

Report to: Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting: 17 July 2024
Report author: Associate Director of Customer and Corporate Services
Report sponsor: Chief Executive
Portfolio Holder: Elected Mayor Peter Taylor
Report title: Delivery Plan 2024-26

1.0 Executive summary

- 1.1 Watford Borough Council is an ambitious and forward-looking local authority. As recognised by our Corporate Peer Challenge in November, over the last two years our Council Plan and associated Delivery Plan have set a clear strategic direction for the organisation, linking the One Watford co-designed 2040 vision, 'Watford Actually' Place Brand and the council's commitments to our residents, community, businesses, visitors and workforce.
- 1.2 Whilst our Council Plan spans the entirety of the current mayoral term, from 2022 to 2026, our previous Delivery Plan covered the first two-year period, breaking down our commitments into clear and deliverable actions, with the latest Delivery Plan, approved by Cabinet on 3 June 2024, spanning the period 2024 to 2026, to the end of the Council Plan. This approach has provided the organisation with a clear focus demonstrated by the strong delivery reported regularly to Overview and Scrutiny Committee in our quarterly Performance and Progress reports. It also provided us with an opportunity to produce a new Delivery Plan at the midway point of the Council Plan, building in new actions to ensure that our focus continues to reflect the priorities of the town.
- 1.3 Underpinned by the Council Plan, our budget and new People Strategy, the successful delivery of the Delivery Plan 2024-26 will be critical to the council's success and to making sure we harness our resources to focus on what is important to the town and our residents. As such, it is proposed that the regular monitoring of the Delivery Plan, which has been embedded over the last two years with quarterly reports to Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committee, is continued.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Overview and Scrutiny are recommended to:

- Note the Delivery Plan 2024-26 and provide comment
- Note that progress against the Delivery Plan 2024-26 will be reported on a quarterly basis to Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committee

3.0 Report pathway

- 3.1 Next review body: *Not applicable*
- 3.2 Indicative date: *Not applicable*
- 3.3 Final review body: *Not applicable*
- 3.4 Indicative date: *Not applicable*

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Reviewed and signed off by: Donna Nolan, Chief Executive

4.0 Council Plan 2022-26

4.1 Watford's Council Plan 2022-26 was developed following the mayoral election in 2022 and the four-year period to 2026 is intended to align with the mayoral term. Four strategic themes and commitments, aligned to the Mayoral manifesto, provide the overarching strategic direction for the council and are a key component of the council's golden thread, establishing the strategic basis for all of our strategies and policies, including the budget and our new People Strategy 2024-28.

4.2 The Plan is underpinned by a range of information, intelligence and data including the Elected Mayor's manifesto pledges and feedback following engagement with internal and external stakeholders. It demonstrates how the council is responding to issues of national importance, such as climate change and the cost-of-living crisis as well as those that reflect what matters to Watford, protecting and promoting what makes Watford special and what we know our residents value.

4.3 The Council Plan themes for 2022-26 remain:

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

5.0 Delivering the Council Plan: Delivery Plan 2024-26

Success for Watford means having the big, bold ideas that set us apart as, but also ensuring we have the skills, the robust plans and the resources in place to turn our ambitions into a reality, and deliver for each and every one of our residents

5.1 Our Delivery Plan 2022-24 included specific activities aligned to Council Plan commitments for the first two years of the Plan. The Delivery Plan 2022-24 has been monitored throughout the last two years to make sure the council maintains a robust focus on achieving what it set out to do, despite a challenging financial climate.

5.2 Our regular Performance and Progress reporting has demonstrated the significant level of progress that has been made against the Delivery Plan over the last two years. As such, a new Delivery Plan has been developed covering the final two years of the Council Plan and

resetting activities to ensure that it reflects our priorities to manage emerging opportunities and known challenges to continue building a successful and resilient future for Watford.

- 5.3 The Delivery Plan 2024-26, attached at Appendix 1, has been developed to provide the council with an opportunity to further demonstrate its role as a leader of place, and show its strategic and operational excellence, building on the strong feedback from the recent Corporate Peer Challenge. The new Plan will guide us over the next two years through this renewed strategic focus.
- 5.4 Under each theme and commitment, we set out our key priority areas of actions, between now and 2026. Every activity will be assigned to a lead officer from the council's Corporate Management Team and at Service Delivery Lead level, and aligned to a Portfolio Holder to enable regular updates on progress. In light of the current financial climate, a review of internal resourcing has been undertaken to ensure that the activities can be delivered within the existing resource available at the current time. In addition, it is proposed that the Delivery Plan will continue to be monitored and a report on progress presented to Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committee quarterly, whilst, annually, we will prepare a report for residents, businesses and partners.
- 5.5 The Delivery Plan 2024-26 maintains a steadfast focus on helping our community, businesses and staff, whilst recognising that a challenging financial climate means carefully managing our resources and prioritising our efforts so that they are directed to those areas most important to our community, businesses, members and staff. As such, this Delivery Plan will form the basis of our Service Planning to ensure that every service across the council is clear on how they can contribute to delivery. Similarly, our values-based Performance and Development Review for staff has commenced on the back of the Delivery Plan approval, ensuring that the strong 'golden thread' through the organisation, recognised by the Peer Challenge team in November 2023, is maintained.
- 5.6 This process effectively commenced through the co-production of the Delivery Plan which, in line with the council's values and ensuring that our Corporate Peer Challenge recommendations were woven into our strategic planning, was developed closely with our members and broader management teams. The draft plan was shared with staff from our Staff Ambassadors Group with feedback and comments incorporated into the final plan. This approach will serve to strengthen our strategic planning ensuring that the mayoral manifesto, peer challenge recommendations, 2040 vision and place brand clearly and strongly align with our service planning and Performance Development Review processes.

6.0 Implications

6.1 Financial

- 6.1.1 The Chief Finance Officer comments that the council's budget underpins the whole of the Council Plan and Delivery Plan with the importance recognised under the theme 'A council working for our community and serving our residents' with the related commitment: 'Focus and challenge how we manage our budget so it is concentrated on delivering our commitments and securing greater investment for Watford'.

6.1.2 By setting out our commitments and associated activity areas, we have linked our budgets to the delivery of the council’s priorities.

6.1.3 For 2024/25 the targets set out in the Council Plan are within budget and reflected in the later years of the MTFS. Moving forward the future Council Plan and Delivery Plan will form the focus of our budget strategy for the years covered by the Plan.

6.2 **Legal** (Monitoring Officer)

6.2.1 The Monitoring Officer comments that the Council Plan remains the primary policy framework document approved by Council on 19 July 2022, in line with the council’s constitution.

6.3 **Risks**

| Nature of risk | Consequence | Suggested Control Measures | Response (treat, tolerate, terminate or transfer) | Risk Rating (combination of severity and likelihood) |
|--|--|--|---|--|
| Failure to link Delivery Plan activities to key themes and commitments in the Council Plan | Failure to respond to what is important to the town and residents and to focus on less important areas of work. A lack of clarity on priorities resulting in resources not being allocated to the right areas that deliver our ambitions and what is important, failing to drive the council forward | Co-production of the plan with members, staff and partners, based on the Council Plan as the primary strategic document for the council. | Treat | 4 (severity) x 1 (likelihood) = 4 |
| Failure to link the Council Plan and Delivery Plan to the Council’s Medium Term Financial Strategy and financial | Risk of insufficient financial resourcing for areas of work identified. | Early engagement and discussions so the links are established and agreed. | Treat | 4 (severity) x 1 (likelihood) = 4 |

| Nature of risk | Consequence | Suggested Control Measures | Response (treat, tolerate, terminate or transfer) | Risk Rating (combination of severity and likelihood) |
|---|---|--|---|--|
| planning effectively. | | | | |
| Failure to identify the staff resources needed to deliver the plan. | Risk of insufficient staff resource or lack of skills / experience in key areas. | Review of resourcing undertaken against each Delivery Plan activity, ensuring the council's People Strategy clearly links and supports delivery. | Treat | 4 (severity) x 2 (likelihood) = 8 |
| Need to identify further savings impacts our ability to deliver the Delivery Plan | Impact on available resource and therefore ability to deliver all activities listed within the Delivery Plan within the anticipated timescales | Any in-year changes will consider the impact on resourcing and the subsequent impact on the Delivery Plan actions | Tolerate | 4 (severity) x 2 (likelihood) = 8 |
| Failure to identify dependencies between areas of work effectively | Risk to delivery / slippage | Early understanding across the organisation of where work requires support from a number of teams to allow this to be built into service business plans. | Treat | 3 (severity) x 2 (likelihood) = 6 |
| Slippage on delivery | Failure to deliver our commitments resulting in poorer outcomes for our town and residents. Potential impact on the reputation of the Council. | Regular monitoring and reporting to Cabinet. Robust project and programme management. | Treat | 4 (severity) x 2 (likelihood) = 8 |

| Nature of risk | Consequence | Suggested Control Measures | Response (treat, tolerate, terminate or transfer) | Risk Rating (combination of severity and likelihood) |
|----------------------|--|--|---|--|
| Change of government | A change of government is likely to mean a change of strategic direction which could impact resource available for delivering the plan | Clear resource mapping against each activity so that the impact on resourcing as a result of the need to respond to external challenges can be managed | Treat | 2 (severity) x 4 (likelihood) = 8 |

6.4 Equalities

6.4.1 The Council Plan is informed by the Watford context, including an understanding of the demographic make-up of the borough's community and feedback from local people on the issues that are important to them. An overall equality impact analysis was undertaken on the Council Plan and impact analyses will be undertaken on specific projects/programmes where relevant.

The equality impact analysis takes into account that under s149 (1) of the Equality Act the Council must have due regard, in the exercise of its functions, to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share relevant protected characteristics and persons who do not share them
- foster good relations between persons who share relevant protected characteristics and persons who do not share them.

The EIA has been reviewed alongside the refreshed Delivery Plan.

6.5 Data Protection

6.5.1 Having had regard to the Council's obligations under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2018, it is considered that officers are not required to undertake a Data Processing Impact Assessment (DPIA) for this report.

6.6 Sustainability

6.6.1 The council's commitment to sustainability, achieving net carbon zero by 2030, improving biodiversity and providing more options for people in the town to choose greener options is recognised in the theme 'A greener, brighter future', with four commitments to support the achievement of this theme. These range from pushing forward with delivering greener ways

to travel in Watford to promoting Watford's transition to a low-carbon economy and a keen focus on biodiversity.

6.7 People

6.7.1 The Council Plan sets the council's strategic direction and is, therefore, a key document for our colleagues, enabling them to understand our commitments and priorities and allowing them to contribute fully to our success and achievements. As the overarching plan for the council, it provides the framework for all our strategies and policies and links, through the Delivery Plan, to service plans and individual objectives and outcomes.

6.7.2 The council recognises the importance of the workforce in the delivery of the Council Plan and has identified a range of activities to support the recruitment and retention of staff as well as their development and wellbeing. In particular, the commitment to 'Lead by example, securing our reputation as a forward thinking, caring and inspiring organisation where our teams can thrive and achieve their best for our residents and businesses' sets out how we will continue to demonstrate how we value our staff and invest in their future.

6.7.3 Our People Strategy 2024-28 has been developed alongside the Delivery Plan and is consequently intrinsically linked to it alongside the challenge financial and operating environment. This approach ensures that the council has the right people, with the right skills at the right time to deliver our strategic ambition.

6.8 Community Safety

6.8.1 Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 requires the Council to give due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of its functions on crime and disorder in its area and to do all it reasonably can to prevent these. Our theme: 'A diverse, happy and healthy town', is underpinned by our commitment 'Promote our welcoming and respectful town'. A range of activities support the delivery of the commitment, including the council's pledge to continue our White Ribbon work, tackle violence against women and girls and reduce the impact of enviro crime.

7.0 Next steps should recommendations be approved

7.1 Following approval of the Delivery Plan 2024-26, the council has commenced its Service Planning process, ensuring that Service Plans are informed by the Delivery Plan and developed to deliver the specific activities set out within it. This process is anticipated to be completed by the end of July allowing for reporting on the first quarter of the new Delivery Plan to be presented to Overview and Scrutiny in September. Our staff Performance Development Reviews have also commenced, aligned to the Service Planning process and supporting our staff to deliver against the Delivery Plan and understand the crucial role they play in driving our plan forward.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Delivery Plan 2024-26

Background papers

The following background papers were used in the preparation of this report. If you wish to inspect or take copies of the background papers, please contact the officer named on the front page of the report.

- Council Plan 2022-26