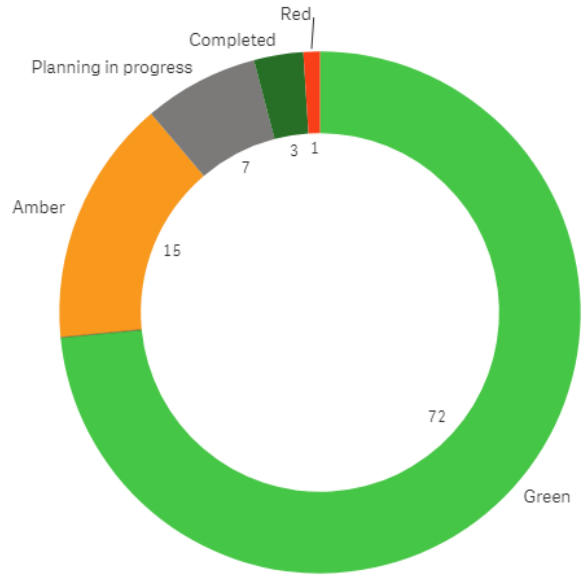


# Delivery Plan Progress Update

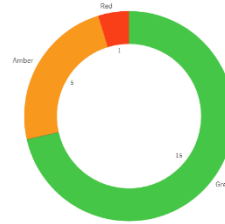


# Delivery Plan Overview

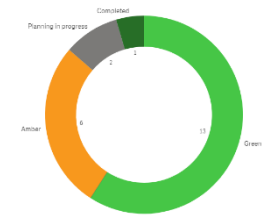
CDP Activity BRAG Split



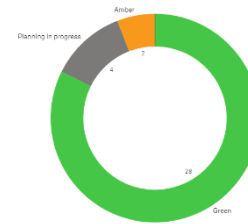
**Council Plan Theme - A greener, brighter future**



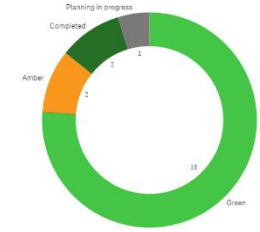
**Council Plan Theme - An inspiring, thriving and creative town**



**Council Plan Theme - A diverse, happy and healthy town**



**Council Plan Theme - A Council working for our community and serving our residents**

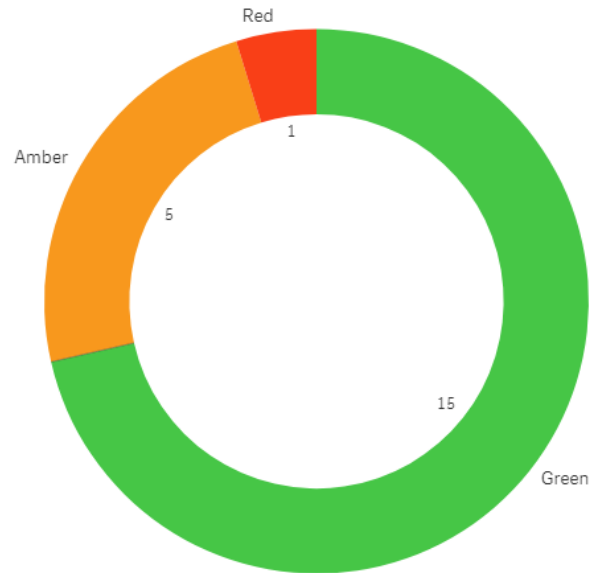


**Key**

- D.Green** – Completed
- Green** – On track
- Amber** – Potential Risks / Some uncertainty
- Red** – Challenges

## THEME: A greener brighter future

### Overview



### Key achievements over this period

- In line with our commitment to invest in sustainable transport, a new Watford Car Club, in partnership with Enterprise Car Club, will be launching in the autumn 2023. The scheme, which will consist of six electric or hybrid vehicles for hire, will provide an affordable, convenient and environmentally friendly option for residents wishing to hire a car.
- Our Cassiobury Wetland project is now progressing with re-baselined key milestones and an agreed concept design which will see this area of biodiversity returned to life. £25k has also be awarded by the Landfill Communities Fund in order to help us realise this vision.
- Groundwork, our contractor on the River Colne programme, have obtained £100k funding from the Environment Agency to continue supporting our ambitions for the River Colne.
- Delivery of the council's Environmental Strategy 2023-30 has commenced. Through the Strategy we will work towards our ambition to achieve net zero carbon emissions for the borough by 2030.

Commitment	Activity		BRAG' Rating	Trend	Headline
<p><b>Encourage people to make greener travel choices, reducing congestion and improving the health and wellbeing of the town</b></p>	<p>1. Investigate greener travel and transport solutions that work for Watford</p>	<p>We will continue to investigate the potential for a low-carbon transport hub in Watford town centre to encourage more use of public transport, reducing congestion and improving air quality for everyone.</p>	<p><b>Green</b></p>	<p>↔</p>	<p>In line with our Transforming Travel in Watford Strategy, good progress has been made regarding the investigations into a low-carbon transport hub, including identifying potential sites within the borough. Over the last period, further work has been undertaken to develop an outline business case and over the next period, potential designs will be developed.</p>
	<p>2. Promote ways of to travel that support people make greener choices</p>	<p>We will explore initiatives such as secure cycle parking and school travel plans to give people options other than using their car for every journey.</p>	<p><b>Green</b></p>	<p>↔</p>	<p>Through our ambitious TTIW Programme, a number of initiatives that will provide residents with options other than using their own cars for short and long journeys have been progressed. This includes awarding the contract for the new Watford Car Club, which will be formally launched in autumn 2023, to Enterprise Car Club. The scheme will provide six electric or hybrid vehicles for hire, offering an affordable, convenient and environmentally friendly option for residents.</p> <p>The St Albans Road Sustainable Transport Corridor revised Masterplan has now been received and, once signed off, an implementation programme will be developed.</p> <p>Proposals for the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans are progressing with the identified sites currently being safety audited and costings completed.</p> <p>The District Shopping Parade Improvements project planning is underway with improvements planned to shopping parades in both The Brow and Whippendell Road.</p> <p>Further information on how the council is progressing delivery of its Transforming Travel in Watford Strategy is included within Appendix C4.</p>
	<p>3. Champion sustainable travel initiatives and greener vehicles options</p>	<p>We will introduce initiatives such as electric vehicles, e-cargo bikes, electric charging points and e-car clubs to encourage more use of green transport, reducing congestion and improving air quality.</p>	<p><b>Green</b></p>	<p>↔</p>	<p>The installation of the electric vehicle charging points, which is funded by a successful On-Street Residential Chargepoint Scheme (ORCS) grant of £592.5k, is well underway. 38 sites have been identified for charge points and all sites have now been surveyed with Ringway, HCC's principal contractor for highway services . Leaflet deliveries were undertaken to promote the benefits of the scheme and the ORCS funding.</p> <p>Our contractor will commence delivery of the first phase from July 2023. We will be launching the Watford Car Club in partnership with Enterprise Car Club in autumn 2023.</p> <p>HCC have secured funding for a cargo bike trial with Raleigh Bikes and have confirmed that Cassiobury Infant School will be trialling the bike in September 2023. Two additional cargo bikes will be available for loan to businesses or others who would like to participate in the trial. The council has registered interest.</p>

Commitment	Activity	BRAG' Rating	Trend	Headline	
	4. Work with our partners to improve our cycling and walking network, including designing and implementing a green loop	We will work with Hertfordshire County Council and our cycling and walking communities to improve the cycling and walking network across our town so more people choose to cycle and walk.	Green	↔	Plans continue to improve our cycling and walking network and working to identify how our Wayfinding Strategy can align with the Green Loop to create a comprehensive solution. The sites identified are currently being safety audited and 3D modelling of the Green Loop East is continuing. We have agreed a priority intervention measure with HCC which is focussed on the contraflow lane along St Johns Road, which will ensure a 'loop' rather than a one direction flow.
	5. Champion proposals for a sustainable transport option for Watford Junction to Croxley	We will work closely with Hertfordshire County Council on the Watford to Croxley Link, examining the feasibility of options to secure the best transport system for our town, offering greater choice for our residents, visitors and commuters to travel sustainably.	Green	↔	We are continuing to work closely with HCC in line with the council's commitment to support proposals for sustainable transport across the town. The Watford to Croxley Link stage 2 work, which is the final stage in the options and feasibility study, is close to completion and a draft report is expected by the end of July 2023.
<b>Promote improvements to Watford's biodiversity to enhance the range of habitats, plants and wildlife in the town</b>	6. Set out our commitments to improving Watford's biodiversity	We will develop our Strategy and Biodiversity Action Plan, recognising the importance of our range of habitats across the town and setting out how we will improve and enhance these for future generations.	Green	↔	Our Biodiversity Strategy is being scoped with the Planning Policy team, and in line with the recently approved Environmental Strategy. The recruitment process for an interim support has been completed and the project can now commence in earnest. A range of work is already underway to support our commitment to biodiversity including improvements to the River Colne, Cassiobury Wetlands and our Tree Planting Programme.
	7. Enhance and extend our green canopy, through our proactive tree planting initiative	We will work with our community to plant 20,000 trees across the town by 2026, increasing our green canopy, making Watford a more pleasant place to live, work and enjoy recreation time.	Green	↔	Following the successful planting of 126 new trees in 2022/23, planning for this year's Tree Planting Programme is now underway for 2023/24. Opportunities for additional tree funding continues to be explored. The next phase of the County-wide Tree Giveaway has been publicised and over 2,600 have been claimed to date. Tree watering is in place with Veolia and is monitored monthly.
	8. Rediscover the River Colne to enhance the river, the river corridor, as a place for our community to enjoy	We will improve the River Colne through Watford to make it a more appealing place for local people to enjoy and a better environment for plants and wildlife to flourish.	Amber	↔	With onsite improvements works at the River Colne now commenced, the river berm installation at Knutsford South has been completed with support from our volunteers. Planting will be completed at the appropriate time to maximise their success. Groundwork, our contractor, have successfully obtained £100k funding from the Environment Agency to continue supporting our ambitions for the River Colne. A number of Balsam (invasive species) bashing events have been held with the support of volunteers. A 'Tales of the River' intern has been appointed to support delivery of this workstream and has arranged successful events including the Wildplay and River Amble events. This activity remains Amber as the completion of the full scope of in river works along the southern section of the river this Autumn / Winter is at risk,

Commitment	Activity	BRAG <sup>1</sup> Rating	Trend	Headline	
				due to the dependency on the EA agreeing a permit in time. This risk is being monitored closely and being reviewed with our in-river specialists.	
	9. Reinvigorate the Cassiobury Wetlands as an important part of our natural environment	We will improve the wetland and habitat of the former watercress beds on the River Gade in Cassiobury Park to enhance biodiversity, water quality and preserve and protect relevant related historical features.	Amber	↔	Following the previously reported challenges with the Cassiobury Wetland project significant progress has been made over the last quarter, enabling us to proceed with delivery. The contract sum has been agreed and concept design complete. A Landfill Communities Fund of £25k has been awarded to help support the delivery of our ambitions for the Cassiobury Wetlands.
	10. Celebrate and enhance Whippendell Woods as a site of special scientific interest	We will protect Whippendell Woods, a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), in order to preserve its 'favourable condition' status.	Green	↑	In line with our commitment to sustainability, works remain ongoing in Whippendell Woods. Our Ash Dieback plan is with the Forestry Commission, awaiting the felling license and we have acquired a tree survey quote from a contractor. To preserve the SSSI status of Whippendell Woods we are working with Bike Park Chilterns, a Community Interest Company, to find a new location for the unofficial mountain bike trail that had been in use in the woodlands. We are awaiting a comms plan and artist impression of the proposed facility.
	11. Promote healthy and sustainable gardening across the town	We will continue compost give-aways using our green waste recycling to bring back the organic material as free, nutrient-rich compost for Watford residents to grow plants and vegetables.	Green	↔	In line with our commitment to promote healthy and sustainable gardening across the town, the council's popular Compost Giveaway will continue on an annual basis, encouraging and supporting our residents to grow plants and vegetables. The next phase of the county-wide Tree Giveaway, which contributes to our commitment to enhance the green canopy across the town, was launched and to date over 2,600 trees have been claimed.
	12. Provide clear guidance on improving biodiversity in the town	We will set out guidance for developers on how to improve and enhance biodiversity in developments so they contribute to the town's goals for better habitats and environmental diversity	Amber	↔	Whilst a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for how developers can contribute to our vision and ambition to enhance biodiversity across the town has been drafted and a briefing session held with councillors, the government released draft guidance which indicates that the process will be standardised. This will remove the ability of Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) to set out local projects and charge rates for schemes that qualify for Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) investments. The BRAG rating remains amber until the guidance is formalised however Herts LPAs have started to discuss how approaches can be applied consistently which could aid progress on approaches set out in the emerging SPD. An application for the first tranches of ringfenced funding (£15k) from the government for biodiversity net gain implementation was submitted in April 2023.

Commitment	Activity	BRAG <sup>1</sup> Rating	Trend	Headline	
<b>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</b>	13. Develop and implement our new Sustainability Strategy	We will work with our community and businesses to develop and implement our new Sustainability Strategy, now called Watford's Environmental Strategy: addressing the climate and ecological emergency, which will set out how together, we can contribute to our target to be a net carbon neutral borough by 2030.	Green	↔	Now that the council's Environment Strategy is approved, delivery of the Delivery Plan is well in progress via a designated Sustainability Programme, however the commitment to achieve net carbon zero by 2030 and the promotion and enhancement sustainability is a key objective in other projects and programmes such as the River Colne and Town Hall Quarter Programmes. Further information on how the council is progressing delivery of its Environment Strategy is included within Appendix C3.
	14. Prepare for legislative changes to help protect our environment	We will respond to the requirements of the Environment Act 2021 to ensure we deliver on our role in improving air quality, tackling waste, improving biodiversity and making other environmental improvements.	Green	↔	The council's Environmental Strategy, which takes into account the requirement of the Environment Act 2021 and sets out our ambition and plan for achieving new carbon zero by 2030 and which was adopted in March 2023, delivery is in progress. Further information on how the council is progressing delivery of its Sustainability Strategy is included within Appendix C3.
	15. Explore opportunities that will contribute financially to our green commitments and goals	We will explore innovative, economically viable ideas that contribute to net carbon zero tapping into emerging trends, including investigating the possibility of green bonds to raise funds for planned projects.	Red	↔	As previously reported, due to the current economic climate and the rise in interest rates the proposal for the Green Investment Bond Scheme has been deferred until the economic climate improves, hence the red rating. The Electric Super Hub initiative, a high-speed charging hub for Electric Vehicles constructed on council-owned land, is still being explored which would entail leasing the land to an operator. Two operators are currently undertaking soft market testing and developing business cases to test the viability of this initiative.
	16. Investigate generating energy from renewable sources	We will examine including sustainable energy generation in council developments so we lead by example and demonstrate how it can work effectively.	Green	↔	Alongside the extensive decarbonisation works to the Town Hall and Colosseum, we are undertaking a procurement exercise to appoint sustainability consultants to undertake a review of further opportunities on council assets, making the most of external funding opportunities. An update report will be available by Autumn 2023. The decarbonisation works at the Town Hall and Colosseum are now complete following a year-long project to improve the sustainability of both heritage buildings.
	17. Improve the energy performance of the Town Hall and Watford Colosseum	We will carry out extensive de-carbonisation works to our Town Hall and Colosseum to improve their energy efficiency and ensure they have a reduced carbon footprint.	Amber	↔	The decarbonisation work and fabric repairs to the Town Hall and Colosseum, funded by the £3m central government grant, is now complete. As part of the initiative, the council has installed 144 state-of-the-art photovoltaic (PV) panels on the roof of the Town Hall and 36 on the Colosseum to harness renewable energy, reducing the reliance on traditional power sources. It is expected to save 24 tonnes of carbon dioxide (CO <sub>2</sub> ) per year. In addition a 30% saving in gas bills and carbon emissions is

Commitment	Activity	BRAG' Rating	Trend	Headline	
				expected due to the new cavity wall insulation and a further 166-tonne annual saving in carbon through the replacement of lights with LED equivalents and installation of new roof insulation. Training for our Facilities Management team to equip them with the knowledge and skills for operating and managing the new systems has been confirmed. The Colosseum roof insulation replacement works are nearing completion.	
	18. Ensure the council's own buildings are energy efficient	We will explore ways to improve the energy performance of all properties within our portfolio.	Green	↔	In line with our ambition to lead by example, we are working on data collection/assessment of energy usage at Croxley Business Park, and to act as a case study for potential wider roll out across the Council. Our application for the next round of funding from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme to improve the energy efficiency of some of our operational and community estate was unfortunately rejected, however we are preparing a case for further PSDS funding for works to improve the energy efficiency of operational and community estate.
	19. Promote sustainable construction in our own developments	We will actively encourage the use of sustainable materials in any of our new developments so we can role model to others who develop in our town.	Amber	↔	As with the Town Hall and the Colosseum, the council is continuing to encourage the use of sustainable materials in new developments with a BREEAM rating of 'Very Good' targeted for direct development of Gateway Zone at Watford Business Park and a Home Quality Mark, an independently assessed certification scheme for new homes, of 4 (out of 5) at Riverside Road development. The amber status reflects the delay in commencing construction work at Watford Business Park due to issues with the Environment Agency however there is no impact on the scheme sustainability criteria. We are working with existing joint venture partners to assess and implement the most efficient and viable energy solutions in residential projects. Similarly, the recent refurbishment of the Annexe at the Town Hall saw 94% of all material recycled with even higher targets achieved to date on the decarbonisation works at the Town Hall and Colosseum.
Encourage residents and businesses to recycle more, reusing materials and reducing waste and what they throw away	20. Increase how much our residents recycle and reduce the waste we throw away as a town	We will build on the success of our waste and recycling scheme to boost household recycling rates across the borough, introducing the opportunity for food waste collections for all households and setting targets that reflect our sustainability ambitions.	Green	↔	The waste and recycling service changes introduced in 2020 has resulted in an increase of recycling rates for the council. The council and its contractor will strive to deliver the new target for recycling rates over the next 4 years. A proposal for the introduction of food waste from flats and high rise building is being developed by the council and its contractor with a view to implementing in 2023 subject to budget. The scheme will make it easy and simple for all residents to recycle as much as they can.
	21. Support our partners to reduce waste and increase recycling	We will work with our partners, including our environmental services provider and leisure services provider to deliver the next step change in reducing waste and	Green	↔	We are working with our key contractors across the borough, such as Watford Market and leisure centres, to reduce the amount of waste created and seek to increase the recycling rates. Our new Environmental Strategy 2023-30 is a key tool and will support us to achieve our ambitions. We have committed to reducing waste by 50% by



Commitment	Activity	BRAG <sup>1</sup> Rating	Trend	Headline
		increasing recycling, particularly through campaigns and changing behaviours.		2030 and with recycling making up at least 60% of the waste. We have also committed to reducing the council's own waste to near zero by 2030.

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## THEME: An inspiring, thriving and creative town

### Overview



### Key achievements over this period

- Watford's Place Brand, Narrative and Strategy was approved by Cabinet in July 2023 and will be launched in late summer 2023. The Strategy will be a key tool in promoting Watford as a great location for businesses, attract more visitors and support the local economy.
- We were a winner in the East of England Awards for Planning Excellence, winning in the category of 'Best Plan' for the 'Watford Local Plan 2021-2038: A Sustainable Town'.
- The decarbonisation and fabric repairs work to the Town Hall and Colosseum are now complete. The decarbonisation works were funded by a £3m Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme grant. Through this scheme the council has installed state of the art photovoltaic (PV) panels on the roof of the Town Hall and Colosseum, reducing the reliance on traditional power sources. The PVs are expected to save 24 tonnes of carbon dioxide per year. In addition a 30% saving in both gas bills and carbon emissions is expected due to the new cavity wall insulation.
- We are progressing the Colosseum refurbishment works and are meeting regularly with the new venue operator, AEG, to agree and finalise the design changes to the building.
- Local projects funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) are progressing well with good participation from the SME community. We have submitted the year 1 UKSPF return to DLUHC and have received confirmation for year 2 funding.

Commitment	Activity	BRAG' Rating	Trend	Headline	
<b>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</b>	22. Deliver our Innovation and Incubation Hub	We will provide a new Innovation and Incubation Hub, as part of our Town Hall Quarter, which will support start-up businesses in the town and give our key sectors a boost, tapping into the significant opportunity provided by the flourishing creative sector and drawing businesses into the borough.	Amber	↔	Following confirmation that the council's bid for Levelling Up Funding had been unsuccessful, work has been underway to develop a lower cost, scaled down business model for the proposed new business hub. In both scenarios, we will ensure that we can still support Watford start-up businesses and give our key sectors a boost, whilst making efficient use of the Town Hall.
	23. Develop a skills and employment plan for Watford that supports the current, and future, needs of our local businesses and life chances of residents	We will work with our business community and education partners, linking to the Hertfordshire LEP Skills and Employment Plan to develop and deliver a Watford Skills and Employment Plan, connecting local skills to business needs.	Green	↔	Delays in the release of the Herts Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP), produced by Herts Chamber and awaiting sign off by central government, has stalled the development of the Watford Skills and Employment Plan. This is a key evidence base and therefore is required to ensure our Watford Skills and Employment Plan has appropriate alignment with themes and priorities from the Local Skills Improvement Plan.
	24. Maximise economic potential and harness new opportunities from Watford's future growth sectors	We will engage with our successful business sectors and partners at local, county and regional levels, building on the economic drive our sectors provide for Watford's economy, promoting clustering where it makes sense for our town to create greater growth and encourage inward investment.	Green	↔	The Sectors Action Plan will be progressed in Q1 of 2024/25 due to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) taking priority, although the evidence has been gathered and sub-regional work is underway with parties around creative and screen industry potential. However, the UKSPF projects are automatically supporting key sectors as they are cross-cutting.
	25. Make the most of our Shared Prosperity Fund allocation	We will use our Shared Prosperity Fund to boost our ambitions for prosperity, jobs and skills, spreading opportunities and building our sense of community pride.	Green	↔	New local projects, Watford Net Zero and Watford Fit to Bid, are live and progressing well with good participation from our SME community. The small business scale-up support will get underway in the autumn and the community wealth building 'Resource Bank' work should commence over the summer. The Herts LEP-led countywide projects are on track with quarterly progress and impact reporting in place from Herts LEP. A paper setting out proposals for allocation of the remaining UKSPF funding is going to Corporate Management Board in July and to Cabinet for approval in September 2023.
<b>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</b>	26. Promote what makes Watford a great location for business, connecting to building pride in the town and our profile as a great place to visit	We will work with partners to shape our place narrative and brand, sharing what is great about Watford, attracting more visitors and supporting our local economy, putting the town on the map as a great place for business.	Green	↔	Our place brand and narrative has been developed and shared with a range of partners. A report and Watford's Place Brand, Narrative and Strategy were taken to Cabinet in July 2023 outlining the progress made to date and the next steps. We are aiming to launch the Strategy in late summer 2023 and this will be supported by a website and social assets.
	27. Ensure there is a strong voice for local businesses by fostering	We will engage with Watford businesses, encouraging an empowered business community that can be a strong voice for the town, making the most of opportunities	Green	↔	Business engagement is a day to day or BAU (business as usual) activity for the Economic Development team. The team meet with several businesses each week and connect them with resources and services that can help them flourish within our town. They support a wide-range of business

Commitment	Activity		BRAG' Rating	Trend	Headline
	effective business networks and forums	and new ventures and encouraging vibrant networks and forums that bring businesses together in a meaningful and effective way.			network activities and events, for example this quarter the team attended the Business Expo held at the Hilton Hotel. The next Council-led Business Connect event is being planned for October 2023. A Watford Business Leaders forum will be established at a point where engagement with Key Businesses is at a logical point to facilitate this. The UKSPF projects are proving good catalysts to help ramp up Key Business engagements.
	28. Engage with wider economic, business and planning partnerships to make sure Watford's interests are represented	We will work closely with our partners in Hertfordshire LEP, Herts Growth Board and the South West Herts Joint Strategic Partnership to shape and influence wider discussions on our economic role and impact.	Green	↔	We are continuing to work closely with our partners to shape our planning and economic partnerships. This includes agreeing a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) with all five South West Herts authorities and the launch of a consultation on the 'Realising our Potential' document which sets out the draft vision and objectives for working together in the future for the benefit of the wider South-West Hertfordshire area. The works towards the development and adoption of the JSP (Joint Strategic Partnership) is underway. We have commissioned consultants to undertake the SW Herts infrastructure and green belt alignment assessments.
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	29. Progress our transformational plans for the Town Hall Quarter	We will take forward plans to revitalise the north end of Watford High Street to create a vibrant and attractive neighbourhood within our Town Hall Quarter for our residents to enjoy, as well as establishing a new area in the town for culture to flourish.	Amber	↔	Work with our joint venture partner, Mace, on the New Neighbourhood scheme continues to progress with de-risking activities for utilities, highways and financial viability. Having previously secured £55k funding for investigatory work, engagement with Homes England to discuss further funding opportunities continues. The activity status remains amber due to the ongoing current economic climate which has delayed the anticipated investment.
	30. Secure the future of Watford Colosseum, improving the heritage building and attracting a new operator	We will refurbish the Watford Colosseum so it remains a first-class entertainment venue, attracting a new operator to bring an exciting and diverse range of performances and creative events to boost the town's cultural offer and local economy.	Amber	↔	The decarbonisation works to the Colosseum are now complete and the roof insulation replacement is nearing completion. Following the successful completion of enabling works, the refurbishment design work is now completed with work continuing on-site to allow for a 2024 opening. Council officers continue to meet regularly with the new Colosseum operator, AEG, to finalise design changes to the Colosseum, as well as operational and financial issues. The amber status reflect the ongoing risk of inflation to capital build projects of this type.
	31. Enhance a sustainable town centre with a mixed economy that will have a broad appeal to all ages and interests	We will develop our Town Centre Framework to ensure that our vibrant and diverse town centre continues to attract residents, businesses and visitors to live, work, shop, eat, drink and enjoy spending time.	Complete	↔	Following a significant level of public engagement, the Town Centre Strategic Framework consultation was completed and approved by Cabinet in March 2023.

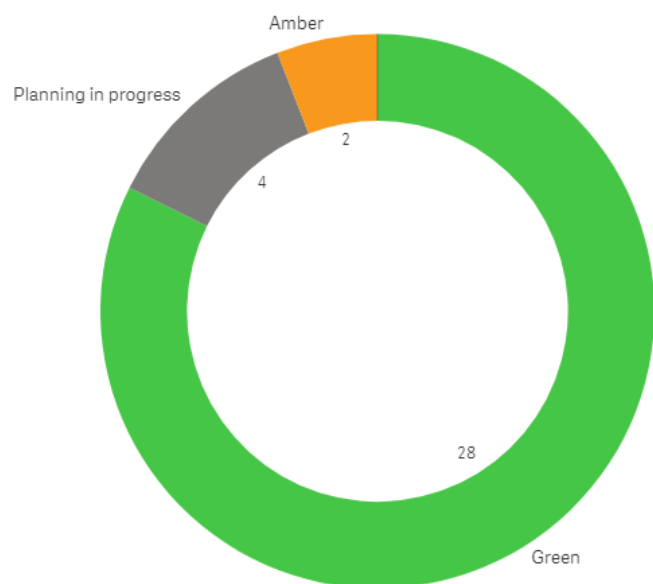
Commitment	Activity	BRAG' Rating	Trend	Headline	
	32. Enhance our outdoor public spaces to make them welcoming and attractive	We will improve a number of our public spaces to provide excellent, safe and attractive outdoor spaces that support a greener Watford. This work will include the enhancement of key areas of our town such as St Mary's Churchyard, Market Street, Queens Road and St Albans Road.	Green	↔	Building on previous public realm improvements in Clarendon Road and Market Street, work in Queens Road is now complete. Planning work will commence in St Mary's Churchyard over the next period. The council remains committed to investing in our public realm spaces to support local businesses and is consulting with the HCC on options for the next phase of public realm works. The District Shopping Parade Improvements project will introduce improvements to identified shopping parades within the borough in order to create vibrant and welcoming spaces and enhance public realm for businesses, residents and visitors. The Brow and Whippendell Road have been prioritised for delivery in the first phase.
	33. Promote the appeal of our town centre and all it has to offer	We will continue to deliver our 'Shop and Eat Local' campaign to attract people to our town centre, supporting our local businesses and their unique appeal.	Green	↔	We are continuing to engage with new businesses and encouraging local people to nominate businesses to appear in campaigns. We are also working with Watford BID and Atria to understand when new businesses arrive.
	34. Promote Watford Market and our offer as a market town	We will support our local traders by continuing to run our popular 'Market Late' events, showcasing the great range of food and drink stalls in the market and trialling specialist markets.	Green	↔	The procurement exercise to identify a new operator for Watford Market has now been completed. The new operator will take on the day to day management of Watford Market, including the Market Lates and Specialist Markets events, and support our local market traders who provide a wide variety and wonderful stalls for our residents and visitors such as food, takeaways and beauty services. The Market Lates and Specialist Markets, which provide a great opportunity for local traders to showcase their diverse food and drink offer will continue in 2023/24.
Ensure the right mix of facilities, services and transport links as part of new developments to create successful, well-designed new communities	35. Take forward plans for the Watford Junction Quarter	We will bring landowners together so we can progress with our long-term plans to create a new Watford neighbourhood that successfully combines new homes, station facilities, jobs, public space, school provision and community facilities for both our existing and new residents.	Green	↔	Whilst the council does not own the land around Watford Junction, we are committed to improving the local amenities to create a new neighbourhood and have continued to liaise with key landowners and stakeholders regarding the redevelopment of the area. The Council is also in conversation with Network Rail regarding future improvements of the station and on a development strategy. We are waiting to hear about funding from NR operations for design work on the station to improve the journeys of the many of our residents who use Watford Junction every day.
	36. Continue our transformation of Watford Business Park	We will complete the Gateway development at Watford Business Park to continue our plans to create new and high quality business space to maximise local employment opportunities and generate income for the council to support its wider priorities.	Amber	↓	Following the sign off of our ambitious and exciting plans to develop Watford Business Park into a new and high-quality business space, the main contract works are progressing and completion is expected in Q3 of 2023/24. The new facility will provide modern and flexible commercial units, a number of which will be fitted out for office accommodation to meet the requirements of potential businesses. The marketing materials have been produced.

Commitment	Activity	BRAG' Rating	Trend	Headline	
				The amber status reflects the delay in practical completion from September to November 2023 and the budget implication in light of additional remediation works required, design changes and the EOT claim.	
	37. Continue to deliver the neighbourhood at Riverwell	We will continue to develop the Riverwell scheme to deliver a high quality mix of new homes, jobs, open spaces and community facilities, maintaining an income source for the council to support its wider priorities. The work at Riverwell will support the opportunity for West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust to deliver its ambition for an acute hospital in Watford.	Amber	↔	The JV partnership is managing the impact of the current economic climate and inflationary pressures on the Riverwell scheme. KIER Construction have been commissioned to complete the remaining works on the Avenues phase 1 development. The programme is amber rated as the partnership continues to review all Riverwell development phases to understand the ongoing economic impacts and explore options to maintain progress and delivery.
	38. Achieve the right long-term balance of development, services and transport links for our town	We will adopt our new Local Plan for Watford which will shape how the town will develop sustainably over the next 30 years and make sure that key development sites are underpinned with creative, sustainable and well considered planning frameworks.	Green	↔	The Watford Local Plan 2021-2038 was adopted in Q2 of 2022/23 and will provide the council with the opportunity to influence local and sustainable development across the town. The council are pleased to be a winner in the East of England Awards for Planning Excellence, winning in the category of 'Best Plan' for the 'Watford Local Plan 2021-2038: A Sustainable Town'.
Make sure we have quality homes to meet the needs of residents, including housing that is affordable through direct ownership, private rental, affordable and social rent housing	39. Deliver a new Housing Strategy for Watford	We will deliver a Housing Strategy that sets out the strategic direction for housing activity in Watford for the next five years. The delivery of housing growth, bringing inward investment into the borough, ensuring existing homes are of good quality, and preventing homelessness will all contribute to meeting the housing challenges faced by our residents.	Planning in progress	↔	The paper on the approach to delivering the Housing Strategy, including an outline project plan will be taken to Portfolio Holders in September 2023. Formal work to develop the strategy will commence in Q3 of 2023/24.
	40. Review and refresh our Nominations Policy	We will deliver a new Nominations Policy for Watford to help our residents apply to our housing register, how we manage the register, your choice about where you live, how we assess applications and allocate properties.	Green	↔	The principles for a revised Nominations Policy have been drafted and are ready for consultation. An approach document, which sets out the timetable, has been agreed with Corporate Management Board, the Housing Portfolio Holder and the Elected Mayor. Over the next period, any changes to the existing policy will be reviewed and informed by legal advice, with consultation undertaken prior to any major changes.
	41. Improve housing provision for those local families who need homes that are affordable	We will work with partners to deliver high quality new homes for social rent, for local families who need them the most and support the housing needs of the most vulnerable members of our community.	Green	↔	The Steering Group to deliver social rented homes across the town is developing a strategic action plan to consider regeneration opportunities and proposals for spend of commuted sums to deliver social rented homes. There are ongoing delays to the Ascot Road, Brightwell and Yeatmans developments, which has led to a reduction in our final outturn for the

Commitment	Activity		BRAG <sup>1</sup> Rating	Trend	Headline
					handover of affordable lettings. In Q1 13 social rented homes were handed over.
	42. Develop planning guidance to ensure developers provide new homes that support local needs	We will provide guidance to inform how new homes and buildings should be designed so they meet the needs of Watford and are built to a high standard.	Amber	↔	The development of the Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is further delayed, reflecting the uncertainty until national guidance is clarified. Specifically, this has delayed the initial vision document consultation process. A table to monitor viability figures to better understand issues and their interpretation as part of the decision-making process was completed.
	43. Deliver a refreshed Private Sector Renewal Policy	We will review and refresh our Private Sector Renewal policy to support the improvement of Watford's housing stock, setting out how we can help the private sector improve and maintain housing quality in the town.	Planning in progress	↔	The refreshment of our Private Sector Renewal policy was delayed to enable alignment with our Housing strategy work. A stock condition assessment is being undertaken through summer 2023 following release of the Census 2021 data to inform the policy and changes.

## THEME: A diverse, happy and healthy town

### Overview



### Key achievements over this period

- Practical completion for the New Crematorium was achieved in June 2023. The new facility, which is located in Hemel Hempstead, will serve residents in Watford, Dacorum, Hertsmere, Three Rivers and St Albans and will be opening in Q2.
- The Conservation Areas Management Plan was approved by Cabinet in June 2023. The action plans will ensure that we take the necessary steps to enhance and protect the historical features, and character, of different areas of the borough.
- The Easter 2023 holiday programme was successfully delivered and a scheme offering sessions to families via a local voluntary organisation was piloted with a good uptake by Watford residents.
- The Watford Community Lottery was launched and the first inaugural draw was held in June 2023. 60% of all ticket sales will go towards supporting our local community and good causes.
- To date 2,600 trees have been claimed via the county-wide tree giveaway, which will go towards increasing our green canopy.
- Following closures over Covid, the Healthy Hub at the Town Hall is open on Wednesdays for face-to-face drop-in appointments and once a month on a Friday for the HCC Health Improvement team to provide bookable appointments for Watford residents to have NHS health checks.



Commitment	Activity		BRAG' Rating	Trend	Headline
<p><b>Continue our investment in our outstanding parks and open spaces so they remain the best in the area</b></p>	<p>44. Deliver improvements to Meriden Park</p>	<p>We will, in consultation with our residents, improve the popular and well-loved Meriden Park, including providing new paths, planting and landscaping, for the whole community to enjoy.</p>	<p>Green</p>	<p>↔</p>	<p>Following the significant improvement works last year, we are continuing to deliver enhance our popular Meriden Park. In Q1, further wildflower seeding was completed alongside additional watering following the recent dry weather. The wildflowers at the park have started to germinate which will create a beautiful wildflower meadow supporting biodiversity within the town.</p>
	<p>45. Continue our programme of investment and improvements in Watford's parks</p>	<p>We will carry out a range of improvements across our award winning parks and open spaces, including improving footpaths, refurbishing grass tennis courts, and carrying out cycling path repairs. In addition, we will promote the 'cycling code of conduct' and associated engagement programme to support considerate cycling.</p>	<p>Green</p>	<p>↔</p>	<p>Following the completion of footpath and cycling path improvements in Cassiobury Park last year, the development of our Green Spaces Strategy is ow underway. The temporary bike bay trial, which is in place in Cassiobury Park until the end of September 2023, is progressing well. In the next quarter we will finalise the map of the next set of priority pathway repairs in Cassiobury Park, which will be subject to budget availability.</p>
	<p>46. Enhance Woodside Playing Fields so it offers improved facilities and opportunities for leisure and sport</p>	<p>We will invest in Woodside Playing Fields to enhance the activities on offer, including improvements to both the current boxing and cricket facilities.</p>	<p>Green</p>	<p>↔</p>	<p>We are progressing the enhancement of Woodside Playing Field to plan. In Q1 we released the RIBA stage 3 spatial design, MEP services schemes and external improvements. In addition the intrusive structural surveys were completed and the Changing Places facility design scheme was approved by Muscular Dystrophy UK who are the approval body for DLUHC. The Changing Places facility will ensure that our facilities are fully accessible for people with disabilities. We have shared the scheme with the principal stakeholders including the clubs on site, governing bodies and members and a wider stakeholder forum on 21 June 2023 was well attended.</p>
	<p>47. Complete our work in partnership for a new crematorium for south west Hertfordshire</p>	<p>We will complete the new crematorium and agree future running arrangements, with our partner local authorities, to deliver enhanced facilities, including a remembrance chapel and gardens.</p>	<p>Amber</p>	<p>↔</p>	<p>We achieved practical completion of the New Crematorium on 16 June 2023 and completed a number of essential activities such as insuring the facility, installing highway signage, trademark registration and staff training. Whilst the completion of the project was later than planned, the team are now working towards the opening of the new facility in Q2 providing residents of Hertfordshire with more choice to say goodbye to their loved ones.</p>
<p><b>Celebrate and promote our town's rich and diverse culture and creativity</b></p>	<p>48. Reimagine our Museum and its place in telling the history of our town</p>	<p>We will develop proposals for a modern, inspiring Heritage and Museum service based in our historic Town Hall that engages and educates our residents and visitors by telling the story of our town and its rich and diverse history, including ensuring that the service and sacrifice of fallen service men and women is recognised.</p>	<p>Green</p>	<p>↔</p>	<p>Plans to create of the new museum service, based at the Town Hall have continued over the last period. In Q1 the RIBA stage 3 design was approved for consultation by the Members Steering Group. In May 2023 the National Heritage Lottery Fund, who provided a development grant of £68k, granted permission to commence the elements of work to be funded by the grant and the first monitoring visit was held in June 2023.</p>

Commitment	Activity		BRAG' Rating	Trend	Headline
			Green		A Community Curator has been recruited to support delivery of the project to ensure extensive community engagement as the plans for the museum progress, with volunteers already supporting the costume inventory work.
	49. Celebrate 100 years of Watford Borough, building a legacy for future generations	We will lead a programme of celebrations across the town commemorating 100 years since the formation of the borough of Watford.	Green	↔	Whilst this activity is now complete, we are however continuing to celebrate 'centenary heroes' through 2023 and launching a time capture in autumn 2023.
	50. Bring our local heritage to life for our community	We will create a new innovative heritage trail across the town to recognise Watford's rich culture and past.	Green	↔	Our Town Centre heritage trail was successfully launched in March 2022, providing a digitally interactive route along the High Street. Plans to update this will be timed to align with new projects such as the Blue Plaque Scheme, which formed part of the Mayor's Manifesto and for which planning is underway. Our successful bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund also means that a heritage trail will form part of the 'Tales of the River' project.
	51. Enhance the town's creative and cultural appeal through a new Public Art Strategy	We will develop a Public Art Strategy for Watford, to explore how art in all its forms, can animate and enhance our public spaces, building on Watford's strong sense of identity and creativity and linking to improved wayfinding across the town.	Green	↔	Our Public Art Strategy will be a key tool in enhancing our public spaces and attract visitors to our High Street. Drafting of the strategy is underway. In the meantime, the pilot commission options are being developed.
	52. Commemorate the town's links to our past	We will introduce a Blue Plaque scheme which will commemorate links between our historic buildings and famous residents, events or former buildings.	Planning in progress	↔	This scheme will build on the '100 People Who Made Watford' initiative. This provides a range of information on some of those Watfordonians who have made exceptional contributions to the town. The project has been scoped by looking at areas where similar schemes have been implemented and understanding how learning could be applied to Watford.
	53. Mark and reflect on Watford's response to COVID-19	We will install a public memorial providing a place for reflection and commemoration to build on the community spirit and recognising the outstanding work across the town during the COVID-19 pandemic.	Green	↔	The location for a general space for reflection and contemplation has now been agreed and will be delivered alongside the improvements works to St Mary's Churchyard. Delivery of the project will commence over the next period.
	54. Enhance our town's historical features and character	We will develop a series of conservation management plans to enhance and protect the historical features, and character, of different areas across the town.	Green	↔	The Conservation Areas Management Plan was approved by Cabinet in June 2023, where it was subsequently adopted. An additional recommendation was proposed by Cabinet regarding how the actions set out in the Action Plan would be monitored and it was agreed that updates would be reported through the council's Enterprise Programme Management Office, which will be agreed with the EPMO in the next quarter.

Commitment	Activity		BRAG' Rating	Trend	Headline
<p><b>Promote our welcoming and respectful town</b></p>	<p>55. Ensure everyone feels welcome, included and safe in Watford</p>	<p>We will continue to make sure people feel welcome and safe in Watford, working closely with our partners to bid for funding that will support ways to have a positive impact on levels of violence against women and girls.</p>	<p><b>Green</b></p>	<p>↔</p>	<p>The Joint Action Group members are successfully progressing through the Community Safety Action Plan and opportunities for actions within core business and set against the Community Safety Partnership priorities which are included in the plan (the priorities are Serious Youth Violence, Violence Against Women and Girls, Community Wellbeing and Reassurance and Inform). The action plan is monitored and updated monthly through the Joint Action Group with exception reporting to One Watford.</p>
	<p>56. Establish our commitment to the wellbeing of women and girls</p>	<p>We will deliver 'White Ribbon' accreditation for Watford Borough Council as a part of our ongoing commitment to tackle violence against women and girls, and continue our productive engagement with our One Watford partnership, which is bringing together all strands of this work across the town.</p>	<p><b>Green</b></p>	<p>↔</p>	<p>Following our successful White Ribbon accreditation last year, the Steering Group, which is chaired by the Elected Mayor, is continuing to work on the action plan for submitting to White Ribbon in the summer 2023. We are progressing the communication campaign and have arranged a training for members in July 2023.</p>
	<p>57. Make sure our town remains clean and free from litter</p>	<p>We will trial a new mobile CCTV approach, as part of our overall CCTV review, which allows us to target litter and fly-tipping hotspots and obtain evidence so that we can prosecute offenders, helping to keep our streets clean and litter-free.</p>	<p><b>Amber</b></p>	<p>↔</p>	<p>The trial for the three mobile test cameras is ongoing and due to be reviewed in September 2023 when the effectiveness of the trial can be assessed. We are continuing to progress the remedial actions identified in the CCTV Review undertaken in 2022 which is expected to be ongoing until the end of December 2023.</p>
	<p>58. Develop a range of information and signposting to create a 'welcome to Watford' resource</p>	<p>We will develop a digital 'welcome to Watford' resource for new residents, setting out how they can be fully involved in the life of the town and make the most of Watford and all it has to offer.</p>	<p><b>Planning in progress</b></p>	<p>↔</p>	<p>A revised timetable has been agreed for the delivery of our 'Welcome to Watford' resource for new residents. The project will be scoped in Q4 of 2023/24 for launch in 2024/25. The resource will link into our Place Brand work, building on the narrative and key messages about Watford.</p>
<p><b>Listen to and hear the diverse voices of Watford</b></p>	<p>59. Engage with our community to support better outcomes for our town and residents</p>	<p>We will develop our strategic approach, setting out how we will proactively work and engage with our community and our voluntary and community sector.</p>	<p><b>Green</b></p>	<p>↔</p>	<p>The Community Engagement and Participation Strategy is drafted to provide strategic direction and action planning on a council-wide approach to how we engage with our community. The Strategy was shared with voluntary and community sector groups in Q1 and was presented to Cabinet in July 2023 for approval, followed by consultation and final Cabinet approval in autumn 2023.</p> <p>Further information on how the council is progressing delivery of its Community Engagement and Participation Strategy is included within Appendix C5.</p>

Commitment	Activity		BRAG' Rating	Trend	Headline
	60. Continue to engage with our community so we actively listen to their views and ideas	We will continue to run our Pensioners Forum to provide support, guidance and companionship for our older residents, who contribute so much to the life of our town.	<b>Green</b>	↔	Recognising the valuable contribution our elderly residents made to the town, and mindful of the additional support they may need, our Senior's Forum continues to be held regularly, supported by Watford and Three Rivers Trust.
	61. Understand and support specific groups within our community	We will introduce a new Veterans Forum for ex-forces personnel, who have done so much for our town and country, building on our commitment to the Hertfordshire Armed Forces Covenant, which provides support between our civilian community and local Armed Forces community.	<b>Planning in progress</b>	↔	We are working closely with community groups and organisations to support Veterans in Watford. Cllr Grimston has been appointed as the Veterans champion for the council.
	62. Support the voluntary sector in Watford to provide positive outcomes for our residents	We will develop a new Voluntary Sector Commissioning Framework and work in partnership with charitable, community and voluntary organisations focused on helping our residents live healthy, happy and independent lives, understanding and meeting their needs through initiatives such as opening up the Town Hall to wider community use.	<b>Green</b>	↔	We have initiated a Community Project to develop a new Voluntary Sector Commissioning Framework (VSCF) and have established a Member Steering Group to oversee the delivery. We are reviewing community needs against commissioned services to identify gaps in service provision and undertaking structured conversations with commissioned organisations to support co-design of the new framework.
	63. Ensure our community buildings benefit local residents	We will work with our community tenants to ensure our community buildings are well maintained, and, that our buildings maximise the benefits for local people.	<b>Green</b>	↔	<p>Our funding application for a further Public Sector Decarbonisation Funding, to allow us to decarbonise more council-owned buildings in addition to the Colosseum and Town Hall was unfortunately not successful. However, we are continuing to ensure our community buildings are well maintained and have recently completed 99% of all EPC surveys. We are currently evaluating the tender responses for the appointment of a consultant to develop our Sustainable Asset Strategy.</p> <p>In line with our ambition to leverage external funds, a Local Carbon Skills fund bid for a heat decarbonisation plan has been submitted. The outcome of the bid is expected in mid-July 2023.</p> <p>The planned works to Cheslyn House, St Mary's Advice Centre and Vicarage Road Cemetery are now complete, improving each of these facilities for Watford residents.</p>
	64. Deliver our Equality and Diversity policy so it underpins what we do and how we engage with our community	We will develop an Equality and Diversity policy for Watford, making sure it reflects our diverse town and our commitment to being a place where everyone can thrive.	<b>Green</b>	↔	The Census 2021 figures will underpin the council's approach to its Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy. The draft Equality and Diversity Policy was developed with an internal and external focus, covering the council's role as an employer as well as a service provider and convener of place. The policy will be presented to Cabinet in autumn 2023.

Commitment	Activity		BRAG' Rating	Trend	Headline
	65. Work with partners to end rough sleeping on the streets of Watford	We will continue to deliver our Homelessness Strategy for Watford, reviewing this on an annual basis and adapting it regularly to ensure that it remains innovative and effective, supporting our target of minimising rough sleepers on the streets of Watford.	<b>Green</b>	↔	Significant progress has been made to reduce homelessness across the town in the last few years. The review of the Homeless and Rough Sleeping Strategy Action Plan, which was updated and refreshed in line with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities requests, is now complete and available on the council's website since May 2023.
<b>Support improved health and wellbeing across the town</b>	66. Encourage Watford to develop as an age friendly town	We will work towards making Watford an age-friendly town which residents and visitors of all ages can enjoy, ensuring local services are accessible to and inclusive of older people with varying needs and capacities.	<b>Planning in progress</b>	↔	Government guidance still requires Local Planning Authorities to prepare design codes for age-friendly towns, however with revised planning guidance anticipated in lates 2023/24, the requirements may change, which may have implications for resources and a delay to the timetable for the adoption of any guidance. We held an internal officer workshop and are planning a workshop with councillors to discuss design issues, risks and opportunities. We are exploring how Watford could become an age friendly community in consultation with the Centre for Ageing Better and the UK Centre for Age-Friendly Communities. Further work is being undertaken to consider how this could be resourced and developed. A further update will be provided in the Autumn.
	67. Tackle digital isolation so residents can effectively engage using new technology	We will work with our partners, volunteers and community groups to support residents who do not have access to technology, choose not to do so or do not currently have the skills to use IT so that they have the same opportunities as others in our town.	<b>Green</b>	↔	Our proposal to tackle digital isolation is still in progress as we explore a number of opportunities, including the option of continuing our work with Watford and Three Rivers Trust who may potentially be able to secure further NHS funding, and the option of using our Welcoming Spaces, volunteers and the council's CSC to support residents who are digitally isolated. The proposal will be presented in the autumn 2023.
	68. Develop services to support our residents' health and wellbeing	We will work closely with our partners to develop a mental health strategy for Watford, ensuring the right support is available for residents who need it. Watford's Healthy Hub will provide a pivotal link to assistance and guidance, including opening up conversations about the menopause and for those needing help with mental health issues.	<b>Green</b>	↔	In Q4 of 2022/23 a Healthy Hub Coordinator was successfully recruited to support delivery of the Healthy Hub services. Plans for the alignment of health inequalities and the Healthy Hub are now completed with mental health now embedded within the service of the Healthy Hub. The Healthy Hub at the Town Hall is open every Wednesdays for face-to-face drop-in appointments and once a month on a Friday for the HCC Health Improvement team to provide bookable appointments for Watford residents to have NHS health checks.

Commitment	Activity	BRAG' Rating	Trend	Headline	
	69. Engage with health partners to improve public health and health inequalities for our residents	We will engage across our health partners to make sure the health and wellbeing needs of Watford are represented in new health structures and commissioning of services.	<b>Green</b>	↔	<p>We are leading the development work with health and social care partners to position Watford's services and joint-working with health colleagues, charities and community leads to deliver health initiatives such as cancer awareness and prevention. An event was held at Watford Football Club (WFC) to explore and align collaborative opportunities.</p> <p>The Healthy Hub service provision continues to be developed to deliver HCC's core offer. We are using the Hub to signpost, offer health awareness sessions and outreach health initiatives into marginalised communities.</p> <p>The following Satellite Hubs will continue:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Think about living with Dementia Creative Art Community cafe programme for people with Dementia, carers/family.</li> <li>• Palliative Care Creative art programme at the Peace Hospice</li> <li>• Bereavement Programme Creative Art programme</li> <li>• Diabetes lifestyle project in partnership with Watford PCN. This project was held at Watford Central Health surgery targeting individuals from the South Asian community. We had 16 referrals with 14 that confirmed for the course.</li> </ul>
	70. Support single homeless people to access accommodation and support	We will continue to establish and embed our single homelessness pathway, focusing on the root causes of homelessness and working closely with our partners to support individuals on every part of their journey into independent living.	<b>Green</b>	↔	<p>The Single Homelessness Project (SHP) was initiated in 2021 to bring together all temporary accommodation providers into a multi-agency team and to provide a holistic view of Watford's approach to accommodating and supporting single homeless people and was formally completed in the last quarter of 2022/23. Since its inception, the SHP project has effectively reduced the number of people sleeping rough in Watford from 80+ to a handful. The formal pathway has been in place since April 2021 and through this over 300 single homeless clients have been provided with a safe, secure, welcoming physical environment with access to the most appropriate support that meets their individual needs, such as mental health, substance abuse and debt advice.</p>
<b>Bring together ways to help our residents who might be struggling financially</b>	71. Make sure residents are aware of what help we offer to support them manage their finances	We will promote our council tax discount scheme so residents know support might be available to help them pay their bills.	<b>Green</b>	↔	<p>We no longer require customers to complete a claim form for council tax reduction where they are in receipt of Universal Credit. We promote the scheme at all contacts with customers on the telephone or at the Customer Service Centre. We have a dedicated officer to provide help for customers complete an online form if required.</p> <p>Our new 'change in circumstance' online form went live at the end of Q4. This is for benefit customers that need to report a change, such as a house move. Our discount and exemption form went live in June 2023 and this will enable residents to apply online for a discount or exemption and in some circumstances they will receive a decision immediately, improving the customer experience, providing greater flexibility and improving service efficiency.</p>

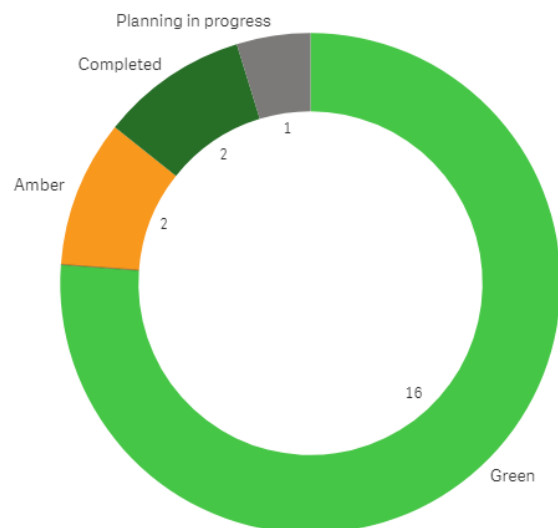
Commitment	Activity		BRAG' Rating	Trend	Headline
	72. Coordinate advice in the town for those seeking information on how to cope with the cost of living crisis	We will work with partners to ensure people can access the advice and information they need when they face financial difficulties, particularly those who are vulnerable or are dealing with debt.	Green	↔	A 'Cost of Living' page has been added to the council website to provide information to local people who may be facing financial difficulties. This is in addition to the 'Cost of Living Forum' which was convened with local voluntary and community organisations to work together on a response for Watford. Partners are collaborating to make sure support is coordinated. We are also engaging with Hertfordshire County Council to link into county support and ensure local residents are accessing all the help available. Some of the 'Welcoming Spaces' which were established for the winter months, have continued over the summer due to the success in terms of numbers visiting.
	73. Use innovative ways to support our local community financially	We will build upon the success of our COVID-19 Fund, Ukraine Community Funds and Watford Community Fund to investigate a new local lottery to support our local community so that they can continue their good work in our town.	Green	↔	The Watford Community Lottery inaugural draw took place on 24 June 2023 and by this date, 45 local good causes, including Watford Palace Theatre, Watford Social Centre for the Blind and Watford Women's Centre, had joined the scheme. Over 1k tickets were sold for the first draw which puts the scheme on track to achieve the projected annual revenue. The scheme will ensure that at least 60% of all tickets sold goes towards supporting our local community and good causes.
	74. Welcome the whole town and visitors to our Big Events	We will deliver our exciting, free programme of Big Events across the town, including our Big Screen, Big Beach and Fireworks, bringing our community together regularly in our town centre and parks.	Green	↔	In 2022/23 we successfully delivered several Big Events attracting and bringing together many of our residents. In addition, a special Big Coronation lunch at the Cassiobury Park Bandstand took place on 7 May 2023 as part of the town's Coronation celebrations. The Big Events for this year, such as Big Beach, Big Screen, Big Sports and Big Fireworks, have been planned.
	75. Provide an appealing and lively programme of holiday activities for young people	We will continue to offer our young people exciting things to do during the Easter and summer holidays so they can be engaged and involved in an enjoyable range of free activities.	Green	↔	We delivered the free Easter 2023 holiday programme and piloted a scheme offering sessions to families via a local voluntary organisation, for which there was a good uptake. A review of the data indicates the majority of people who benefitted from the scheme are Watford residents from across the community. The Cost of Living Forum with groups and organisations was convened to bring together the support available and to make sure local people are aware of where to go for help. The forum is also bringing together data and information to build understanding of the extent of the crisis within Watford and make sure Watford is coordinating with county, regional and national support and campaigns. Although the winter months are over, the 'Welcoming Places', which are supported by the Watford Community Fund, will continue as they have proven to be very successful and are meeting a range of community needs. The government has announced Household Support Fund 4 for 2023/24, which at district level will be used to support food charities and energy support.

Commitment	Activity		BRAG' Rating	Trend	Headline
	76. Improve private sector housing across the town, focusing on how it can contribute to both environmental and community benefits	We will support the sustainability of the town's privately owned homes making use of Energy Company Obligation funding to improve the energy efficiency and warmth of those who are vulnerable or on low incomes.	<b>Green</b>	↔	The Energy Company Obligation (ECO), which aims to tackle fuel poverty and help reduce carbon emissions, will be delivered through to the end of March 2026. Processes to progress the ECO directly with installers via our partners at National Energy Foundation have been established and our statement of intent issued in accordance with the revised government guidance. We are awaiting further ECO+ guidance to become enacted in the autumn 2023 after which we will adapt our own assistance to reflect the changes, however we are pre-empting this and beginning marketing to be ready to deliver.
77. Help our community better access the benefits of Watford's economic growth	We will explore ways to create a resilient and inclusive economy that benefits our community, building on foundations from the Hertfordshire Community Wealth Building project, linking local people with opportunities and supporting our voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector link to make a greater economic contribution.	<b>Green</b>	↔	Our plan around Community Wealth Building will focus on the economy related activities we are delivering which will also derive benefits from our communities, both business and resident communities. The proposed Watford Business Charter will be a key tool to enable this. The Charter will encourage businesses to do more in 5 areas: recruit local, buy local, go green, connect with community and be a great employer. A 'Resource Bank' will be developed alongside the Charter to support businesses to deliver upon this.	



## THEME: A council working for our community and serving our residents

### Overview



### Key achievements over this period

- Through our Customer Experience Strategy we have launched the Customer Care Service Standards, which sets out what our customers can expect from us and how we will deliver our services by adopting best practice in line with the council's values.
- We participated in the 'South West Herts Great Big Green Week', a national campaign which aims to draw attention to climate change. A number of fun and educational events were held across Watford and Three Rivers including a Palace Family screening of Lorax, Watford Green Gym and Watford Green Market.
- We successfully delivered the May 2023 Local Elections in compliance the Electoral Commission Guidance and some aspects of the Elections Act 2022, such as the Voter Photo ID, which is now a requirement.
- The Information & Insight Strategy (formally the Business Intelligence Strategy) and Delivery Plan were approved in June 2023. The Strategy sets out how we will achieve our vision of an organisation driven by intelligence to meet the demands of our customers and continue to provide high quality services.
- We showcased the implementation of our agile working approach at the Local Government Association Conference. This included a video message from our staff and members on the benefits of agile working and how this has improved their work life balance.

Commitment	Activity		BRAG' Rating	Trend	Headline
<p><b>Make sure we deliver an outstanding customer experience and the high quality services our community expects</b></p>	<p>78. Provide an excellent customer experience for everyone who engages with the council</p>	<p>We will prepare and deliver a new Customer Experience Strategy to transform how we engage with our customers over the next four years, delivering a real step change across all our services, embracing innovation and embedding a first class experience our customers will value.</p>	<p><b>Green</b></p>	<p>↔</p>	<p>We are progressing the delivery of the Customer Experience Strategy, working collaboratively with colleagues across the council and capitalising on synergy with other projects to deliver the Strategy vision. In Q1, we finalised and commenced the launch of the Customer Care Service Standards, which sets out what our customers can expect from us and how we will deliver our services by adopting best practice in line with the council's values.</p> <p>We are continuing to develop the business case for the introduction of proactive customer alerts which is expected to deliver significant benefits for both the council and our residents by adopting current technology to streamline and deliver our services. In addition we are assessing the viability of new delivery options such as voice automated telephony, customer alerts, SMS and WhatsApp.</p> <p>The recent approval of the Information and Insight Strategy will enable us to progress our plans for using data to drive improvements to our services.</p> <p>Further information on how the council is progressing delivery of its Customer Experience Strategy is included within Appendix C2.</p>
	<p>79. Champion a greener and more sustainable council that strives to reduce our carbon footprint</p>	<p>We will embed our ambition to be net carbon neutral by 2030 by continuing to deliver our organisational Sustainability Action Plan (now part of our newly approved Environmental Strategy) so that it intrinsic to everything and ensures we reduce our carbon footprint in line with our green goals.</p>	<p><b>Green</b></p>	<p>↔</p>	<p>We have formalised the delivery of the new Environment Strategy and set out how we will achieve our ambition to be net carbon neutral by 2030 through the Sustainability Programme. Sustainability is at the heart of everything we do, and is woven through other council projects, programmes, schemes and initiatives such as the Rediscovering River Colne, Town Hall Quarter and Transforming Travel in Watford Programmes.</p> <p>Further information on how the council is progressing delivery of its Environment Strategy is included within Appendix C3.</p>
	<p>80. Focus the right resources in the right places to secure future success</p>	<p>We will review how we employ our resources (including staff and finances) to make sure they are focussed on the areas which are most important to the council and support the delivery of this Plan.</p>	<p><b>Green</b></p>	<p>↔</p>	<p>Following the successful introduction of our Service Delivery Lead Officers to strength the council's ability to deliver against its priorities, the annual Personal Development Review process is currently in progress, giving staff the opportunity to review their performance, celebrate their successes and identify personal and professional development opportunities. Through this process we will ensure that staff objectives are aligned and prioritised to the delivery of the Council Plan.</p>

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	81. Explore opportunities to share services with other councils where it delivers best value and better customer outcomes	We will work with other authorities to develop and implement business cases that explore opportunities to share more services where this will deliver improvements for our customers.	Green	↔	Phase 2 of the Building Control and Planning Enforcement Shared Services with St Albans City District Council is being progressed. This phase of the project will see the review and implementation of processes and procedures, using best practice. We will ensure that staff are trained and have access to the necessary systems and data to enable them to deliver an efficient and seamless service, whilst achieving value for money across both authorities.
	82. Make sure the council continues to hold successful and well run elections	We will support and prepare for the implementation of the Elections Act 2022 so that our elections continue to be effectively managed and voters are well informed on elections and how to exercise their right to vote.	Green	↔	The May 2023 Local Elections were successfully delivered in compliance with the Electoral Commission Guidance and certain aspects of the Elections Act 2022. This included the introduction of Voter Photo ID and an increased focus on supporting voters with disabilities. Our Communications and Engagement colleagues produced and implemented a robust comms strategy to promote the requirement for Voter Photo IDs. This ensured that the majority of our voters had acceptable IDs, enabling them to vote. We will continue to implement the remainder of the Elections Act from 2023 through to 2025.
Pioneer new ways of working that challenge us to innovate, transform and consistently improve	83. Adopt the right digital technology that matches and supports our ambition for excellent service delivery for our residents	We will develop and deliver a new four-year ICT strategy to drive forward how we use ICT and digital technology to deliver our ambitions, seeking opportunities to innovate to meet the needs of the council and our community.	Green	↔	The IT Strategy continues to be developed. In the meantime, the ICT team continue to deliver on a number of projects such as Microsoft 365 and the replacement of Councillor IT devices at both Watford and Three Rivers councils.
	84. Deliver a step change in how we use our data and information so it strengthens our drive for constant improvement	We will improve how we use our data and information to challenge our decisions, enhance performance and support excellent customer experience, using our information to monitor service delivery and to drive action if something needs improving.	Green	↔	The Council's Information and Insight Strategy 2023-26 (formally known as the Business Intelligence Strategy) was approved by Cabinet in June 2023. The Strategy sets out how we will achieve our vision of an organisation driven by intelligence to meet the demands of our customers and continue to provide high quality services. This has underpinned the development of a corporate Continuous Improvement Framework which will be reviewed by Cabinet in October 2023. We are exploring the use of external data sources, such as Mosaic and Acorn, to see how these data can be used to deliver and support targeted services and schemes such as the Digital Isolation scheme. We have progressed the development of our external performance dashboard on the council's BI platform, Qlik, which has been used to produce our Q1 progress and performance report.
	85. Strengthen our approach to contract management to ensure we are making the most of our	We will implement a robust contract management framework to ensure we deliver expected outcomes and excellent value for money from our contracts,	Complete	↔	The review of our existing contract management approaches has been completed and the final version of the Contract Management Handbook has been published. Relevant officers have been given the necessary training to ensure that the council continues to achieve the very best value from our

Commitment	Activity		BRAG' Rating	Trend	Headline
	contracts and that they are delivering for us and the town	providing the best service for our customers.			contracts. Training guides are also available on the intranet to enable officers to refresh their training as and when required.
	86. Embed social value through our procurement process	We will update our Procurement Strategy to strengthen our approach to evidencing economic, social and environmental outcomes when procuring, awarding and delivering contracts.	Complete	↔	The council's updated Procurement Strategy was approved by Cabinet in January 2023. The Strategy will make sure we continue to get best value from the market during this period of economic instability and includes a comprehensive proposal on social value and measurement which supports the delivery of our Sustainability Action Plan.
Focus and challenge how we manage our budget so it is concentrated on delivering our commitments and securing greater investment for Watford	87. Ensure our investment portfolio is ambitious and effectively managed to deliver maximum value to the council	We will ensure that we are actively managing our investment portfolio, including exploring new opportunities to protect our income, manage risk and maximise value over the longer term, so that we can continue to provide high quality services to our residents and businesses.	Amber	↓	We continue to agree long leasehold extensions on Watford Business Park (WBP) where appropriate which generate capital receipts and secure rental income for the medium to long term. We are continuing to utilise the council's existing land bank to generate further income through direct development or through joint venture arrangements. Examples include the Gateway site at WBP and the Riverwell Multi-Storey Car Park. Out of Borough Assets performing well. For example Coleshill Industrial Estate rents agreed have grown from £6.50 psf to in excess of £7.50 psf in the last 2 years. Croxley Park is actively managed to ensure that open market rent is maintained with minimal voids. The Croxley Park Business Plan for 2023/24 was adopted in March 2023. The GT Model tracks the financial performance of the Park compared to assumptions made at the time of the lease being taken in 2019. It was assumed in 2019 that the whole of Building 1 would have been let and income producing by now, rather than just a single floor, so the revenue being generated at present is not as was originally forecasted, due to the continuing availability of 60,000 ft in Building 1, although occupier interest in the building is now increasing. The vacant occupancy costs to the council and annual headlease rental uplifts are at capped level.
	88. Assess the feasibility of a Growth Fund and its benefits for Watford	We will explore where our financial strength can support start-up and growth opportunities delivering a positive investment return for the council and renewed prosperity for the town.	Planning in progress	↔	The Council has set aside £500k towards a Growth Fund. As part of our bid to central government's Levelling Up Fund (LUF), a further £500k was requested to complement the Innovation Hub initiative, which would have allowed a £1m fund to be set up to support businesses in the Hub, through a grants and loan scheme. However, since the council was unsuccessful in securing the LUF funding, a decision has been made to not progress the initiative due to the economic climate.
	89. Manage and direct the council finances effectively	We will ensure that our budgets align with our priorities and that budget management is robust, forward-looking and supports the best possible service outcomes from	Green	↔	The 2023/24 budget included a Council Tax increase of 2.99%, well below inflation. The Council proactively manages and monitors budgets during the year to ensure value for money and effective prioritisation of resources. The 2024/25 budget setting process has now begun and will ensure that council

Commitment	Activity		BRAG' Rating	Trend	Headline
		available resources, enabling us to keep council tax increases below inflation.			resources continue to align to council priorities to deliver the best possible service outcomes. 5.
	90. Identify new commercial opportunities that align with our ambition	We will look for new and innovative commercial opportunities that will align to our values, whilst ensuring a financial return that can be used to support the council's activities for the benefit of the borough.	Green	↔	The Collaboration and Commercial Strategy, which identifies future opportunities, has been drafted and is scheduled to go to Cabinet in autumn for approval. Due to the current financial climate the council is not seeking to undertake any major investments at the current time and will look to pursue opportunities to collaborate with partners, ensure our existing investments hold up and explore opportunities as they arise.
	91. Manage our ambitious capital programme so that it supports our aspirations	We will develop a commercial risk and mitigation strategy for our capital programme to protect the council against turbulence in global markets, whilst still delivering our ambitious programme of improvements.	Amber	↔	The rapid and significant increase in inflation continues to pose significant risks to the affordability of the Capital Investment Programme. The greatest exposure is to projects that are at the pre-tender stage where the council has not yet entered into contract. Where possible, mitigations are in place such as the early purchase of materials to protect against future price rises. The affordability of all schemes within the Capital Programme is kept under review and project appraisals take into account the cost of funding projects and include the associated borrowing costs where relevant.
	92. Invest our Croxley Park funds in ethical investments	We will make sure the funds we receive from Croxley Park are invested in a sustainable way to deliver financial goals and better future for us all.	Green	↔	Funds from the Croxley Park investment are placed with the Royal London Sustainable Diversified Trust Fund and Royal London Sustainable Managed Growth Trust Fund with the aim to provide capital growth that will maintain the value of the investment in line with inflation. The performance of these funds is monitored by the Property Investment Board and reported through the Council's budget monitoring report, with income utilised to deliver our corporate priorities as outlined within the Council Plan.
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	93. Build on our innovative approach to agile working, realising the benefits for our staff and our community	We will ensure our staff are able to provide timely high quality and efficient services to customers by opening up opportunities for staff to work in an agile way in a modern, collaborative and inspiring workplace, helping the council to become an employer of choice.	Green	↔	The council's new collaborative and focused working space opened in July 2022, providing a modern and fit for purpose space for teams to deliver the very best services to residents, businesses and the community. To ensure the working space remains fit for purpose, we are regularly conducting staff surveys to collate feedback on both the space and technology and implementing changes as required. We recently showcased the implementation of our agile working approach at the Local Government Association Conference. This included a video message from our staff and members on the benefits of agile working and how this has improved their work life balance.

Commitment	Activity		BRAG' Rating	Trend	Headline
	94. Secure robust succession planning, making sure we value and manage our talent to recruit and retain the best for Watford	We will open up opportunities for our staff to grow and develop, building their skills and knowledge to achieve. Where we do recruit, we will appoint the best, ensuring we recruit people with the right experience and behaviours to be part of 'Team Watford'.	Green	↔	The Values and Behaviours, which set out the expected behaviours for 'Team Watford', ensuring that we provide the best service to our residents, businesses and community, were launched in December 2022. We have now commenced the full roll out and implementation of the values and behaviours, which will also include incorporating these into each stage of the employee lifecycle so that we can support the performance of our staff. As well as the Values and Behaviours, our new People Strategy, currently in development, will also determine how we support, develop and retain our staff. The Behavioural framework will be used as part of our recruitment process.
	95. Embed our values and behaviours so they inspire our staff to achieve even more and underpin how we work	We will collaboratively develop meaningful corporate values and behaviours with our staff and use these as the foundation to implement a behaviours framework. This will help develop the skills of our people at all levels, and from all backgrounds, to recognise individual contributions, expertise and knowledge and to improve the resident and customer focused services we deliver.	Green	↔	The implementation of the council's values and behaviours framework is well underway. In Q1 significant work was undertaken to shape the values and behaviours and the focus has now moved to delivery. We have initiated an internal, comprehensive communications and engagement campaign, an important aspect of the project to ensure successful implementation. This included sharing a video message from the Chief Executive on the importance of the values and behaviours. Our Agile Pathfinders and Tier 4 Service Delivery Leads will play a key role in championing the values and behaviours across the council. A training programme will be rolled out shortly to support them.
	96. Refresh our Organisational Development approach so that it effectively underpins and supports our Council Plan	We will ensure we develop, motivate and inspire our staff so they are supported and empowered to do their best for our residents and businesses by refreshing our Organisational Development approach.	Green	↔	The council's People Strategy and Delivery Plan, which will stretch to 2027, is currently going through the formal approval process. Once approved, we will prioritise projects for delivery from August 2023. The roll out and implementation of our refreshed Values and Behaviours Framework is now well underway. Through this process the Values and Behaviours Framework will be worked into the employment lifecycle from recruitment and onboarding to development and progression and through to the Performance Development Review process.
	97. Seek and implement opportunities for people to have fulfilling local government careers	We will create apprenticeship opportunities for local people at the beginning of their working life, providing them with experience, skills and knowledge from across the council to help kick start their careers.	Green	↔	The council's Corporate Apprenticeship Scheme aims to support local people, particularly our younger residents, at the beginning of their working lives. Currently one apprentice is on the Scheme working with services across the council in order to gain the skills, knowledge and experience they need to help them start and progress in their career, whilst providing valuable public services to our customers. We are planning to recruit a further four apprentices although this will be reliant on available funding.

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	<p>98. Protect the physical and mental health and wellbeing of our staff</p>	<p>We will ensure that we protect the physical and mental health and wellbeing of our staff by developing their resilience and providing opportunities for genuine two-way engagement</p>	<p><b>Green</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">↔</p> <p>A team event was held in July 2023 for our valued Health and Wellbeing (H&amp;WB) champions, who play a key role in supporting our staff through the council's health and wellbeing initiatives. At this event the H&amp;WB champions provided input into the health and wellbeing survey we are planning to conduct in autumn 2023. The responses from the survey will be summarised into a report which will then guide our next steps.</p> <p>We also held a 'Time to Talk' event in May giving our staff the opportunity to get together.</p> <p>We are planning to deliver a number of 'Lunch and Learn' sessions by June 2024.</p>