



Watford Together

UNITED BY POSSIBILITY

COUNCIL PLAN 2022-2026



WATFORD
BOROUGH
COUNCIL

Welcome to our new Council Plan

Seizing Opportunities



FOREWORD BY
OUR
ELECTED MAYOR

THE DIFFERENCE IS NO ORDINARY TOWN

Watford is a place that thinks differently. We're always ready to challenge perceptions and the accepted way of doing things. We're a town and a council that believes anything is possible when it comes to achieving the best for Watford, our residents and our community.

Over the last two very challenging years, we've continued to think bigger for Watford, setting the right direction to help us make the most of our opportunities, to fully grasp the vibrancy and commitment of our town and steer a clear course for great things in the future.

As we look forward, now is the right time to harness that creativity and flair for innovation, maximise our leadership role and make the most of our passion for delivering big ideas. We seek to do this with the energy and dedication of our

community, which underpins Watford's success and gives our town its heart and strong sense of character. We are a town that cares, and our kindness, as well as our boldness, is woven throughout our new Council Plan; uniting to show what Watford can achieve.

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 people.

We also pride ourselves on being 'no ordinary town'. This plan sets out what makes us far from ordinary

and how we'll focus on what really matters to our residents, our businesses and our community, particularly in these uncertain times. We've achieved a lot since our last plan but, as both a dynamic and a pioneering council, there is still more we can achieve: responding to the big challenges of our time and looking at new ways to deliver more for our residents and our community.

We recognise that, as well as setting the council's path for the next four years, this plan also needs to support our wider agenda and vision for Watford. Part of my role as Elected Mayor is representing and providing a voice for Watford nationally, regionally and locally - putting Watford first and standing up for what's most important for our town.

We are a council that delivers

Achieving more

AND HARNESSING SUCCESS

We are a council that delivers. We set ourselves a highly ambitious agenda in our last Council Plan and, in just two years, have achieved so much for our town and community. This goes far beyond our response to the COVID-19 pandemic, where we supported and worked alongside our residents, businesses and partners, creating the right foundation for our town and council to flourish - from ground-breaking major projects, to shaping a more modern, agile council to serve our community into the future.



Keep **rises in council tax** to below inflation



Reduced number of people **Sleeping rough**



Launched **Our agile ways of working**

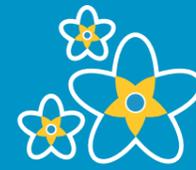
Achieved **17** green flags



Refurbished **Watford Market** and launched 'Market lates'



Recognising our **Unsung local heroes** who contribute to the life of the town



Champion a more **dementia-friendly town**



Opened award-winning **Oxhey Activity Park**



Delivered **Public Realm Improvements**



Launched **'transforming travel in Watford'** to deliver a step change in how people travel



Biggest increase in recycling rates in Hertfordshire

A new council plan

Watford together

We are proud of our successes, but we are ready to do more.

Tackling matters that really matter

We are ambitious for our town, our residents and our businesses, and we 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 happy and healthy 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.

A new plan gives us the chance to refresh our commitments to our community and town for the next four years.

It sets out our roadmap for the future, so everyone can be clear about our plans and ambitions and feel confident we are addressing the things that really matter to Watford; embracing opportunities and harnessing our energy and resources to tackle both the global and the national issues that affect us at a local level. A clear and focused plan is fundamental in making sure the council's budget is directed where it can make the biggest impact, driving our planning and delivery of services and effectively linking the work our staff do to make a real difference to the people of Watford.



UNITED BY POSSIBILITIES

A confident council and a town best placed for the future

A global pandemic and a war in Europe, combined with the ongoing challenges of climate change, inequality, the rising cost of living and a post-Brexit UK are all reshaping the national and local landscape in a way that we could not have envisaged.

The last two years have made the world a very challenging place, with many of the certainties we once took for granted now being called into question. We have had to adapt and respond quickly but, having been tested as never before, we know we can rise to the challenge, pivot our focus quickly and put in place any measures that may be needed. Our staff have welcomed new ways of working, becoming more agile and continuing to bring their best to work and serving our community. Our town's response has been impressive, and we know our community is as enthusiastic and dedicated as we are to grasp any opportunities the future may hold.

This means getting our plans right is more important than ever. We remain unapologetically ambitious for Watford and understand our success will be achieved through:

- ▶ The dedication of our councillors, building on their strong links to the community and our partners;
- ▶ The commitment of our staff going that extra mile, searching out innovation and creative ways to deliver for our community and bringing our new values to everything we do;
- ▶ The energy and backing of our outstanding partnerships across the private, public and voluntary sectors;
- ▶ The support of our residents and businesses, celebrating our diversity and uniting through our shared aspirations for our town.

Putting Watford first



Success for Watford is not always in our hands as a council - some of our goals will be achieved through using our voice to make sure areas of national, regional and local importance for Watford are also heard.

We recognise the vital importance of our wider relationships and networks as effective platforms we can use to advocate for Watford and our community, applying influence where it is in the town's interest and making the most of the right partnerships to help make things happen.

- ▶ Championing West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust's ambitions to secure the investment for improved hospital facilities at Watford General.
- ▶ Lobbying government to recognise, with our limited land supply, the challenges the town faces and why we need a different approach to meeting housing targets.
- ▶ Supporting Watford Football Club's goals for improvements to its Vicarage Road stadium.
- ▶ Pressing at national, regional and county level for better, affordable and reliable public transport for our residents, including bus and rail services.
- ▶ Backing our community safety partners to make sure we have strong, well-resourced local policing to keep the town safe and welcoming.
- ▶ Representing our residents' real concerns and anxiety at government level about the steep rise in the cost of living and the impact on people's finances, particularly those on lower incomes.
- ▶ Influencing our health partners to deliver better health outcomes for Watford.
- ▶ Working for 20mph to be the default speed limit on our residential roads, improving safety and encouraging greener, healthier travel options.
- ▶ Ensuring Watford's interests are fully represented in any devolution discussions or deals.

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ACHIEVED THROUGH USING OUR
VOICE TO MAKE SURE AREAS OF
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IMPORTANCE FOR WATFORD
ARE ALSO HEARD**



Our themes: 1

Be bold

We thrive on delivering the big ideas that help us stand out, knowing this will ensure our continued success as a council and our prosperity and happiness as a town.

A COUNCIL WORKING FOR OUR COMMUNITY AND SERVING OUR RESIDENTS



OUR PLAN IS UNDERPINNED BY OUR FOUR THEMES

Our plan is underpinned by our four themes. These outline our ambitions and inspire us to continue to push forward towards our goals for Watford and our community.

We are a different kind of council - we champion bold values and free thinking, striving for better answers and looking for innovative ways to work and transform everything we do.

We pride ourselves on never settling for the status quo, and embracing new opportunities.

Our staff recognise that being part of 'Team Watford' means being up for the challenge, and always seeking to do things differently to improve outcomes for our residents and our community.

They have welcomed our approach to agile working, stepping up to embrace new ways of working that deliver for Watford and make a difference to the lives of our residents. Building and inspiring our talent remains a key goal for the council.

Our councillors play a pivotal role in leading and supporting the community and we will continue to support them in their important role.

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

Our commitments

- ▶ Make sure we deliver an outstanding customer experience and the high-quality services our community expects.
- ▶ Pioneer new ways of working that challenge us to innovate, transform and consistently improve.
- ▶ Focus on and challenge how we manage our budget, so it is concentrated on delivering our commitments and securing greater investment for Watford.
- ▶ Lead by example, securing our reputation as a forward-thinking, caring and inspiring organisation where staff can thrive and achieve their best for our residents and businesses.

theme 2:

A greener, brighter future



Climate change is the biggest challenge we face, globally, nationally and locally.

We believe that to be part of the solution, we must think and act as a town and a community, to make Watford a beacon for greener and more sustainable ways to live, do business and travel.

We have pledged to become a carbon-neutral council by 2030, which means we will work to reduce our carbon footprint and achieve environmental benefits in everything we do.

We will also engage with our residents and businesses to fully embed the concept of a greener town, working together to have a real impact on our local environment: from greater opportunities for biodiversity and recycling, to less polluting and healthier ways to travel.

Our commitments

- ▶ Encourage people to make greener travel choices, reducing congestion and improving the health and well-being of the town.
- ▶ Promote improvements to Watford's biodiversity to enhance the range of habitats, plants and wildlife in the town.
- ▶ Work alongside our community and businesses to find the right ways to reach net carbon neutral, seeking not just to learn from others, but to explore innovative solutions that will work for Watford.
- ▶ Encourage residents and businesses to recycle more, reusing materials and reducing waste and what they throw away.

CLIMATE CHANGE IS THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE WE FACE, GLOBALLY, NATIONALLY AND LOCALLY

theme 3:

An inspiring, thriving and creative town

**AN OUTSTANDING
PLACE FOR
EVERYONE**

We are a successful town



Build on our connections, creativity and community and recognise how vital it is for our town to flourish and achieve its maximum potential for everyone.

We want Watford to continue to be an outstanding place for everyone: residents, businesses and visitors alike.

Watford has a rich history, and we want to protect our town's strong local identity, successfully blending our past with our future and putting in place the plans that will shape Watford in the years ahead.

Our experience shows that standing still is not an option. We need to consistently strive to do more: to focus on what really matters and build a town where no one gets left behind; a town where everyone benefits from well-planned growth and opportunity; and a town that leads the way in creativity, opportunity and enterprise.

We will focus on:

progress made possible by people; valuing business and entrepreneurial success; creating opportunities; a town with a living heart; connecting to where you need to be; high-quality design and development.

Commitments

- ▶ Position Watford as a town where start-ups and business innovation can thrive, supported by strong local skills, generating a range of job opportunities, including for our young people.
- ▶ Tell Watford's story as a great location for businesses where they can invest, grow and succeed as part of our flourishing business community and networks that connect people.
- ▶ Create a distinctive and successful neighbourhood at the heart of our town, providing space and time for residents, businesses and the community to enjoy and experience.
- ▶ 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 direct ownership, private rental and social rent housing.

theme 4:

A diverse, happy and healthy town

**WE ARE
AMBITIOUS FOR
OUR RESIDENTS**



Watford is a united town that is quick to grasp opportunities that reflect our creativity and diversity and add to our sense of pride and belonging.

Over the last two years, our community has stepped up to care for each other and get involved whenever and wherever they have been needed. This spirit reflects our belief that everyone should share in Watford's opportunities to succeed, and enjoy what the town has to offer, and is a catalyst for even greater success.

We are ambitious for our residents and community and recognise that not everyone shares the same life experiences.

But our town should be a place where people feel they can reach their potential – whatever their age or interest, or if they need that bit of extra help.

People value Watford's openness, as well as all the fantastic things there are to do in the town. We are a place with the energy, choice and diversity of a city, but with the community spirit and welcome of a village. We want our 'Watford welcome' to continue to attract people to our town and help them continue to feel that this is a place where they belong.

We will focus on: what makes Watford special; culture; leisure and heritage; engaging and listening to our community; health and well-being; tackling homelessness; challenging inequalities.

Commitments

- ▶ Continue our investment in our outstanding parks and open spaces, so they remain the best in the area.
- ▶ Celebrate and promote our town's rich and diverse culture and creativity.
- ▶ Promote our welcoming and respectful town.
- ▶ Listen to, and hear, the diverse voices of Watford.
- ▶ Support improved health and well-being across the town.
- ▶ Bring together ways to help our residents who might be struggling financially.



Our purpose and direction

Keeping our commitments

Our plan will be translated into action through everything we do. It forms the basis for a detailed Delivery Plan (2022-24) setting out what we will do to make sure our commitments are delivered.

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

**Watford Together,
United by possibility**





**WATFORD
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COUNCIL**

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