

Report to: *Cabinet*

Date of meeting: *13 March 2023*

Report author: *Associate Director of Customer and Corporate Service, EPMO
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Report sponsor: *Associate Director of Customer and Corporate Service*

Portfolio holder: *Councillor Mark Watkin*

Report title: *Focusing on delivery:
Council Delivery Plan 2022-24 Quarter 3 Update
Organisational Development Strategy 2020-24 Quarter 3 Update
Council Performance 2022-23 Quarter 3 Update*

Nature of report: *For information and noting*

1.0 Executive Summary

1.1 Following the Mayoral election in May 2022, Watford Borough Council launched its new Council Plan in June 2022 which sets out an ambitious agenda for the town and the council. The Council Plan forms part of the organisation's strategic framework, which aims to ensure that the council delivers on its commitments. Underpinning the Council Plan is a two-year Delivery Plan and our Organisational Development Strategy, which are both supported by a suite of key performance indicators (KPIs). This allows the council to ensure that both projects and high quality services continue to be delivered, and for action to be taken if areas of concern are identified. A critical part of this approach is regular reporting of the key elements of the council's strategic framework and day to day performance. This report, therefore, contains updates comprising:

- the Council Plan 2022-26 and Delivery Plan 2022-24;
- the Organisational Development Strategy 2020-24; and
- key performance indicators.

1.2 The updates reflect the positive outcomes that have been achieved over quarter 3 of 2022/23 through strengthening the council's strategic framework and establishing a clear focus for the organisation, including aligning existing KPIs to our Council Plan themes. This has enabled services to concentrate on what is important to the town and council.

The progress achieved since the last update to Cabinet is shown in the updates appended to this report (Appendices A, B and C).

- 1.3 The successful delivery of the commitments in the Council Plan 2022-26 is critical to ensuring we remain focused on what is important to Watford and we are seen by our community as an organisation that delivers on its promises. As such, the council has committed to reporting on progress against the Council Delivery Plan, Organisational Development Strategy and Key Performance Indicators on a quarterly basis. This report forms the third of these updates since the approval of the new Council Plan.
- 1.4 As part of our drive for continuous improvement, a review of the council's key performance indicators is underway across the organisation, intended to align with the council's new management structure and ensure that the council continues to challenge itself to deliver excellent services to residents, businesses and the community. Discussions with Portfolio Holders on future KPIs are proposed to take place over the next period which will allow the new key performance indicators to be reported upon from quarter 1 of the 2023/2024 financial year.

2.0 Recommendations

It is recommended that Cabinet note:

- 2.1 The progress updates within this report relating to:
 - the Council Plan 2022-26 and Delivery Plan 2022 -24 (Appendix A)
 - the Organisational Development Strategy 2020-24 (Appendix B)
 - the key performance indicator results for Quarter 3 of 2022/23 (Appendix C)
- 2.2 That the key performance indicators and measures will continue to be reviewed as part of the council-wide service planning process and the ongoing work on the Business Intelligence Strategy, and that these will be discussed with Portfolio Holders over the next period for their views.
- 2.3 That the report will be presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 15 March 2023.

3.0 Decision Pathway

- 3.1 Next decision-making body: Not applicable

3.1.1 Indicative date: Not applicable

3.2 Final decision-making body: Cabinet

3.2.1 Indicative date: 13 March 2023

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Reviewed and signed off by: Kathryn Robson, Director of Performance

4.0 Detailed Proposal

4.1 A refreshed strategic framework

4.1.1 The council has an ambitious agenda for Watford and recognises that a focused, and aligned, strategic framework is fundamental to the successful delivery of its plans for the town.

4.1.2 Following the Mayoral election in May 2022, the council reviewed and refreshed its strategic framework to better reflect these ambitions as well as the Mayor's Manifesto, local intelligence, community feedback and best practice. The renewed framework, comprising the council's key strategies and plans, confirms our focus on what is important to the town and its residents and that resources are allocated to its priority commitments.

4.1.3 A critical part of the successful delivery of the renewed framework is robust, and regular, monitoring and reporting of the associated plans including:

- the Council Plan 2022-26 and Delivery Plan 2022-24;
- the Organisational Development Strategy 2020-24 and Delivery Plan; and
- key performance indicators.

This report presents a progress update of the plans outlined in 4.4 and in associated Appendices (A, B and C).

4.1.4 A significant amount of progress has been achieved across all delivery areas. The direction set by the strategic framework has ensured services have clarity on where they need to concentrate, focus their energies and support the council's reputation as a council that gets things done and that delivers on what is important to the town.

4.1.5 Running throughout the council's progress is the strengthening of our organisational approach, governance and structure. This means the council has the essential building blocks in place to support all of our activities and commitments not just across these plans but also across all of our corporate work and effort. This has particularly focused on:

- making sure we have the right capacity to deliver, particularly at the senior level of the organisation;
- a renewed emphasis on integrating how we work strategically;
- making sure the way we make our decisions is transparent, timely and supported by the relevant information; and
- our organisational culture is directed to our 'one team' approach, shared ownership of our corporate priorities and commitment to deliver

4.1.6 Both plans are underpinned by a suite of key performance indicators, which are currently under review and which will be finalised for use in advance of April 2023.

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

4.2.1 The new Council Plan 2022-26 was approved by Council in June 2022 as was the associated Delivery Plan 2022-24.

4.2.2 The Council Plan is designed to be strategic, high level and outward-facing, with an emphasis on outcome focused commitments based around four key themes:

- A greener, brighter future
- An inspiring, thriving and creative town
- A diverse happy and healthy town
- A council working for our community and serving our residents

Each theme has a number of areas of commitment under which specific projects and areas of work have been identified and articulated through the Delivery Plan 2022-24.

4.2.3 Whilst the Council Plan has a four-year perspective, the Delivery Plan has been developed to focus on key priorities to 2024. The 18-month perspective means that the Council can benefit from the approach deployed during its Covid-19 response and remain flexible and agile to

respond to emerging and future challenges and opportunities over the life of the Council Plan.

4.2.4 By reporting regularly to Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the progress made by the organisation against the Council Plan and, particularly the Delivery Plan, we can ensure we are continuing to focus our resources on what is important to our town and community. It also provides transparency and clear accountability to our community.

4.2.5 The full report can be seen in Appendix A but some key highlights, by Council Plan theme are included below:

A greener brighter future

- In line with our commitment to sustainable transport, work with a number of Watford schools to develop and improve their School Travel Plan (STP) which will enable them to be provided with cycle parking is underway.
- Following the Tree Nominations initiative held in the summer, tree planting is now underway, with additional funds for whip replacement also secured.
- The 'Tales of the River' project, funded by a successful £246.7k bid to the National Heritage Lottery Fund has been initiated and will help to promote the value of the River to our town.
- A Supplementary Planning Document for developers on how they can contribute to enhancing biodiversity across the town has been developed. The SPD is expected to be adopted later in the year following consultation.
- The consultation on Watford's draft Environmental Strategy 2023-30, addressing the climate and ecological emergency, ended in December 2022. 679 responses were received across various media, all generally positive with 'net zero' being the most engaged topic. Formal endorsement of the Strategy at Cabinet is expected in March 2023.

An inspiring, thriving and creative town

- The government approved Watford's UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) investment plan in December 2022 and year 1 funding allocation has been received.
- Our place brand and narrative has been developed to build on the initial concepts. An associated implementation and resourcing plan is being developed alongside the creative content to ensure successful rollout.

- In November 2022, Mace Develop were selected as our preferred joint venture partner to help deliver our ambition to revitalise the north end of the High Street and around the Town Hall.
- Work is continuing on the refurbishment of Watford Colosseum with the decarbonisation works now almost complete.
- The Town Centre Strategic Framework consultation is now complete will be presented to Cabinet in March 2023 for final sign off.
- The 'Shop and Eat Local' campaign was brought forward to coincide with the festive period. The council is continuing to engage with new businesses and encouraging local people to nominate businesses to be promoted locally.
- Following inspection and amendments, the Local Plan has now been adopted by the council and provides the council with the opportunity to influence local and sustainable development across the town.

A diverse, happy and healthy town

- The council remain committed to investment in Woodside and the updated scheme and multi-million pound investment was approved by Cabinet in January 2023. It will include renovating the buildings to provide energy efficient facilities for cricket, football, and boxing for all ages, as well as spaces for shared community use. There will also be modern and accessible changing rooms for clubs already based there – including Watford Town Cricket Club, the junior and adult football clubs and Watford Amateur Boxing Club.
- In recognition of Watford's 100 years as a borough, a successful flag flying exercise with local schools was held, 100-year old residents were recognised and a community led centenary service was held on Centenary Day. The end of year 100-year celebration exhibition was held at Watford Museum. We continue to recognise the 100 people who made Watford as part of our centenary legacy.
- White Ribbon Day on 25 November 2022 was marked by the council in line with the achievement of White Ribbon accreditation.
- Winter Shelter provided accommodation for rough sleepers during pre-Christmas cold spell.
- The annual fireworks display attracted circa 30k people and raised funds for local charities.
- The Cost of Living Forum was convened with groups and organisations to bring together the support available and to make

sure people are aware of where to go for help. Watford established 'Welcoming Spaces' for the winter months.

A council working for our community and serving our residents

- The Council's Customer Experience Strategy 2022-26 and Delivery Plan have been approved and implemented commence to ensure that we continue to deliver the very best services for our residents and community.
- The Building Control and Planning Enforcement Shared Services with St Albans City District Council went live from 1 November 2022. The implementation of the Legal Shared Services is well underway with implementation scheduled for 1 February 2023, ensuring that we continue to delivery high quality but efficient services.
- Planning is underway for the 2023 Borough Ward Elections and will be implementing the changes introduced by the Elections Act 2022 such as Voter ID, with town-wide communications planned.
- Our updated Procurement Strategy was approved by Cabinet in January 2023.
- Further health, wellbeing and resilience training courses as well as a menopause and cost of living sessions have been rolled out to support our employees and partners.

4.3 Organisational Development Strategy 2020-24 and associated Delivery Plan

- 4.3.1 The Council Plan identifies the Organisational Development Strategy as a priority area of work under the theme 'A council working for our community and serving our residents'.
- 4.3.2 The council recognises our staff are critical to our success and to building our reputation as a council that delivers. At the same time, we know that the commitment of our staff and their passion for public service ensures we keep our residents, our businesses and community at the heart of everything we do. The importance of effectively matching our resources (both financial and staff) to the ambitions of our Council Plan and Delivery Plan was recognised when the plans were presented to Cabinet in June 2022 with a newly approved senior management structure.

- 4.3.3 The Organisational Development Strategy is also supported by a Delivery Plan, which translates the high level, strategic approach to how we develop our staff into practical and timely actions.
- 4.3.4 The full report can be seen in Appendix B but some key highlights are included below:
- Health, Wellbeing and Resilience workshops continued to be delivered to employees
 - Fully booked Menopause Awareness workshops were delivered
 - As the cost of living crisis came to the forefront, the Citizens Advice Bureau delivered a session to support employees at this time, with a further session planned for 2023
 - New corporate Values and Behaviours were launched in December 2022 and a structure for the behaviour framework agreed.
 - Two Management Development courses have been completed and positive feedback has been received
 - Senior Leaders took part in an awayday and all have undertaken the TMS assessment to increase their self-awareness
 - iTrent (Performance and Learning & Development) has been launched and has been used by all to undertake their PDRs
 - Data can now be extracted from iTrent to inform development and succession planning conversations
- 4.3.5 It should be noted that the Organisational Development Strategy was approved in June 2020, as the country emerged from the first wave of Covid-19. The council was subsequently required to respond to additional lockdowns and secondary waves of the pandemic. As such, a number of the activities initially identified within the Organisational Development Strategy were not deliverable within the timescales anticipated. Recognising that the council's introduction of agile working and a significant change in the external environment as a result of inflation and the cost of living crisis, the council are developing an updated People Strategy which will ensure that our ambitions relating to our commitments to staff remain aligned to our wider strategic direction. Those outstanding activities within the current Organisational Development Strategy will be reviewed and picked up by the new People Strategy.

4.4 Key Performance Indicators

4.4.1 Our key performance indicators underpin our Council Plan by ensuring that the organisation continues to perform against a range of measures. The measures highlighted within this report have supported the delivery of good quality services (both internal and external) by highlighting areas of good performance and, more importantly, under performance. This allows the council to ensure that services continue to offer a high quality service to our residents and businesses, and for action to be taken if areas of concern are identified.

4.4.2 The attached report (Appendix C), therefore, shows the results for the current set of key performance indicators at the end of Q3 for 2022/23. However, some key highlights are included below:

- All household waste and recycling indicators continue to be within target for Q3. There was 226 tonnes less waste recycled and composted when compared to Q3 21/22. To break it down further, there was 32 tonnes less recycling, 115 tonnes less green waste, and 79 tonnes less food waste collected. The dry hot summer is likely to be the cause of the lower green waste tonnages.
- Levels of litter, detritus and fly-posting all show significant improvement when compared with the same quarter last year, however detritus was the only street cleansing indicator exceeding the target set, with litter and fly-posting falling just outside of their targets. The indicator monitoring graffiti was just outside of the target, and this result is higher than Q3 last year, however graffiti levels remain low in most areas. The result reflects a spate of graffiti occurring in Other Highway, Main Road, Main Retail and Commercial and Other Retail and Commercial areas.
- Planning performance has improved since Q2. The processing of major applications was below target, with 1 processed outside of the timescales. However as there were only 2 major applications processed in Q3 this has a large impact on the result. Processing of minor applications was back above target, with only 1 application agreed outside of the timescales, out of a total of 38 received in Q3. Processing of other applications not categorised as major or minor was well within target at 100% of the 110 applications determined within the timescale or with an agreed extension of time.
- In the parking service, overall numbers of Penalty Charge Notices (PCN) issued decreased in Q3. The figures are inclusive of bus gate

PCN's, and a breakdown showing the bus gate figures has been included in Appendix C.

- The number of cases where the council has accepted a statutory duty to house remains at a low level and similar to Q2. There has been a surge in the number of households in temporary accommodation in the last three months, which is in common with the experience of boroughs in the rest of Hertfordshire: in fact the increased pressure has arrived with Watford later than other Hertfordshire boroughs. Until recently there were a large number of new homes handed over by housing associations which helped tremendously in being able to prevent homelessness and/or move households on quickly from temporary accommodation. Further detail on the main reasons for presenting as homeless and needing temporary accommodation is included in Appendix C.
- The financial indicators are almost all within quarterly targets, and on track to meet targets by the end of the year. The only exception is the value of outstanding invoices over 12 months, which was outside of the target of 10% or less, at 15.25%. Collections rates of Council Tax was within the quarterly target, largely due to the ERG payment credits being refunded. Collection rates of NNDR was 4.31% up on last year, which was mainly due to no additional retail relief in 2022/23 compared with 2021/22.
- Average time to process housing benefit claims has continued to speed up, and was down to 5 days in Q3, showing improvement since the last quarter. Average time to process a change of circumstance stayed at 5 days, which shows a 3 day improvement when compared with the same quarter last year. Automation of parts of the service have contributed to the improvement in processing times.
- There was a small decrease in Leisure Centre usage in Q3, which is consistent with the usual drop in participation in the lead up to Christmas. The exception to this was the throughput figures for Watford Leisure Centre: Central branch. A significant decrease in throughput was noted with figures dropping from 165,180 to 109,486. The closure of West Herts College during this time contributed to this result. Sports and Leisure Management (SLM) took this opportunity to increase marketing for all sessions. In addition, the service introduced a new referral campaign, accessed through the Everyone Active App, where members can refer a friend to get one month membership for free.
- Numbers of staff on long term sickness have reduced since quarter 2, however there has been a large increase in the number of short

term absences (61 in Q3 compared with 36 in Q2). Although sickness rates are higher when compared with quarter 3 last year, it is still within target.

- The 2022/23 Personal Development review (PDR) cycle was launched at the end of June with a target completion date of 31 August. In light of the senior management restructure that changed reporting lines for a number of staff, the deadline was extended to the end of quarter 3 to allow for new reporting arrangements to embed. The completion figure for PDR's at the end of Q3 was 72.3% - below the target of 100% but considerably higher than last year's result. Return to work interviews are still below the target of 100% completion within timescale, with the primary reason for late completion being the employee or manager on annual leave but additional information is now being shared with managers to help improve this figure. Figures assessing staff satisfaction and motivation were collected through the PDR process, and both are above target at 7.6 and 7.9 out of 10 respectively.
- ICT continue to report strong results, with all KPI's in Q3 on target or exceeding targets. Customer satisfaction is high with 93% of users filling out the customer satisfaction survey rating the service as meeting or exceeding expectations.
- After a very challenging Q2, all results related to the Customer Service Centre have bounced back and are well within their targets. The recruitment of 2.5 FTE and 1 corporate apprentice has helped achieve this. Also, with December being a shorter working month, customer contact quietens down towards the Christmas period.
- Responding to FOI's within timescales recorded an excellent result of 99%. The service worked hard to proactively monitor FOI's moving through the system. In addition, during Q3 staff outside of the CSC responsible for monitoring FOI's, were given access to FOI reports produced by the corporate reporting platform, with the aim of increasing visibility of FOI's moving through the system and their due dates.

5.0 Implications

5.1 Financial

- 5.1.1** The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy is aligned with the Council Plan to ensure that the commitments within the Plan are resourced. The Council's budget underpins the whole of the Council Plan and Delivery

Plan. The importance of the budget is recognised under the theme ‘A Council working for our community and serving our residents’ with the related commitment being ‘Focus and challenge how we manage our budget so it is concentrated on delivering our commitments and securing greater investment for Watford’.

5.1.2 The Shared Director of Finance comments that there are no further financial implications arising from the contents of this report.

5.2 Legal issues (Monitoring Officer)

5.2.1 The Group Head of Democracy and Governance comments that the Council Plan is one of the policy framework documents listed in the constitution that has to be approved by Council. The plan was approved by Council on 13 June 2022.

5.3 Risks

Nature of risk	Consequence	Suggested control measure	Response (treat, tolerate, terminate, transfer)	Risk rating (combination of severity and likelihood)
Slippage on delivery of the Council Plan	Failure to deliver our commitments resulting in poorer outcomes for our town and residents. Potential impact on the reputation of the Council.	Regular monitoring and reporting to Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Robust project and programme management	Treat	3 (severity) x 2 (likelihood) = 6
Failure to recognise milestones / completion of commitments	Lost opportunity to celebrate success internally and externally	Regular monitoring and reporting to Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Robust project and programme management	Treat	3 (severity) x 2 (likelihood) = 6

		Clear communication of milestones / achievements		
Failure to promote and recognise the Council's strategic approach and culture that is focused on delivery and outcomes	Lost opportunity to embed a renewed strategic approach and culture that ensures Watford BC remains a high performing, innovative and agile organisation	Regular, robust and accurate reports for Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny that is owned across service areas Linking delivery to staff and team objectives	Treat	3 (severity) x 1 (likelihood) = 3
Slippage on delivery of the Organisational Development Strategy	Failure to deliver our commitments to staff potentially resulting in failure to deliver our Council Plan. Potential impact on staff's health and wellbeing.	Regular monitoring and reporting to Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Robust project and programme management. Regular checking in with staff through 1:1s, team meetings, surveys, Staff Ambassador Group	Treat	3 (severity) x 2 (likelihood) = 6
Loss of skilled staff / difficulties in recruiting if Organisational Development Strategy is not delivered and the council is not perceived as a place	Impact on delivery, potential cost implication if needed to recruit on short-term basis to fill posts	Regular monitoring and reporting to Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Robust project and programme management.	Treat	3 (severity) x 2 (likelihood) = 6

where staff can develop and grow		Regular checking in with staff through 1:1s, team meetings, surveys, Staff Ambassador Group Build into recruitment literature		
Failure to scrutinise organisational performance	Potential for performance to slip with consequences for quality of service delivery	Robust scrutiny and challenge	Treat	3 (severity) x 2 (likelihood) = 6
Failure to respond to issues with organisational performance	Potential for issues with performance not to be addressed, and for poor performance to continue	Response to issues identified monitored by Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Leadership Board and Portfolio Holders.	Treat	3 (severity) x 2 (likelihood) = 6
Failure to provide transparency over organisational performance	Lack of understanding and trust related to organisational performance, particularly where performance is below the standard expected.	Ensure KPIs have sufficient commentary explaining the context around the quarterly results. Ensure portfolio holders have regular opportunities to review and discuss organisation performance.	Treat	3 (severity) x 2 (likelihood) = 6

5.4 Equalities, Human Rights and Data Protection

- 5.4.1** An Equality Impact Analysis (EIA) was developed for the Council Plan 2022-2026. This is consistently reviewed based on up to date information and data the council receives to ensure the council meets its public sector equalities under the s149 (1) of the Equality Act 2010.

EIAs were also developed for the Organisational Development Strategy 2020-24 during its development. These will also this will be monitored through the life of the respective strategies.

5.5 Sustainability

- 5.5.1** The council's commitment to sustainability runs through the Council Plan and a range of actions to deliver our climate change commitments are identified within the Delivery Plan. These range from pushing forward with delivering greener ways to travel in Watford to promoting Watford's transition to a low-carbon economy. Indeed, an entire theme is devoted to delivering 'a brighter, greener future' with a whole range of activities planned to meet our sustainability commitments.

5.6 People Implications

- 5.6.1** The Council Plan sets the Council's strategic direction, and is, therefore, a key document for staff, enabling them to understand our commitments and priorities and allowing them to contribute fully to our success and achievements. As the overarching plan for the Council, it provides the framework for all our strategies and policies and links, through the Delivery Plan, to service business plans and individual staff objectives and outcomes. The principles demonstrate how we go about our work and are an important guide for staff on the Council's expectations recognising it is not just what we deliver but how we deliver that is a measure of our organisational culture.

The Organisational Development Strategy supports the Council Plan and Delivery Plan to equip all staff to deliver the very best service for residents.

5.7 Community Safety/Crime and Disorder

- 5.7.1** Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 requires the Council to give due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of its functions on crime and disorder in its area and to do all it reasonably can to prevent these. Our theme: A diverse, happy and healthy town, underpins our

commitment to ‘promote our welcoming and respectful town’ and the associated action to ‘ensure everyone feels welcome, included and safe in Watford’ and to ‘stablish our commitment to the wellbeing of women and girls’ by working with partners and using our statutory powers.

6.0 Actions arising from this Proposal

6.1 This report is to update the Cabinet on the following:

- Appendix A – Council Plan 2022-26 / Delivery Plan 2022-24 Q3 progress update
- Appendix B – Organisational Development Strategy 2020-24 Q3 progress update
- Appendix C – Key Performance Indicators update Q3 2022-23

Following review by Cabinet, this report will be presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee for comment.

7.0 Appendices

- Appendix A – Council Plan 2022-26 / Delivery Plan 2022-24 Q3 progress update
- Appendix B – Organisational Development Strategy 2020-24 Q3 progress update
- Appendix C – Key Performance Indicators update Q3 2022-23

8.0 Background Papers

- Watford Borough Council: Council Plan 2022-26
- Watford Borough Council: Delivery Plan 2024-26
- Watford Borough Council: Organisational Development Strategy 2020-24