



## Equality Impact Analysis

<b>Title of policy, function or service</b>	Covid-19 – Our Road to Renewal
<b>Lead officer</b>	Managing Director
<b>Person completing the EIA</b>	Head of Programme Management Office
<b>Type of policy, function or service:</b>	Existing (reviewed)  New / Proposed <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Version</b>	Version 0.1- 24 June 2020 – Initial draft  Version 0.2 – 25 June 2020 – Amendments following review by Renewal Coordination Group  Version 1.0 – 25 June 2020 – Final version approved by Group Head of Corporate Strategy and Communications

## **1. Background**

The council's Road to Renewal Plan forms part of a package of forward looking strategies which will ensure that the council provides a focus on moving forwards from Covid-19 whilst clearly aligning this to the long-term ambitions for the town and organisation.

Our Road to Renewal Plan details the specific activity to be undertaken by the council in order to lead the renewal work. As well as alignment with the Council Plan, it builds upon both the positives, such as the overwhelming community-spirited reaction to the crisis, and the lessons learnt from the council's initial response. Our Road to Renewal Plan also details the separate work streams established to deliver a comprehensive and joined-up renewal of the town and council. Within the framework of the Council Plan it also outlines the specific objectives for each area of focus which cover the community, economy and business and the council's organisational renewal, including its financial resilience.

As a key strategic document, the plan's impact on the town and community is fundamental to ensuring we meet our commitment to equalities and diversity and our 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 Road to Renewal Plan on the people in the groups or with the characteristics protected in the Equalities Act 2010. This document will also reflect upon the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on those with protected characteristics, based on what we currently know about how it has affected our community.

The protected characteristics, as defined by the Equalities Act 2010, 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 96,600 (ONS mid-2019 estimate). This was slightly less than estimated in 2018 (96,800 rounded). The slowing of population growth across the UK (marked by a fall in Watford) is attributed to the lowest number of births for 14 years alongside an increase in emigration and a fall in international immigration.

Watford's population is currently projected to increase to 105,000 by 2025 and 110,300 by 2035, a rise from 2016 of 14.2%. This growth will be a challenge for Watford, given our tight borough boundaries and is

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recognised within the Council Plan, shaping a number of our commitments and areas for action in the both the Delivery Plan and Road to Renewal Plan, which specifically highlights the need for a sustainable future for the town, post-Covid.

The graphs below show a comparison between the sex and age profile of England’s population with that of Watford. (ONS 2018).



Overall, this comparison shows that Watford is a relatively young town. This is particularly the case in the 0 to 19 age range where 26.5% of the population are between those ages, compared with 23.6% nationally. Similarly the 30 to 49 cohort accounts for a significantly higher proportion of the Watford population at 32.1%, compared to 26.1% nationally. This means that we are a town which is popular with families and, whilst we are a town for all, we recognise that our plans need to reflect our large number of young people and families. Furthermore, the Hertfordshire Growth Board economic update of June 2020 specifically indicated that young people will be disproportionately impacted by the potential economic downturn with the Institute of Student Employers reporting that graduate recruitment is down by 12% with an overall reduction of 23% in entry level roles. Our Road to Renewal Plan specifically addresses this by linking young people across to the town to our volunteering approach and providing a particular focus for young people within the skills and employment work with our partners.

**Population density:** The population density for Watford is circa 4,600 people per square kilometre. This makes it the most densely populated district area in Hertfordshire and in the country (432 per square kilometre). This is a reflection that we are an urban district, with many characteristics of a metropolitan borough. In comparison with many metropolitan boroughs, particularly those in and around the outskirts of London, our density is relatively low.

**Ward level populations (mid-year 2018 estimates):** The ONS publishes experimental data on ward level populations. The last release date was for mid-year 2018. This showed Central ward had the highest population (9,447) and Tudor the lowest (6,825). Further analysis shows that Nascot ward had a

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significantly higher number of elderly residents than other wards in Watford, whilst Central a significantly higher number of under 20s. The age profile of Nascot ward was recently highlighted by the Covid-19 crisis, when it experienced the highest death rate of any ward in Watford.

Ward	Mid-year 2018
Callowland	7,928
Central	9,447
Holywell	8,610
Leggatts	7,757
Meriden	7,972
Nascot	8,815

Ward	Mid-year 2018
Oxhey	6,847
Park	8,698
Stanborough	7,403
Tudor	6,825
Vicarage	8,854
Woodside	7,611

*ONS experimental data (Ward Level Mid-Year Population Estimates (experimental), Mid-2018)*

#### Households

**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 May 2020 the figure was 40,275 (council tax base).

The average household size in Watford is currently 2.45. This is currently average for the region. Nationally, there is downward trend in household size projected over the next 20 years. The Watford average household size is envisaged to drop to 2.33 person household in 2039, which this is larger than that projected for the English average (2.21 in 2039) and the Hertfordshire average (2.29 in 2039). These projections have implications for Watford in terms of development and growth.

**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 2016 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; it is one of the strengths of our town and what makes us such a vibrant community, something which was highlighted through the town's response to COVID-19 as all parts of the community pulled together to support the most vulnerable in our society. This is something that the Road to Renewal Plan specifically seeks to harness and move forwards, linking in directly with the role that young people, disproportionately impacted by Covid-19, can play in the wider community.

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%). Research has shown that members of the BAME community are at an increased risk of Covid-19. The Road to Renewal

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Plan reflects this and additional activities have been put in place in relation to council staff returning to the Town Hall in a safe way. Further recommendations from Public Health England in relation to the BAME community will be reviewed and delivered through the Council Plan Delivery Plan, rather than as part of our Road to Renewal Plan.

**National insurance registration:** 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. The National Insurance Registrations for January – March 2020 shows there were 2,194 registrations in Watford, of which 640 were from Romania and Bulgaria, 527 from South Asia and 395 from Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and Sweden.

**Language spoken at home:** Other data sources, including school language survey on the languages spoken by Watford school children at home, endorse the National Insurance findings that Watford remains a town with a diverse community with English still the predominant language (at around 60%) followed by (in order of self-selection by Watford families): Urdu, Polish, Tamil, Romanian, Gujarati, Punjabi, Gujarati and Hindi.

**Births and origin of parents:** In 2018, nearly 60% (59.6%) of children born to Watford based parents, had one or both parents born outside of the UK, with 42% having both parents born outside of the UK. 52% of new mothers in Watford were born outside of the UK (1,397 births in total, with 667 to mothers born in the UK and 730 born outside of the UK. Of these 730 mothers were born in the 'new' EU countries – those that had joined since 2004) and 252 in the Middle East and Asia.

**Electorate:** The electorate on the electoral register (as published on 1 December 2018) was 70,544, with a further 3,642 identified as potential electors. The main ethnicity groups have been identified as:

<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>2018/19</b>
British	58,329
Romanian	1,842
Polish	1,560
Rep of Ireland	1,289
Indian	1,062
Italian	805
Portuguese	703
Pakistani	652
Sri Lankan	418
Spanish	364
French	337
Bulgarian	215

### Age

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The largest populations by age band in Watford are:

- 35-39 years (8,537)
- 30-34 years (7,921)
- 40 -44 years (7,458)
- 5 -9 years (7,027)

Compared with other districts in Hertfordshire, Watford has fewer 65+ years residents. The age profile of the borough is more comparable with cities who have younger age profiles and where younger people are attracted by lifestyle opportunities, affordable housing and good transport links. Whilst over 60s have been more impacted by Covid-19 than younger individuals (reflected in Watford within the Death-by-Ward data, our young residents are predicted to be impacted more substantially by the predicted economic downturn.

**Median age:** the median age in Watford is 37 years. This compares to 40 for England (mid-year 2019 population estimates)

### **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 (Census 2011). The 2019 NHS Health Profile's summary conclusion is that the health of people in Watford is 'varied' compared with the England average. About 12% (2,300) of children live in low income families – this is an improvement on 2016 (14% / 2,700). Life expectancy for men at 65 is similar to the England average but for women it is significantly worse (2016-18).

The profile also shows that Watford is below average for a number of important health indicators, which may have had some impact on the town's rate of deaths from Covid-19. These include: residents eating the recommended 5 a day portions of fruit and vegetables, over-18s who are obese and physically active adults. All reported cancer screenings were below average for Watford and emergency admissions for falls from the age of 65 plus were worse than for the England average.

### **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 or for the sexual orientation of its community. It is anticipated that these questions will be asked in the Census 2021.

### **Education and skills**

A skilled workforce supports the economic development and employment aspirations for Watford. There has been a mostly increasing trend in educational attainment in Watford over the last few years. Watford's working age population has the fourth highest percentage (44.4%) in Hertfordshire of those with qualifications at NVQ 4 and above (Three Rivers is the highest with 63.5%, St Albans the second highest at 58.5% and East Herts third highest with 45.7%); this is close to the Hertfordshire average of 42% average but higher than the Great Britain average of 40.3%. 83.7% of Watford residents have achieved 5 A\*-C or equivalent. This is the better than the England average of 75.6 (Jan – Dec 2019). Skills and employment plays a key role in the Business and Economy work stream of the Road to Renewal Plan with an acknowledgement that the council has a unique opportunity to support the local economy by working with partners to upskill our residents and workforce, with a particular focus on young people and sustainable,

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low-carbon industries in order to meet the council's commitment relating to the declared Climate Emergency.

### **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 15 statutory homeless (March 2020) and 153 households in temporary accommodation (March 2020). However, these figures were impacted significantly by the action taken by Central Government and the council during the initial response to Covid-19. All rough sleepers were provided with accommodation and the Road to Renewal Plan recognises the opportunity for the council to achieve and maintain zero rough sleeping on the streets of Watford.

### **Deprivation**

The English Indices of Deprivation (IoD) 2019 were published by the Government in September 2019, and updates the previous 2015 Indices, published in September 2015. The Indices of Deprivation measure relative levels of deprivation in 32,844 small areas or neighbourhoods, called Lower-layer Super Output Areas, in England

The IoD2019 is based on 39 separate indicators, organised across seven distinct domains of deprivation which are combined and weighted to calculate the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019

In the IMD 2019, Watford is ranked 195 out of 317 authorities, putting it in the 7<sup>th</sup> 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 2015.

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, health and disability, 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 than for other areas.

The ten most deprived LSOAs in Watford, as ranked in the IMD 2019 are as follows (the ranking for the last IMD data in 2015 is shown in brackets in the first column). Deprivation has also been identified as an indicator for poorer Covid-19 outcomes so understanding our areas of deprivation, particularly if we apply greater granularity around health and income deprivation, is important. The LSOA, which contains some of Whippendell Road, Chester Road and Durban Road West is within the second most deprived health and disability quartile does not feature in the top 10 most deprived LSOAs

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Watford rank	Ward	LSOA code	Hertfordshire		England	
			Rank	Decile in Herts (1st = most deprived)	Rank	Decile (1st = most deprived)
1 (1)	<b>Central</b> (Water Lane, Gladstone Road, Grosvenor Road, part of Radlett Road, Brockleberry Close, Raphael Drive, top part of Queens Road)	E01023860 (009B)	5 (5)	1st (1st)	5055 (5005)	2nd (2nd)
2 (3)	<b>Holywell</b> (Caractacus Green, part of Charlock Way, Moor View, Jellicoe Road, Stripling Way, Rose Gardens)	E01023865 (011C)	21 (22)	1st (1st)	7239 (7800)	3rd (3rd)
3 (2)	<b>Meriden</b> (Garsmouth Way, Aldbury Close, Harvest End, part of York Way)	E01023876 (003D)	26(19)	1st (1st)	7924 (7590)	3rd (3rd)
4 (4)	<b>Holywell</b> (Ascot Road, Greenhill Crescent, Caxton Way, Croxley View)	E01023866 (011D)	27 (30)	1st (1st)	8294 (9203)	3rd (3rd)
5 (7)	<b>Woodside</b> (Haines Way, Queenswood Crescent, Sheriff Way, Nottingham Close)	E01023906 (001C)	61 (41)	1st (1st)	10719 (10062)	4th (4th)
6 (10)	<b>Oxhey</b> (Deacons Hill, Blackwell Drive, Riverside Road, Eastbury Road, Thorpe Crescent)	E01023883 (012B)	62 (49)	1st (1st)	10758 (10710)	4th (4th)
7 (13)	<b>Callowland</b> (Maude Crescent, St George's Road, Breakspere Close, Nicholas Close)	E01023857 (006C)	67 (56)	1st (1st)	10894 (10812)	4th (4th)
8 (9)	<b>Meriden</b> (Gaddesden Crescent, Bovingdon Crescent, Garston Lane)	E01023877 (003E)	73 (75)	2nd (2nd)	11225 (11837)	4th (4th)
9 (12)	<b>Leggatts</b> (The Harebreaks, Chestnut Walk, Foxhill, Brushrise, Elm Grove)	E01023870 (004C)	78 (52)	2nd (1st)	11515 (10734)	4th (4th)
10 (5)	<b>Stanborough</b> (Clarke Way, Rushton Avenue, Orbital Crescent, Harris Road)	E01023891 (002B)	92 (31)	1st (1st)	11970 (9377)	4th (3rd)

## 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. It confirms we are a young and diverse borough. Watford MOSAIC profile from 2018 is shown below:

	Mosaic Code	Name	Description	Number of Household	2017 Watford %	2016 Watford %	Difference	Trend	Rank (last year)
1	J40	Career Builders	Singles and couples in their 20s and 30s progressing in their field of work from commutable properties	4,045	12.5%	11.9%	0.6%	▲	1
2	I36	Cultural Comfort	Thriving families with good incomes in multi-cultural urban communities	3,321	10.3%	8.7%	1.6%	▲	2
3	D14	Cafes and Catchments	Affluent families with growing children living in upmarket housing in city environs	2,499	7.7%	8.0%	-0.3%	▼	3
4	D17	Thriving Independence	Well-qualified older singles with incomes from successful professional careers living in good quality housing	2,422	7.5%	5.4%	2.1%	▲	7
5	M56	Solid Economy	Stable families with children renting better quality homes from social landlords	2,172	6.7%	6.4%	0.3%	▲	6
6	J44	Flexible Workforce	Young renters ready to move to follow worthwhile incomes from service sector jobs	1,954	6.0%	7.0%	-1.0%	▼	4
7	H35	Primary Ambitions	Forward-thinking younger families who sought affordable homes in good suburbs which they may now be out-growing	1,550	4.8%	6.8%	-2.0%	▼	5
8	B08	Premium Fortunes	Influential families with substantial income established in large, distinctive homes in wealthy enclaves	1,237	3.8%	3.2%	0.6%	▲	10
9	I37	Community Elders	Established older households owning city homes in diverse neighbourhoods	1,128	3.5%	4.1%	-0.6%	▼	8
10	I39	Ageing Access	Older residents owning small inner suburban properties with good access to amenities	1,099	3.4%	3.4%	0.0%	◊	9



**Key issues identified from our borough profile for our Road to Renewal Plan:**

- A young population with a higher proportion of those under 50, which, given the higher proportion of under 20s indicates Watford is a town with a high number of families
- A very diverse population and a town that continues to attract people from across the globe and with a high proportion of BAME residents
- Some underlying health related issues, particularly around preventative health measures and healthy living
- Areas where residents are experiencing less positive outcomes – often as a result of multiple issues but which could be impacting on life chances and opportunities

#### **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. A new survey will be conducted later in 2020, to provide additional insight into the council's planning and the development of the next phase of its Delivery Plan and to help inform the ongoing alignment of the Road to Renewal Plan.

##### **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

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- 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:

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

Total responses: 1,095

It should be noted that the Road to Renewal Plan seeks to address many of the issues raised by our residents, particularly in relation to issue identified as the most important to the majority of respondents – a vibrant and prosperous local economy. The Road to Renewal Plan sets out how our Economic Revive and Thrive Strategy will be driven by the desire to achieve positive outcomes for our local residents, businesses and therefore local economy.

## 5. The impact of Covid-19

Covid-19 has had an unprecedented impact on the world, the UK and on our town. Whilst all areas have been affected by the virus, Watford has experienced a higher number of deaths and rate of deaths than many other places. As home to a major hospital, it has experienced the full force of the pandemic and the Road to Renewal Plan acknowledges the very changed world we now face both in terms of revitalising our town but also in supporting those residents and in our community who have been significantly impacted by Covid-19. Specific objectives have been made in relation to supporting those affected by Covid-19 and to address the issue of digital isolation.

As of 6 June 2020, 111 Watford residents had died of Covid-19. Nearly a third of these were in care homes, indicating that, like in all areas, the elderly were disproportionately affected by the virus. Statistics from England show more people from black, Asian and minority ethnic groups are dying from Covid-19 more than those from white ethnic groups and that men were more likely to die than women. Whilst there is substantially more research needed as to why some people are experiencing worse outcomes than others, the key issues identified from Covid-19 research to date are as follows:

- The virus does not affect the population uniformly with certain groups / communities likely to experience worse outcomes than others
- Many of the risk factors associated with Covid-19 relate to protected characteristics (age, sex, ethnicity,

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- Covid-19 has significant implications for our community both those with protected characteristics and the wider community and these need to be reflected in our strategic planning and delivery

## **6. How the council will promote equality through the Road to Renewal Plan**

Under the Equality Act 2010, three areas need to be considered when analysing the equality impact of the Road to Renewal 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

### **Positive impacts**

- It is acknowledged that Covid-19 has specifically impacted members of the community with protected characteristics (age, sex, ethnicity, disability). Public health advice throughout the renewal from Covid-19 will reflect this, as do the plans for the council's own approach to returning colleagues to the Town Hall and other physical places of work. The plans in place provide flexibility to these individuals and the Road to Renewal Plan includes reviews of internal policies to ensure that these new ways of working are recognised.
- Whilst the council's Watford Together initiative has been really successful in bringing the community together through Covid-19, many people shielding will have experienced isolation and associated mental health issues. Given the specific impact of Covid-19 on some of those protected characteristic groups, lockdown itself will have disproportionately impacted those members of the community. The Road to Renewal plan seeks to address this with specific commitments in relation to those who have experienced mental health issues, bereavement or financial difficulty as a result of the virus. A further activity to support those experiencing digital isolation has also been identified which will help to support equality across different age ranges. Our Road to Renewal Plan also sets out the ways in which we want to celebrate Watford's community, providing shared places for reflection and commemoration which will particularly benefit those who have experienced social isolation over the past few months.
- The Road for Renewal Plan also makes provision for ensuring that those residents who have received support throughout Covid-19 either no longer require support or are helped to access other support. Given that the information available shows that the majority of those accessing support have been over 60, this will ensure that the most vulnerable in our community continue to be supported once lockdown has been lifted, maintaining additional support for those disproportionately impacted by Covid-19.
- Information shows that young people, whilst not disproportionately impacted by Covid-19 itself, will be amongst the worst affected by the subsequent economic downturn. As a result, our Road for Renewal Plan specifically identifies this demographic within both the skills and employment work and the volunteering schemes, where engagement with this age group will provide specific opportunities by those disproportionately impacted by the economic downturn.

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- The Road to Renewal Plan outlines the ambition to ensure that as many services as possible are available online. This will enhance the service provision for Watford residents, allowing them to access services at a time that is convenient for them. Existing provision, via the telephone and post will remain and the plan outlines how the Town Hall can reopen to provide face to face services where these are necessary and when the risk to both the public and our colleagues is mitigated to an acceptable level. Additional online services will reduce the need for residents to attend the Town Hall in person, protecting those with protected characteristics who could be at an increased risk of illness should they physically attend the Town Hall.

#### **Negative impacts**

- Like all organisations and local authorities, Watford is restricted by the national guidelines relating to social distancing. If these remain in place or are increased as a result of a localised outbreak, some of the community events planned could not be attended by these individuals. However, the council will continue to follow national guidance and should there be a localised outbreak of Covid-19, it is unlikely that any such event would go ahead.

## **7. Overall conclusion**

Having completed the Equality Impact Assessment for the Road to Renewal Plan, it is concluded that the plan will have a positive impact on Watford Borough Council customers. Whilst the plan itself does not negatively impact on individuals with any of the protected characteristics, it is clear that there is a disproportionate impact of both Covid-19 and the impact of lockdown on individuals with protected characteristics. However, the Road to Renewal Plan specifically addresses these issues and subsequently fulfils the council's obligation in relation to the Equalities Act 2010. It should also be noted that the Road to Renewal Plan represents just one of a number of plans for the council and these plans will also seek to ensure that equality continues to be actively promoted.

**This EIA has been approved by:** Kathryn Robson, Group Head of Corporate Strategy and Communications