.

- **encourage councillors to be mindful of local organisations and events which attempt to tackle loneliness in their ward when allocating money from their Neighbourhood Locality Funds**
- **the Task Group Chair to write and encourage the Portfolio Holder for Community to be mindful of local organisations and events which attempt to tackle loneliness in Watford in their consideration of the council's Small Grants Fund applications.**

Within each of Watford Borough Council's 12 wards, councillors have a small Neighbourhood Locality Fund of £2,500 per annum. The fund is intended to enable councillors to meet with residents, businesses and other community groups, and facilitate the enhancement of their area and the amenities of those living and working in the ward. This could include providing grants for community projects, match funding, or carrying out small projects. The protocol for any expenditure requires a focus on local organisations promoting grass roots groups and activities, rather than larger national charities with other funding streams at their disposal.

In addition, Watford Borough Council has an annual Small Grants Fund. This offers voluntary and community sector groups the opportunity to apply for a grant of up to £2,000 to help towards a project or to purchase an item of equipment. Applications are encouraged from informal groups, such as groups of neighbours, as well as from small formal community organisations, grass roots groups, charities, social enterprises and community interest companies.

The task group considered that both funds offered the opportunity for councillors and Watford Borough Council to promote activities which would assist in the efforts to tackle loneliness in Watford.

To this end, it was suggested that councillors should be mindful of local organisations and events within their wards which attempted to tackle loneliness when allocating money from their Neighbourhood Locality Funds.

In addition, whilst the assessment criteria for the Small Grants Funds sat comfortably with the aspirations of the task group, it was agreed that the task group chair should write to the Portfolio Holder for Community to remind her of the work of the task group and encourage her to be aware of the opportunities to tackle loneliness when allocating money to groups.

Bibliography/background papers

Trapped in a bubble: an investigation into triggers for loneliness in the UK, Co-op and British Red Cross, 2016

[http://www.redcross.org.uk/~media/BritishRedCross/Documents/What%20we%20do/UK%20services/Co Op Trapped in a bubble report AW.pdf](http://www.redcross.org.uk/~media/BritishRedCross/Documents/What%20we%20do/UK%20services/Co%20Op%20Trapped%20in%20a%20bubble%20report%20AW.pdf)

BBC Radio 2 Loneliness Week, 9-14 July 2017

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/3gk9N7qRMcW2hhcVhmBJ5D/loneliness-week-2017>

Growing up: transition to a successful adulthood, Action for Children, 2015

https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/media/8275/growing_up_-_transition_to_a_successful_adulthood.pdf

This is how it feels to be lonely - A report on migrants and refugees' experiences with loneliness in London, The Forum, 2014

https://migrantsorganise.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Loneliness-report_The-Forum_UPDATED.pdf

Dementia 2014: Opportunity for change, Alzheimer's Society, 2014

https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/download/downloads/id/2317/dementia_2014_opportunity_for_change.pdf

A very general practice How much time do GPs spend on issues other than health? Citizens Advice, 2015

https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/Global/CitizensAdvice/Public%20services%20publications/CitizensAdvice_AVeryGeneralPractice_May2015.pdf

Alone and Caring, Carers UK, 2015

<https://www.carersuk.org/for-professionals/policy/policy-library/alone-caring>

Websites for the following organisations:

[Age UK](#)

[Youth Connexions Hertfordshire](#)

[Carers UK](#)

[Disability Watford](#)

[Hertfordshire County Council](#)

[Home Start](#)

[New Hope](#)

[The Silver Line](#)

[Small Acts of Kindness](#)

[Watford & Three Rivers Trust](#)

Suggestions for topics to be scrutinised – evaluation table

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

Section 1 – Scrutiny Suggestion	
Proposer: Councillor/Officer/Member of public	
Topic recommended for scrutiny: <i>Please include as much detail as is available about the specific such as;</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>areas which should be <u>included</u></i> • <i>areas which should be <u>excluded</u></i> • <i>Whether the focus should be on past performance, future policy or both.</i> 	<i>Tackling loneliness</i>
Why have you recommended this topic for scrutiny?	I would like this council to help find strategic ways across party to help tackle loneliness. This Council notes that being or living alone in total isolation can be a public health issue and risk that must be tackled starting at a local level. Feelings of loneliness and social isolation can affect people at any stage of their life but are particularly more critical when it happens to older age. We know that loneliness has two important distinctions a) risk factors leading up to a deterioration in health and well-being b) effects this would have on individuals and public services.
What are the specific outcomes you wish to see from the review?	I would like to see that there is a clear point of contact that people can have access to either the person who is suffering or any other person who knows of someone. This could be a local councillor who comes across a vulnerable person

	<p>they could be referred.</p> <p>I would also like to see more shared partnerships between all the varies local charities that may be able to help bring about change. I am concerned that local charities are not talking to each other often enough and I would like to see a task group that also includes some of the most appropriate charities represented so we can work together.</p> <p>At present Manchester and Coventry councils have adopted and worked out a plan to fit this in the council.</p> <p>It is predicted that between 2008 and 2033 there will be large increases in the number of older people living alone particularly in the 85+ age range.</p> <p>Raising councillors' awareness of the issue, how to identify potential lonely people and what to do.</p>
How do you think evidence might be obtained?	<p>I would like to start off by carrying out a survey and using social media to reinforce our efforts.</p> <p>From councillors during their canvassing door to door who may have identified people who are living alone.</p> <p>We would need to collect data from various sources, mosaic profiling, council services, local charities/community groups.</p> <p>Herts county council will also be a good source.</p> <p>Information from expert witnesses</p>
Does the proposed item meet the following criteria?	
It must affect a group or community of people	<p>Old aged people mainly</p> <p>Young people who have lost partners</p> <p>Single parents</p> <p>Young people</p>
It must relate to a service, event or issue in	Health and well-being and the town's vulnerable communities

which the council has a significant stake	
It must not have been a topic of scrutiny within the last 12 months	This topic has not been covered by scrutiny
It must not be an issue, such as planning or licensing, which is dealt with by another council committee	Not applicable
Does the topic meet the council's priorities?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify ways to manage the borough's housing needs 2. Champion smart growth and economic prosperity 3. Provide for our vulnerable and disadvantaged communities 4. Deliver a digital Watford to empower our community 5. Secure our own financial future
Are you aware of any limitations of time, other constraints or risks which need to be taken into account?	None that I am aware of
Does the topic involve a Council partner or other outside body?	Local charities police, and herts county council.
Are there likely to be any Equality implications which will need to be considered?	
Councillor/Officer <i>Bilqees Mauthoor</i>	Date 15 May 2017

Part A

Report to: Cabinet
Date of meeting: 5 March 2018
Report of: Head of Service Transformation
Title: Revision to Digital Watford Board meeting schedule

1.0 **Summary**

- 1.1 Cabinet on 6 June 2016 approved the establishment of the Digital Watford Board.
- 1.2 On 11 September 2017, Cabinet approved an amendment to the membership and Terms of Reference of the Digital Watford Board, following discussions between the Head of Service Transformation and other Digital Watford Board members.
- 1.3 The current Terms of Reference are considered appropriate for the objectives of the Board. However, approval from Cabinet is requested to alter the format and regularity of Digital Watford Board meetings, as outlined in 3.2, from the new municipal year.

2.0 **Recommendations**

- 2.1 That the Digital Watford Board meeting schedule and approach for the new municipal year should be amended as indicated in section 3.2 below and that the Head of Service Transformation in consultation with the Portfolio Holder are given the delegated authority to amend this schedule as appropriate and make any other changes necessary to the operation of the Board.

Contact Officer:

For further information on this report please contact: Andrew Cox, Head of Service Transformation
Telephone extension: 01923 278124 email: andrew.cox@watford.gov.uk

Report approved by: Andrew Cox, Head of Service Transformation

3.0 **Detailed proposal**

- 3.1 The existing Digital Watford Board membership maintain that it is important for the council to have a political and executive oversight of the development and implementation of digital technology across the town. As such, the formal Digital

Watford Board meetings are a useful and necessary vehicle. However, in order to facilitate discussions and ongoing relationships between other local organisations, and members of the Digital Watford Board, it is believed that more informal meetings, of a seminar format away from the Town Hall would also be of benefit to encourage debate, working relationships and ownership amongst the membership of the Board.

3.2 It is therefore proposed that the Digital Watford Board hold at least one formal board meeting, open to the public and held at Watford Town Hall, per annum, supplemented by at least one informal seminar event per annum, ideally hosted by another organisation on the board.

4.1 **Financial**

4.1.1 The Shared Director of Finance comments that there are no financial implications contained in this report.

4.2 **Legal Issues** (Monitoring Officer)

4.2.1 The Head of Democracy and Governance comments that Digital Watford Board is a working group set up by Cabinet. As it is proposing membership from representatives outside of the council it cannot have any decision making powers. Its meetings can, however, be open to the public, on the same terms as other council meetings. This will require all agendas and papers to be published at least five clear days before the date of the meeting. It is proposed that these requirements apply to the bi-annual Digital Watford Board meeting at Watford Town Hall.

4.3 **Potential Risks**

There are no potential risks associated with this report.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Digital Watford Board Terms of Reference – agreed 27 July 2017

Background Papers

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.

- Revised responsibilities and terms of reference for the board – Digital Watford Board presentation 24 July 2017
- Minutes for Item 3 – Digital Watford Board, 24 July 2017
- Minutes for Item 7 – Cabinet, 11 September 2017

File Reference

- <http://modgov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=312&MId=1894>