

Watford Together

OUR TOWN. OUR FUTURE.

COUNCIL PLAN
2020-2024



**WATFORD
BOROUGH
COUNCIL**

Thinking bigger, to be the best

**FOREWORD BY PETER TAYLOR,
OUR ELECTED MAYOR**

Welcome to our new Council Plan. We pride ourselves on thinking bigger for Watford. Our focus is, and has always been, to achieve the best for our town, our residents and our community. In what have been some of the most challenging times we have ever faced, it is now more important than ever that our big ideas can set the right direction for Watford and accomplish great things for the future.

We know what it is that makes Watford such a special and popular place to live, work and visit. We have outstanding communities that embrace our town's diversity and creativity, and who have a genuine passion for Watford. We care about our neighbours and, this year in particular, we have seen so many amazing examples of people pulling together to help others during difficult times. A true demonstration of everything that makes Watford the place we are all proud to call home.

Our town is uniquely positioned as a gateway to London, but also enjoys the benefits of its own strong identity, and heritage, as a market town. This makes us extremely popular and successful as a place not just to live, work or visit, but above all, to thrive. People beyond our borders look to Watford as their 'go-to' town and we have an exceptional pull, with 'Greater Watford' serving a population of over half a million. Across the life of this plan we will harness Watford's unique energy and enthusiasm, to create the opportunities that will put us proudly on the map for generations to come.

Our council is recognised as one of the most forward-looking and creative district councils in the UK. We thrive on thinking differently, pushing the boundaries where we can, to achieve more for Watford, and we are seriously ambitious for our town and our people.

Throughout the COVID-19 crisis we hope we have shown how we can respond to difficult circumstances, whilst maintaining a high level of performance across those services you rely on every day. We adapted quickly to what was needed. We provided strong leadership and united as a council and a town, so we could work quickly, knocking down hurdles and coming up with better ways of doing things that really made a difference. We want to take this experience of going beyond the traditional way of working, and build upon what we have learnt, to move to the next level.

RENEWING OUR COUNCIL PLAN SHOWS JUST HOW WATFORD PULLS TOGETHER AND RESPONDS.

It is different and ambitious, and clearly demonstrates our promises to our residents, and our town. There can be no doubt our world has changed. We know for our residents and businesses there is no going back to how things were before COVID-19; it is not an option for our future. The challenge now, and importantly, the opportunity, is to start the process of thinking about our 'new normal'. We will build it together; we will grasp the opportunities ahead that will ensure our town flourishes and emerges stronger and more united than ever before.

Over the next pages we outline what we have delivered since I was elected in 2018. It demonstrates our boldness, that we are prepared to be a dynamic and pioneering council, always looking for new ways to deliver more for our community that is the heart of Watford.





Delivering success and transformation

We are a council that delivers. COVID-19 has meant we have had to step up, and in a way that no one could have imagined. We have made it work – bringing together our ambitious plans for the town, but also keeping our residents and businesses at the heart of everything we do, whilst allowing our kindness and care to shine through. We're not the happiest place in the East of England for no reason!

Bikes, buses and apps – Pioneering greener ways to travel

We have successfully launched a ground-breaking package of greener and cleaner ways to travel around the town. Our mint-green Beryl Bikes launched in March, the first bike-share scheme in Hertfordshire. Over 35,000 rides covering 150,000 miles have been taken so far. Electric bikes are also on their way, putting Watford way ahead in providing real, active travel choices. We are the first district council in the country to launch on-demand buses, giving people the choice of a flexible service across the town, initially, in three ArrivaClick fifteen-seater buses – increasing to seven by the end of the year. These buses respond to passenger needs and, in these challenging times, offer a great alternative to traditional public transport. The innovative TravelWatford transport app, another first for Watford, is a digital one-stop shop for getting around the town quickly, safely and with the lowest environmental impact.

Family matters – Investing in a family-friendly town

Watford stands out as a town that welcomes families – with twelve award-winning, green flag parks. Following millions of pounds of investment, Cassiobury Park, with its paddling pools, play areas, miniature railway and cafés, attracts millions of visitors each year, with everyone finding their own, special way to enjoy our outstanding park. We have created a thrilling new facility for skateboarding, BMX and cycling, as well as a new café and community hub in Oxhey Park, which opens this autumn. We have championed the work of Watford Cycle Hub by investing in a new hub building and have upgraded our parks, open spaces and leisure centres so they remain best in class.

Welcome to Watford - Promoting our outstanding town centre

Our town centre is the largest and most successful in the area. We have brought in millions of pounds of investment to renew the High Street to keep it vibrant, welcoming and packed with high-quality shops, restaurants and things to do. To match the investment in the stunning extension to the town's shopping centre, we have upgraded the High Street, making it more cycle and walker-friendly, as well as an attractive place to enjoy and spend time. We are now extending this investment to Clarendon Road, the gateway from Watford Junction to the town centre. As a home for many of Watford's largest businesses, we want it to be an appealing area, with more green and friendly spaces.

All walks of life - Caring for our community

Watford is a town where no one is left behind. We recognise the value of all our residents' voices and have launched a Dementia Friendly Alliance to help those in our town with dementia, and their families and carers, live fuller, happier lives. Our lively Pensioners' Forum provides a way for our older residents to have their say and our Healthy Hub offers wraparound care to those in our community needing support with their mental health.

Doing more during COVID-19

We delivered our own response to COVID-19, covering not just our responsibilities, but looking at where we could step up and do more for our town and community. Critical to this effective response are our Watford Together and Watford Helps initiatives. Both show the council at its best - creative, caring and focused, driven by the needs of our residents and our ambition to make a difference.



WATFORD IS A TOWN WHERE NO ONE GETS LEFT BEHIND.

Watford Together

Lockdown provided a real challenge for those working in the entertainment, culture and leisure sectors; we saw that these groups had the potential to be a real beacon of hope for Watford, keeping people connected and helping them feel happier through hard times. We brought them together, using their diverse skills to create a terrific programme of activities and events, physical activities, quizzes and competitions. By successfully uniting our community, we have also been able to use Watford Together to raise, and address, important issues around mental health.

Watford Helps

As the pandemic hit, there was a tremendous outpouring from people keen to volunteer and offer support. The council set up Watford Helps to bring together the charities and community groups leading the volunteer effort in our town. Early on it became clear that many charities and voluntary groups could be forced to close, just when they were needed the most. Through Watford Helps, the Elected Mayor has championed a COVID-19 appeal, with a target to raise £250k. This is providing practical help to charities and a lifeline to our residents in need.



A NEW COUNCIL PLAN

WATFORD TOGETHER – OUR TOWN. OUR FUTURE.

Our next steps

We are proud of what we have achieved, but we want to go further. We are ambitious for our town, our residents and our businesses, and want to see them flourish, now more than ever.

We want Watford to be a place for people to enjoy, from childhood to old age, and for our residents to lead healthy and happy lives in a safe, clean and green town. At the same time, we want our businesses to thrive and prosper, and to make an important contribution to a strong economy that provides jobs for local people. This means continuing to provide excellent services at the best possible price.

A plan for prosperity with purpose

A new plan gives us the chance to look at our commitments to the town and our community for the next four years. It links our long-term goals and what we know is important to Watford now, given everyone's experiences of COVID-19. As our future roadmap, it informs our budget setting,

is an essential tool for the planning and delivery of services, and helps our staff understand how the work they do makes a real difference to the people of Watford. We know our success will be achieved through:

- the dedication of our councillors and the link they provide between our community and the council and its partners;
- the commitment of our staff, who are prepared to go the extra mile for our residents, customers and businesses;
- the backing of our partnerships across the private, public and voluntary sectors;
- the support of our residents and businesses.

Our themes

We want Watford to be an outstanding place for everyone: residents, business owners and visitors alike. Our plans have created a thriving and attractive town, but we know we cannot stand still.

We must always look to the future and be ambitious for Watford, to guarantee our continued success and prosperity. This has never been more important as we look to thrive post COVID-19.

Be bold

A COUNCIL THAT SERVES OUR RESIDENTS

We are a different kind of council - pioneering and always searching for better answers; a bold council that gets things done, focuses on opportunity and challenges old-fashioned thinking. We work as 'one team' and everything we do is to make our town successful and improve the lives of our residents.

We recognise that the talent and commitment of our staff are the engines that drive us forward. We want our people to be the best they can be and to stretch themselves to achieve even more. We know how proud they are to work for Watford;

they want to make a difference, deliver for our residents and businesses, and blend all that is best about public service, while embracing learning from the private sector.

Our councillors have been called on to provide leadership for our community as never before. They have risen to this brilliantly and we will continue to support them in their important role.

We will focus on: leadership; collaborative working; growing our own talent; learning; being best in field; recognising success and achievements.

Our commitments

- Make sure our council is a caring and collaborative organisation that puts **what matters to people at the heart of everything we do**.
- Deliver **high-quality, sustainable services**.
- Empower leaders at all levels in our council to **inspire our organisation and our community**.
- Focus our budget to **deliver on our commitments and secure investment** to work for Watford.
- Welcome **innovation, technology and new ways of working** to continuously improve.

A THRIVING, DIVERSE AND CREATIVE TOWN

We want to shape Watford for future generations, making it a great place, where people want to live, work and visit; a town where no one gets left behind; where everyone benefits from well-planned growth and opportunity; and that leads the way in creativity and better environmental choices. Watford has a rich history and we want to protect the strong local identity of our town, successfully blending our past with our future.

We will focus on: diverse and friendly neighbourhoods; a good range of housing choices; better local transport; high-quality design and development; cultural and creative opportunities; business and entrepreneurial success; and a cleaner, greener environment.

Our commitments

- Promote Watford as an enterprising town where **businesses can invest, grow and succeed**.
- Create **thriving and affordable neighbourhoods** and the right environment for businesses to flourish.
- Ensure the right mix of facilities, services and transport links as part of new developments to **create successful, well-designed new communities**.
- Make sure we have **quality homes to meet the needs of residents**, including housing that is affordable through ownership, private rental and social housing.
- Build on our **new, greener ways to travel** in and around Watford and promote the transition to a low-carbon economy.

A HEALTHY AND HAPPY TOWN

Our community is the strength and the heart of Watford. We know they have great civic pride and enjoy getting involved in the life of the town. We have seen them care for each other like never before and we want this great spirit to be the launchpad for something very special for Watford in the years to come. Our diverse town inspires us every day and we want its community to really feel a part of our joint future.

We recognise that not all of our residents share the same life experiences. We know we are at a turning point and want to work with our community to tackle issues to make a real difference.

Our town is a happy place. People value our excellent, good-value services; our safe, well-kept neighbourhoods; our culture, entertainment and creative organisations; and all the fantastic things there are to do in Watford – whatever your age or interest. We want to build on what makes our town special.

We will focus on: culture, leisure and heritage; excellent services for residents and customers; health and wellbeing; tackling homelessness; challenging inequalities.

Our commitments

- Celebrate our **diversity, heritage and culture**, to make Watford a place for people to succeed from childhood to old age.
- Enable our **cultural and creative sectors** to flourish.
- Ensure we have **quality events, recreational opportunities and outdoor spaces** for people to get together, feel part of the town and boost their health and wellbeing.
- Work even more closely with the voluntary and community sector, to build a **resilient community where people support each other**.
- Work with partners to end rough sleeping and **help people enjoy better lives**.

Mapping the future

OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES UNDERPIN HOW WE DELIVER ON OUR THEMES AND COMMITMENTS.



Excellence

Work with partners to deliver excellent outcomes for our customers and community.

Promotion

Promote Watford widely to maximise our town's potential.

Impact

Use our resources wisely to maximise financial, social and environmental impact.

Enterprise

Challenge ourselves to be ambitious and entrepreneurial.

Leadership

Bring people who care about the town together to get things done.

Caring

Respond thoughtfully to show our readiness to help others.

Keeping our commitments

Our plan will be translated into action through everything we do. It forms the basis for a detailed Delivery Plan, setting out what we will do to make sure our commitments are delivered.

We will rigorously monitor this plan to measure how well we are doing, and we will report back to our residents and community.



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