



Equality Impact Analysis

Title of policy, function or service	Council Plan 2020-24 (and associated Delivery Plan 2020-22)
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Person completing the EIA	Kathryn Robson
Type of policy, function or service:	Existing (reviewed) New/Proposed <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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1. Background

Council Plan 2020-24 – Watford Together – Our Town. Our Future.

Watford Borough Council has developed a bold and ambitious new Council Plan for 2020-24. This is underpinned by a more detailed Delivery Plan with a timeframe 2020-22. The development of the plan is part of the council's integrated approach to addressing the post COVID-19 era, linking together a range of key documents that will shape our organisation and drive us forward.

It has been designed to reflect the council's ambitions and commitments for our community, businesses, visitors and workforce and to make sure the town has a successful and resilient future. The plan is strategic, high level and outward-facing, with an emphasis on outcome focused commitments.

The Plan takes into account a range of information, intelligence and data including: the Elected Mayor's manifesto pledges, the Local Government Peer Review in 2017; outcomes of community and staff surveys; and feedback following engagement with a wide range of internal and external stakeholders.

It sets out the direction for the council to 2024 and guides how we use our resources and how we will measure our achievements. It also provides a framework for all our strategies, plans and directs everything we do as a council.

As our 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 Council Plan 2020-24 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.

COVID-19

Given the significant impact of COVID-19, this EIA will also review the impact of the Council Plan and Delivery Plan across the protected characteristics based on what we currently know about how it has affected our community.

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 recognised within the Council Plan, shaping a number of our commitments and areas for action in the Delivery Plan.

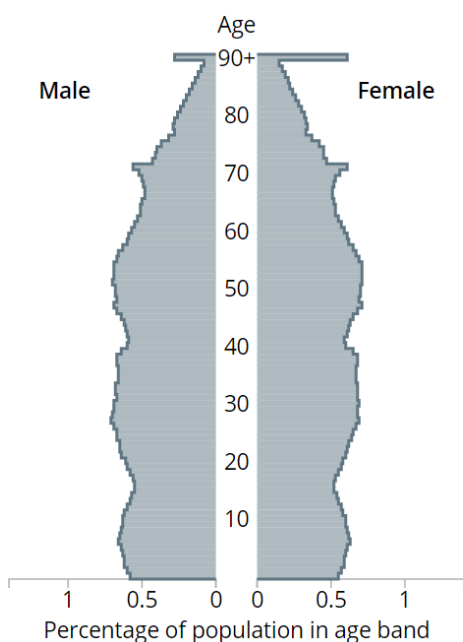
The graphs below show a comparison between the sex and age profile of England’s population with that of Watford. (ONS 2018).

ENGLAND

55,977,178 people in 2018

All ages

27,667,942 males 49.4% 
28,309,236 females 50.6% 

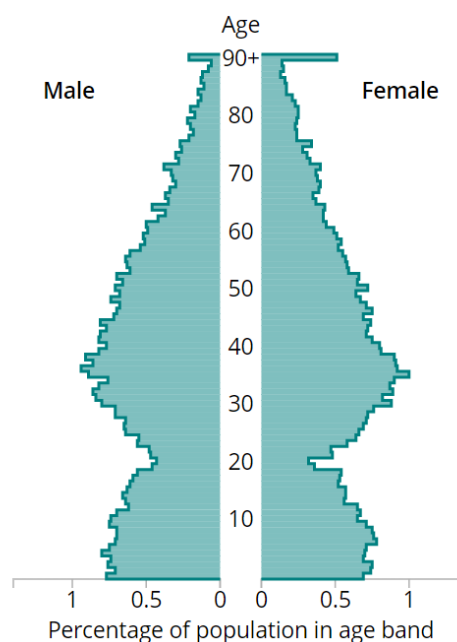


WATFORD

96,767 people in 2018

All ages

48,011 males 49.6% 
48,756 females 50.4% 



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.

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 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 and d

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%).

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, 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, Pahari, 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 (1397 births in total, with 667 to mothers born in the UK and 730 born outside of the UK. Of these 257 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:

Ethnicity	2018/19
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

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.

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)

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).

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 7th 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. 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

Watford rank	Ward	LSOA code	Hertfordshire		England	
			Rank	Decile in Herts (1st = most deprived)	Rank	Decile (1st = most deprived)
1 (1)	Central (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)	Holywell (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)	Meriden (Garsmouth Way, Aldbury Close, Harvest End, part of York Way)	E01023876 (003D)	26 (19)	1st (1st)	7924 (7590)	3rd (3rd)
4 (4)	Holywell (Ascot Road, Greenhill Crescent, Caxton Way, Croxley View)	E01023866 (011D)	27 (30)	1st (1st)	8294 (9203)	3rd (3rd)
5 (7)	Woodside (Haines Way, Queenswood Crescent, Sheriff Way, Nottingham Close)	E01023906 (001C)	61 (41)	1st (1st)	10719 (10062)	4th (4th)
6 (10)	Oxhey (Deacons Hill, Blackwell Drive, Riverside Road, Eastbury Road, Thorpe Crescent)	E01023883 (012B)	62 (49)	1st (1st)	10758 (10710)	4th (4th)
7 (13)	Callowland (Maude Crescent, St George's Road, Breakspere Close, Nicholas Close)	E01023857 (006C)	67 (56)	1st (1st)	10894 (10812)	4th (4th)
8 (9)	Meriden (Gaddesden Crescent, Bovingdon Crescent, Garston Lane)	E01023877 (003E)	73 (75)	2nd (2nd)	11225 (11837)	4th (4th)
9 (12)	Leggatts (The Harebreaks, Chestnut Walk, Foxhill, Brushrise, Elm Grove)	E01023870 (004C)	78 (52)	2nd (1st)	11515 (10734)	4th (4th)
10 (5)	Stanborough (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.

	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 Council Plan 2020-24:

- 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 growing population where there will be more smaller households but where there will still be a need for family homes
- 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.

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

Key issues identified from our resident feedback:

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. 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 Council Plan 2020-24 acknowledges the very changed world we now face both in terms of revitalising our town but also in supporting those of residents and in our community who have been significantly impacted by COVID-19.

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 hit hard 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, Public Health England (PHE) found people from black ethnic groups are most likely to be diagnosed with COVID-19, and death rates were highest among people of black and Asian ethnic groups. Its report published in June 2020 states "historic racism and poorer experiences of healthcare or at work" meant black and Asian people were less likely to seek care when they needed or speak up if they had concerns about risk in the workplace.

The PHE report said the unequal impact may be explained by social and economic inequalities, racism, discrimination and stigma, differing risks at work and inequalities in the prevalence of conditions such as obesity, diabetes, hypertension and asthma, which can increase the severity of COVID-19.

The report recommendations were strongly focused on the health sector but there are lessons we can adopt and support our health partners to address.

Key for us are:

- Better data collection about ethnicity and religion
- Improve engagement and participation of BAME community, particularly around reducing risks related to COVID-19
- Risk assessments for BAME workers – particularly those on the frontline
- Producing culturally sensitive campaigns to help people access services
- Support health partners to target health messages
- Ensuring COVID-19 recovery / renewal strategies actively address inequalities to create long-term change

We also know that the significant majority of those who requested support during COVID-19 lockdown were 60+, reflecting their potential vulnerability.

Key issues identified from COVID-19 research:

- 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, disability)
- 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
- Communications and engagement need to reflect our diverse community and we need to work with them to work with them to understand their issues and identify solutions

6. How will the council ensure equality is promoted through the Council Plan 2020-24 and associate Delivery Plan

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

The Council Plan 2020-24, as the council's main strategic planning document, underpins all other council strategies and plans and everything we do. Therefore, it is fundamental to our meeting our equality duty but, more importantly, to creating a town and community where everyone is valued and can reach their potential, irrespective of their background or any protected characteristic.

Our Council Plan 2020-24 makes a clear statement that our strategic direction is: Watford Together – Our Town. Our Future, emphasising that we are 'one town' and that all our community has a share in our future success.

The plan is designed to be strategic, high level and outward-facing, with an emphasis on outcome focused commitments. It describes the Council's post COVID-19 era to the workforce, our communities and our partners by resetting our strategic commitments.

The Plan has been developed around three key objectives:

- What we are trying to achieve - our themes
- What we are going to focus on over the next four years - our commitments
- How we will go about our work - our principles.

The proposed themes are as follows:

- **A thriving, diverse and creative town**
- **A healthy and happy town**
- **A Council that serves our residents**

The delivery of these themes will be underpinned by the proposed principles of **excellence; promotion; impact; enterprise; leadership and caring.**

The Council Plan is underpinned by a robust and focused Delivery Plan, which shows how the Council will focus our work to bring the Council Plan to life, making sure we deliver what we said we would over the next 18 months.

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

All of our commitments, and the work set out to deliver them, impact on our community to some extent. Indeed, the underlying driver for the plan is to ensure we are working in a way that benefits all our community; we seek to identify where the council can contribute to improving the town 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 Delivery Plan where separate EIAs will be carried out. The councils Corporate Leadership Team will oversee the Delivery commitment 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. A council that serves 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 communities 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 communities.
- 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

What this means for equalities

This theme focuses on our people and we will look to be an employer of choice in our community that treats our staff with dignity and respect and offers everyone opportunities to succeed, build their careers and flourish. We will focus on our customers, meeting their individual needs, and ensuring there is no barrier to enjoying our services or enjoying what our town has to offer. We want to use new technology to open up our council and to provide all our community – not just the young – engage and become involved in the life of the town

2. A thriving, diverse and creative town

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.

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.

What this means for equalities

Jobs and homes are important to all backgrounds at some point in their life. This theme highlights how important these are to the town and how a flourishing local economy supports all our community. Jobs are particularly critical for those of working age but all ages and backgrounds benefit if there are employment opportunities that allow families to settle and grow here and the town benefits from the prosperity they bring.

Many of those needing a home in our town are young people or those with families and so we need to ensure we are a town that offers housing choices for our residents. We want new homes to be high quality and affordable.

Another area where we need to focus is private rented accommodation, which data tells us is an extremely important sector in our town. 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 community 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.

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.

We recognise successful neighbourhoods need good infrastructure such as public transport, active transport links, schools and GP surgeries. Facilities and services 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.

3. A healthy and happy town

Our communities are 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 communities 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 residents 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 well-being; 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.

What this means for equalities

This theme recognises the diversity of our town and how important our community, from every background, is to the vibrancy and success of Watford. The BLM movement this year, and the inequalities identified by COVID-19, highlighted that life chances are not the same for everyone and we will work with our community to secure better outcomes.

Health and wellbeing are often linked to protected characteristics and, again this has been reinforced, during the COVID-19 pandemic.

A. Positive impacts

Potential positive effects

Our Council Plan and Delivery Plan are designed to move our town and council to the next level. They are influenced by what we know about Watford from data and intelligence and feedback from residents, staff and partners. These have come together to shape ambitious plans for the town and to make a difference in those areas that matter to our residents, businesses and community,

Through the commitments and associated actions in the Delivery Plan the council will continue to ensure it embraces and promotes its equality duty through taking how we can advance equalities in everything we do – we will support this through a renewed focus on

Some of the positive impacts include:

- Our focus on our staff's development and on innovative and focused recruitment will support us meet our duties as an employer and promote us as a place to work where equalities and diversity is taken seriously and championed
- Our ambition to provide customer excellence will mean the needs of those with protected characteristics will be understood through the way we engage with our customers, ensuring people recognise that we are a council who are serious about delivering high quality services that matter to people
- 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, including affordable homes, in attractive, well-designed neighbourhoods 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
- We recognise the importance of health and wellbeing, including mental health and our committed to making Watford a dementia friendly town
- Fostering good relations within the community will be supported through a number of actions including our commitment to ensure we have quality outdoor spaces and vents for people to get together – we believe this to be particularly important for our post COVID-19 town

- Service excellence and a focus on better data and intelligence means we will continue to

Recommendation 1: Continue to build a comprehensive picture of the Watford community through feedback from consultations and engagement and updating the Watford context on a regular basis, particularly through the Census 2021 information we expect in the next couple of years

Recommendation 2: Ensure EIAs are undertaken on all relevant Council Plan / Delivery Plan commitments and actions and that they are underpinned with quality data and intelligence and community feedback / engagement

Recommendation 3: Ensure our consultation and engagement with our staff and community continues to collect relevant equalities data so we have a better understanding of the impact of our work, strengthening our explanation of why we need to collect this and explaining how the information is used to support our work and better community outcomes

Recommendation 4: Continue to review any research findings on COVID-19 that offers insight into the impact of the virus on our community and particularly those with protected characteristics

Recommendation 5: Review the council's equality objectives to ensure they reflect our ambitions and commitments, updating our website as necessary

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 Council Plan 2020-24 and Delivery Plan 2020-22.

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. This training will be reviewed within the year
- Staff Ambassador Group – provides feedback and support to the organisation and can be asked to champion equalities within their services
- Corporate Leadership Team to receives reports on equalities to inform of progress and any issues
- Our website has a Browsealoud facility which translates information into a range of languages and provides audio services too
- Working with our community either through established groups or making new connections if necessary, find out what is important to them and to hear their views

Recommendation 6: Review staff equalities training and make sure this is rolled out to staff and members

Recommendation 7: 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 if needed

Recommendation 8: Ensure the council’s project and programme management frameworks identify equalities as an area for consideration to highlight where necessary

Recommendation 9: Promote the council’s website Browsealoud facility both internally and externally

Recommendation 10: Ensure the council is responsive and listens to its community, opening up channels of engagement and giving people an opportunity to have their voice heard and influence outcomes for local people

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 Council Plan and Delivery Plan will, overall, deliver positive impacts for the Watford community. This is because the ambitions and strategic direction set out in the plans seek to make Watford an even better to live, work, enjoy life and visit. We want Watford to be a place where people, businesses and the community can grow and thrive and have set out a programme of work that will deliver this.

We will make sure we meet our equalities duty, champion diversity and address any issues our community identifies which prevent people making the most of what our town has to offer or which prevent them reaching their potential.

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 Council Plan through the Delivery Plan commitments and actions to improve outcomes across all equality groups / protected characteristics	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to build a comprehensive picture of the Watford community through feedback from consultations and engagement and updating the Watford context on a regular basis, particularly through the Census 2021 • Ensure learning from COVID-19 is built into our planning and that we respond to what emerges from research in terms of inequalities and impact on protected characteristics • Ensure EIAs are carried out and are effective and support decision making • Continue to identify equality issues within committee reports and highlight where EIAs have been completed
Ensure our consultation and engagement with our staff and community continues to collect relevant equalities data so we have a better understanding of the impact of our work	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 • Make sure we explain why we are collecting information on protected characteristics and show how it can make a real difference

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 so staff and members understand the importance of considering the equality impacts of decision making and the council's public sector equality duty • Leadership to champion equalities and challenge decisions and proposals in the context of equalities and diversity
Lack of understanding of the community and issues that are affecting those with a protected characteristic	All (potentially) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ethnicity (e.g. impact of COVID-19) - Age - Disability - Sex 	<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 • Ensure learning from COVID-19 is built into our planning and that we respond to what emerges from research in terms of inequalities and impact on protected characteristics • Work closely with our community to understand from them about issues and what matters to them • Build greater understanding through engagement with our community and work with them to support • Ensure EIAs are carried out, are effective and support decision making

This EIA has been developed by:

Kathryn Robson

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