



Well-planned town



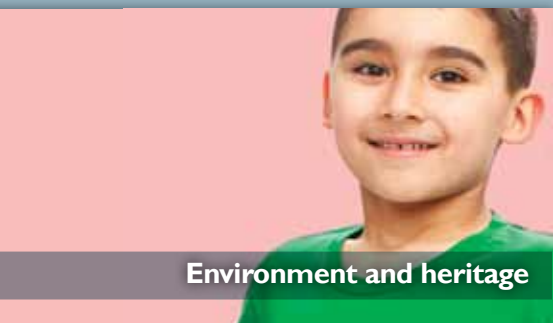
Well-informed community



Healthy town



Prosperous and educated town



Environment and heritage



Safer town



Watford Sustainable Community Strategy 2026

Working together for a better Watford



www.onewatford.co.uk

Chair's Introduction

(Dorothy Thornhill (Chair) and Bob Jones (Vice Chair) as co-signatory)

We are very pleased to introduce Watford's Sustainable Community Strategy 2026, which builds on the vision and commitment One Watford set out in the borough's second Community Plan 2006-2026.

When we embarked on the review of the plan last summer we knew that we would find that some things had changed over the last couple of years. Some of the changes were because, as a partnership, we had started to tackle those areas we had identified as our priorities. Other changes were because life has moved on very quickly and we are facing issues and challenges that we could not have anticipated just two years ago.

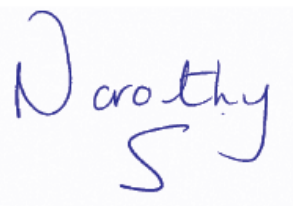
But what clearly hasn't changed is One Watford's vision for the borough - 'a town to be proud of, where people will always choose to live, work and visit' - or our commitment as a partnership to work together to make a real difference to the town and the lives of local people.

The partners in One Watford have come together because we are passionate about the borough and are determined to do our best for Watford and its residents. This might be about improving the social, economic and environmental well-being of the borough but we also recognise it is about changing people's perceptions of Watford and improving its image, celebrating local success and raising people's aspirations.

One Watford is delighted that, once again, many Watford residents took the time to let us know what they thought about our plans for the borough and what was important to them as they looked forward. It was good to meet many of you at the events that we held as part of the review and the views that were submitted show that you all also care passionately about the future of the town. We hope you will keep an eye out for other One Watford events and our feedback on what the partnership has been doing to make sure we deliver what we have set out to do.

The intention of this strategy is not to repeat what each individual organisation in One Watford is doing – we all have our 'day jobs' and its aim is to 'add value' wherever possible. This means that some areas for action do not feature in the strategy, because they are being tackled already. This does not make them any less important, but means that One Watford can focus its energy on the areas where collectively we can make the most impact.

We know there's a lot to do and some difficult issues to tackle but we are confident that, by working together, we can achieve some great things for Watford.



Dorothy Thornhill
Mayor of Watford



Bob Jones
Chief Executive
Watford Council for Voluntary services

Why have we got a Sustainable Community Strategy?

Local authorities have a duty to prepare a Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) for their area. This SCS should set out a long-term vision for the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the local area. Most local authorities recognise that it is best to do this in partnership.

Put simply, this means that all the important organisations in Watford have been working together on a plan to improve the borough and the quality of life of its residents.

Watford's second Community Plan was published in 2006. Since then, we have been working together on important issues for the town. However, we recognise that it is vital to make sure that the issues are still relevant. This is why we have taken stock and developed a strong evidence base that tells us what life is like in Watford right now. We've tested it out with the public to see if they agree.

Now, we can move forward, continuing our work together, feeling confident that we understand the current issues that are important to people.

This update has been renamed a 'Sustainable Community Strategy'

to recognise that sustainability should be at the heart of developing this strategy – our goal is that our residents enjoy a better quality of life today without compromising the quality of life of future generations.

Who has developed this Strategy?

This strategy has been developed by those organisations that work in Watford and have an impact on everyone's day to day lives. Together, we are called One Watford.

One Watford is not a statutory body – each of us works together because we are committed to making Watford a better place. We work on issues that are not the responsibility of one organisation alone – we do not duplicate what individual organisations do as part of their day job.

- We 'add value' where working together will achieve more than working alone.
- We plug gaps where there is an issue that needs tackling that is not the responsibility of any one organisation.
- We use our collective influence to affect wider policies that have an impact on Watford.

One Watford is chaired by the Elected Mayor, Dorothy Thornhill, and its Vice Chair is Bob Jones, Chief Executive of Watford Council for Voluntary Services.

The organisations that make up One Watford are:

- Watford Borough Council
- Hertfordshire County Council
- Hertfordshire Police Authority
- John Lewis Watford
- Safer Watford
- Watford & West Herts Chamber of Commerce
- Watford Community Housing Trust
- Watford Council for Voluntary Services
- Watford District Children's Trust Partnership
- Watford Football Club
- Watford Observer
- Watford Enterprise Agency (Wenta)
- West Hertfordshire Primary Care Trust
- West Herts College

The SCS, therefore, is the main partnership document for Watford. It shows how One Watford partners are working together to improve Watford and contribute to the sustainable development of the borough – that means meeting today's needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

¹ ONS Mid-year 2008 population estimates

² Based on ONS Mid-year 2002 population estimates, latest available

³ Watford Borough Council

⁴ ONS Mid-year 2007 population estimates

⁵ 2006-based Subnational Population Projections – ONS (2008)

⁶ ONS Mid-year 2006 population estimates / experimental data set

⁷ All deprivation statistics from Index of Multiple Deprivation 2007

Our vision

We have a shared vision – that Watford will be ‘a town to be proud of, where people will always choose to live, work and visit’.

We are proud of Watford, and want local people to feel the same.

There are many great things that Watford has to offer, and we want to make sure that people know about them.

We also recognise that some things could be improved.

Our work began when the Community Plan 2006/2026 was published in February 2006.

But we want to make sure that we are concentrating on the right things.

To do this, we developed an evidence base full of facts and figures about Watford.

A portrait of Watford

Official statistics show Watford’s population is around 81,000¹. The borough covers 21 sq km and is the most densely populated district in the country, with over 3,700 people per sq km². There are around 35,400 households in the borough³.

Watford has a higher than average working age population and lower than average numbers of people of retirement age and over⁴. However, population projections to 2026 predict that the total population will rise by almost 10% and that the population aged 65 years and over will increase by almost a quarter⁵. This will have a significant impact on the demographics of the borough.

Watford is a diverse borough, with people from many different ethnic backgrounds. Around three-quarters of the population classify themselves as White British, with people of Other White origin, Pakistani origin and Indian origin making up the three other largest groups⁶.

Watford is a relatively prosperous area, ranked 203rd out of 354 local authority areas in the Indices of

Multiple Deprivation (IMD) (where 1 is the most deprived)⁷. However, this hides ‘pockets’ of deprivation. Small areas (containing around 1500 people) called Super Output Areas (SOAs) can pinpoint areas of deprivation which sit alongside relatively wealthy areas. Three SOAs in Watford feature in the most deprived 10% in the Eastern region. These are in Central, Meriden and Holywell wards. This and other IMD data will help us to target our work to try to reduce inequalities amongst our population. More information from our evidence base can be found under each objective as you go through this Sustainable Community Survey.

What you told us

Once we established our evidence base, we asked Watford residents if they agreed that this matched their experience of living and working in Watford. We did this in a variety of ways:

- Commissioned ‘vox pops’ with people in Watford, which were featured in the DVD ‘A day in the life of Watford’.
- Watford Council for Voluntary

Services Networking lunch.

- One Watford consultation evening with residents.
- Focus group with the Watford Disability Forum.
- Focus group with the Mencap Advocacy Group.
- Discussion at the Watford Chief Officers’ information network.
- An article in the Watford Borough Council magazine About Watford inviting general comments.
- Consulted with the One Watford Equality Panel.
- Ran an online consultation open to all.
- Ran a moderated online forum for young people.

From this wide-ranging consultation, we found that we were broadly focusing on the right issues, but added one new priority and changed a small number of others to reflect what you told us.

We can also make use of the results from the Place Survey, a new survey that the government requires to be carried out by local authorities, which was introduced in 2008/09. The results will measure people’s views on a variety of aspects of their lives. This will help us to establish a baseline from which we can improve.

A well-planned town with homes to suit all needs

WE BELIEVE WATFORD is a great place to live. We know it is popular – but that many who would like to live here are unable to buy homes because they can't afford the house prices.

The most recent Housing Strategy for Watford (2008/11)⁸, looks at the significant housing issues facing within the borough over the next few years. A growing population means demand is likely to increase and much of this demand will be for what is known as 'affordable housing'. This means housing for people who cannot afford to rent or buy houses generally available on the open market. To balance this growth in demand we have been set a challenging target by government to deliver an additional 5,200 homes in Watford by 2021. Addressing the borough's housing needs will prove particularly difficult in the current economic climate and we will need to make the most of the opportunities that become available to ensure people can access the housing they need.

As well as having enough housing that people can afford to live in, the

town needs to be well-planned. It needs to have the right facilities and amenities to meet the requirements of residents, and it should be easy to get around. The key document for ensuring this is Watford's Local Development Framework (LDF)⁹, which is the development plan for the borough. The LDF sets out policies that show how Watford will meet its economic, environmental and social aims for the future, where this affects the development and use of land. This is why it is so closely linked to the SCS – one way of looking at the LDF, and the documents that it includes, is that it will deliver the 'physical' objectives of this SCS.

Our research told us that Watford is the 5th best connected district in the country, with direct mainline connections to London, Gatwick Airport, the Midlands and the north, as well as underground

and overground connections to London Euston and Metroland and convenient road connections via the M1, M25 and A41. However, the borough suffers from high levels of congestion and Watford was ranked the 14th most congested local authority area nationally¹⁰.

This objective is new to our Sustainable Community Strategy and acknowledges the importance that we place on people having affordable and suitable homes to live in.

What we aim to achieve:

To achieve this objective, we have identified the following priorities and key actions:

- Meet housing needs, especially around the affordability and type of housing available.
- Reduce congestion.
- Support the development of the Watford Health Campus and other key sites in the town.

⁸ Watford Borough Council Housing Strategy 2008-11

⁹ For more information on the LDF, visit www.watford.gov.uk/planning

¹⁰ The State of the Borough: An Economic, Social and Environmental Audit of Watford – Local Futures (December 2006)



A well-informed community where everyone can contribute

AS PARTNERS WORKING in Watford, we value the contribution that our community makes to life in the borough and appreciate it is important for people to be able to influence decisions that are made about what goes on in the town.

What we aim to achieve:

Our priorities under this objective are:

- Support the voluntary sector.
- Improve community cohesion and celebrate Watford's diverse culture.
- Increase pride in the town.
- Support the DCTP to deliver the priorities for children and young people in Watford.

We welcomed the response to our consultation on these priorities, and made changes to the draft priorities to reflect this. We want to ensure that people have an ongoing opportunity to be involved in our work, while at the same time making sure One Watford operates in an efficient way.

To help achieve this, we will be establishing a Watford Community Assembly, which will be open to any active network in Watford that carries out community development work. It is proposed that this Assembly will meet twice a year, and local groups will be able to send a representative to help build community cohesion, understanding and ownership of One Watford's work and identify any unmet needs. The Assembly will elect a representative to sit on a new sub-group of One Watford which will feed directly into One Watford and will look after the community-focused elements of the SCS that are not already overseen by existing groups. In addition, we anticipate that

through the money received by One Watford as its share of the Local Area Agreement (from 2009/10), the partnership will be able to provide more support than previously to local community groups.

We want to make the most of Watford's diverse culture by celebrating the different groups that make the borough what it is, and to ensure that the good community relations that already exist are strengthened. We believe this, and so many other things, are a source of pride for Watford, and will continue with our Watford for You project to promote the town and its people.

The government has placed a statutory duty on organisations that work with children and young people to work in partnership. Our partnership is called the Watford District Children's Trust Partnership (DCTP). It works specifically on children and young people's issues, has a plan of its own, and like Safer Watford, reports its progress to One Watford.





A healthy town

WATFORD IS A relatively healthy town. However, there are some areas of concern and some examples of health inequalities between different groups of people in Watford.

There were 227.5 deaths from smoking per 100,000 population aged 35 years or over in Watford during 2004/06. This is worse than the national and regional average, although this is an improving trend. However, the number of early deaths from cancer per 100,000 population aged under 75 over the same period has increased.

Children in Reception Year and Year 6 in Watford are among the heaviest in Hertfordshire¹¹. Less than a fifth of adults participate in the recommended 3 x 30 minutes physical activity per week¹² and almost half do no physical activity at all¹³. Almost a quarter of our adult population is classed as obese and this has increased since 2007¹⁴. Inactivity carries significant health risks that can reduce the quality and length of life. It has been estimated that physical inactivity costs West Hertfordshire Primary Care Trust (which covers the five districts of Watford, Three Rivers, Dacorum, St

Albans and Hertsmere) £1,151,403 per 100,000 people in primary and secondary care costs¹⁵.

The number of claimants of incapacity benefits for mental illness, while similar to the regional average, is on the increase¹⁶. Watford scores the third highest in the county on the Mental Health Needs Index and has the highest suicide rates and second highest number of hospital admissions for schizophrenia in the county¹⁷.

The average life expectancy for men in Watford is 77.4 years (slightly above the English average) and for women is 80.8 years (slightly below the English average). Men from the least deprived areas (eg Park and Tudor wards) can expect to live 6 years longer than those in the most deprived areas (eg Holywell and Central). This has worsened from a gap of over 4 years in 2007. For women, the difference is 4.7 years¹⁸.

This indicates that there are clear links between health and deprivation, and we will target those communities in greatest need when delivering our projects for 2009/10.

Partners have already been working together on issues that will help to address health inequalities locally. The Watford & Three Rivers Health Partnership received funds from the West Hertfordshire PCT to spend on projects that would help to increase physical activity in the over 45s and support people to quit smoking.

The partnership asked community groups for their views on how best to spend the money, and funded, amongst other things, single-sex exercise classes to encourage women from black and minority ethnic (BME) communities to participate, smoking cessation seminars, theatre-style workshops to prevent smoking amongst children and subsidised gym membership to help people who quit smoking stay fit.

¹¹ WatCom Practice Based Commissioning Profiles 2008, West Herts PCT

¹² Active People Survey 2 (2007/08)

¹³ Activity Profile: Watford (July 2007), Sport England

¹⁴ Watford Health Profile 2008, Department of Health

¹⁵ Be active, be healthy: a plan for getting the nation moving – Department of Health, 2009

¹⁶ See above

¹⁷ Mental Health Needs Assessment – Hertfordshire 2008

¹⁸ Watford Health Profile 2008, Department of Health

What we aim to achieve:

Based on what the evidence and consultation told us, we have decided to focus on the following areas to make Watford a healthy town:

- Reduce smoking and smoke-related harm.
- Increase physical activity levels.
- Reduce obesity.
- Improve emotional wellbeing.



A prosperous and educated town

IN RECENT TIMES, Watford has flourished and is a relatively prosperous town. We know that it has had an entrepreneurial environment with a higher than average proportion of businesses in the borough under two years old and a higher than average number of new business registrations per 1000 resident adults. However, the borough also had a higher than average rate of business closures¹⁹.

This might be a sign that businesses like to start off in Watford and, perhaps as they grow, they choose to evolve or move to other areas or it could be that new businesses do find it hard to get established long-term.

The current economic downturn is bound to impact on the town's prosperity and there are some early signs that things are getting harder for businesses and in the job market. For example, unemployment benefit claimants continue to rise, although in Watford the rate of the rise between December 2007 and December 2008 was the lowest in the county²⁰. However, we want to make sure that, as things improve worldwide and nationally, Watford is

well-placed to take advantage of the economic upturn.

Watford's population is relatively highly-skilled, with above average levels of skills and below average proportions of residents with no qualifications²¹.

However, Watford has above the county average need for basic skills for literacy and numeracy²², and although English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) needs are generally low in Hertfordshire, there is a peak in Watford indicating a higher level of need²³. The two are often linked.

Generally, school attainment is high,

although clearly there are differences in achievement in Watford.

In terms of adult learning, although participation in Watford is generally higher than the Hertfordshire average, we have consistently poor performance at Full Level 3 (equivalent to 2 'A' levels). There has also been a decline in apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships. With Watford mirroring the trend in the East of England in terms of a skills gap in priority sectors, the need for residents to be equipped with the right skills during challenging economic times is even more important.

This means that partnership working is all the more crucial in safeguarding Watford's economic prosperity.

The Watford for You project, which aims to raise pride in the town, will help to 'sell' Watford as a good place to do business, encouraging new employers to choose the town as their base to provide jobs for local people. However, we know that we need to do more and so will work closely to share information to allow

¹⁹ The State of the Borough: An Economic, Social and Environmental Audit of Watford – Local Futures (December 2006)

²⁰ Monthly Unemployment Bulletin for Hertfordshire, December 2008 – Hertfordshire County Council

²¹ ONS annual population survey – January 2007 – December 2007

²² Department for Education and Skills, 2003

²³ Local Needs Assessment – Hertfordshire (Learning & Skills Council East, January 2007)

²⁴ Local Needs Assessment – Hertfordshire (Learning & Skills Council East, January 2007)

us to put together a co-ordinated response to the recession, ensuring Watford and its residents emerge in a stronger position.

To help address issues around learning and skills, the Watford Learning Partnership works with local education and skills providers to increase access to and participation in lifelong learning for individuals and communities in Watford and is a sub-group of One Watford.

What we aim to achieve:

Based on our assessment of what is needed to make Watford a prosperous and educated town, we have chosen to focus on the following priorities:

- Ensure Watford remains a place where businesses can thrive.
- Support people through the changing economic climate.
- Improve the skills of young people and adult learners.
- Support people with low levels of basic skills and English language needs.
- Address the skills gap.



A town that protects its environment and heritage

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS are high on everyone's agenda – whether that's about wanting a pleasant environment to live in or concerns about climate change. This came out strongly in what you told us as part of our consultation.

Watford's ecological footprint (put simply, the resources we use in day to day life) is nearly identical to the UK (5.4 global hectares per person) and East of England average. However, the ecological footprint for personal travel in Watford is 20% higher than the national average. Residents spend considerably more on getting around, mainly on fuel due to higher distances travelled by car. This is not surprising given how well-connected the town is to major roads²⁵.

We are committed to Watford becoming a more sustainable borough that reduces its negative impact on the environment. We hope to persuade people of the alternatives to getting into their cars for short journeys (for instance walking or cycling – both healthy options) and to think carefully about

how they go about their daily lives to see if they can become more 'environmentally-friendly'. During 2008/09, Watford residents recycled or composted almost 35% of their waste but we know there is more that can be done.

Businesses also have a role to play, and we will be continuing with our One Watford Green Business Pledge, which already has over 60 signatories and provides support and advice to local businesses who are committed to becoming greener.

We will also ensure that we use our role in the development of the town to protect Watford's heritage to retain the character of the borough. Once again, the Local Development Framework will be important to ensure that the borough develops in line with our vision in this Sustainable Community Strategy.

What we aim to achieve:
This is a new objective in the Sustainable Community Strategy to acknowledge our clear commitment to protecting our environment, in all senses of the word.

Our priorities under this objective are:

- Reduce the amount of personal travel using cars.
- Support residents and businesses to reduce their energy use and become greener.
- Ensure that key plans for development in the town protect Watford's heritage.

²⁵ The Ecological Footprint of Hertfordshire, Results and Scenarios, July 2006 – sponsored by Hertfordshire Environmental Forum





A safer town

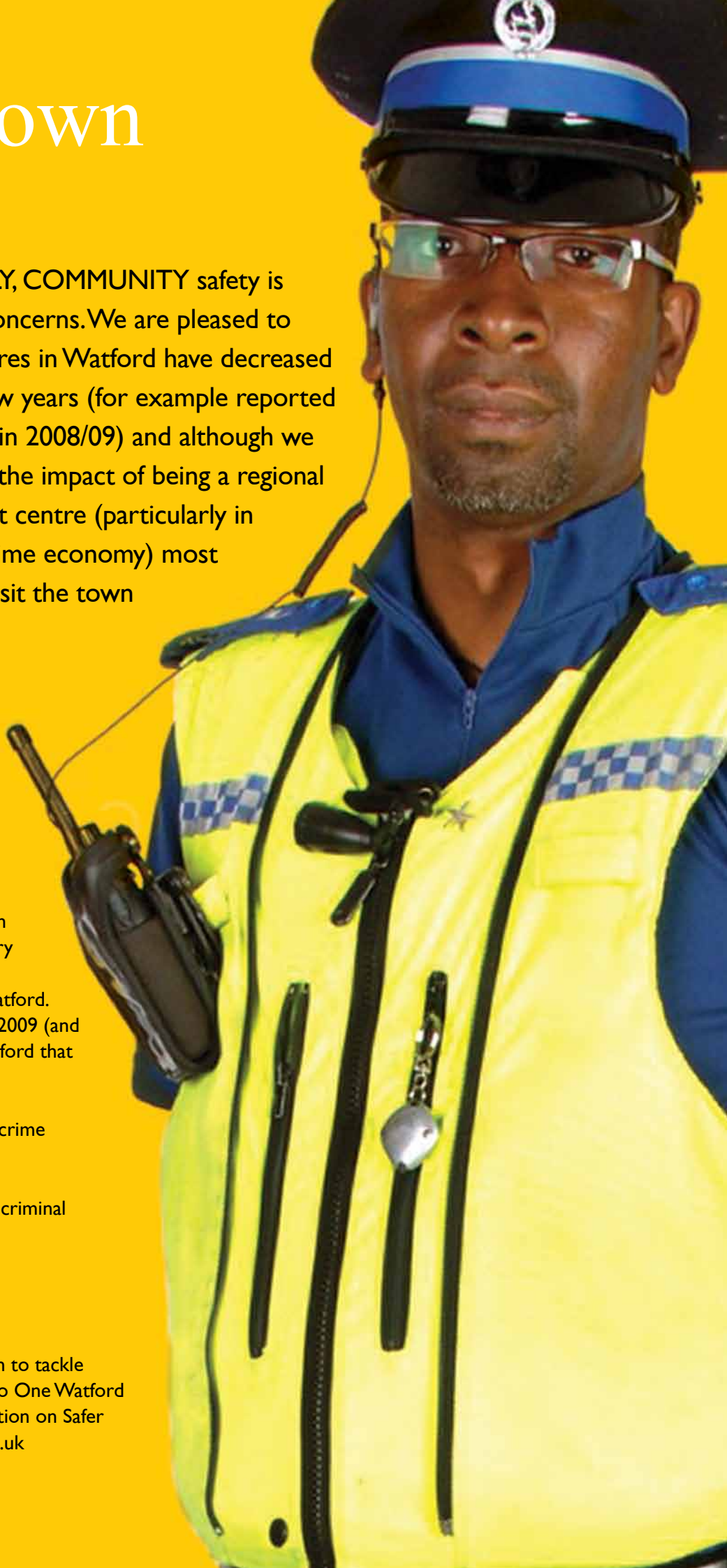
UNDERSTANDABLY, COMMUNITY safety is one of your key concerns. We are pleased to say that crime figures in Watford have decreased significantly over the last few years (for example reported crime fell by just over 11% in 2008/09) and although we still face challenges around the impact of being a regional shopping and entertainment centre (particularly in terms of our strong night-time economy) most people who live, work or visit the town find it a very safe place.

Community safety in Watford is very much a partnership effort. The community safety partnership, Safer Watford, has the statutory responsibility to tackle crime and disorder and drug and alcohol misuse. It does this on behalf of One Watford.

Safer Watford must carry out its own priority setting, as part of its statutory responsibilities. These priorities are scrutinised and endorsed by One Watford. The community safety priorities for 2009 (and therefore the priorities for One Watford that sit under this objective) are:

- Reduce alcohol and drug-related crime
- Reduce violent crime
- Reduce acquisitive crime
- Reduce anti-social behaviour and criminal damage
- Increase feelings of safety
- Reduce re-offending
- Prevent violent extremism

Safer Watford has its own action plan to tackle these issues. It reports its progress to One Watford on a regular basis. For more information on Safer Watford, visit: www.saferwatford.org.uk



Targets and measures of success

Our strategy looks forward to 2026. 17 years is a long time to plan ahead. One Watford will develop three-year action plans that will set out in detail exactly what it plans to do to deliver its priorities and will support this with a set of targets so the partnership, and you, can check its progress.

Links to other plans and strategies

The Sustainable Community Strategy is the overarching plan for Watford. However, it has links to other key documents that have an effect on the borough.

On a larger geographical scale, the Sustainable Community Strategy for the county – Hertfordshire 2021: A Brighter Future – is the long term strategy for Hertfordshire.

In the short-term (2008-2011), an agreement has been signed between central government and Hertfordshire County Council, on behalf of all local partners, including One Watford and individual partners. This is known as a Local Area Agreement (LAA). There are 46 national indicators in Hertfordshire's second LAA. Where these are relevant to Watford, we will contribute to delivering on those targets and will measure our performance against them.

We have also considered national and regional developments that affect Watford when developing this Strategy. These include the Local Government White Paper (2006), the East of England Plan, the Regional Economic Strategy and a range of national and regional policies relating to education, health, crime and disorder, the economy and the environment.

More locally, the plans of individual partners all influence and are influenced by this Sustainable Community Strategy.

Alternative Formats of this Plan

For a copy of the plan in large print, on audiotape or in one of the languages listed below, please contact:

The Partnership and performance section at
**Watford Borough Council, Watford Town Hall,
Watford WD17 3EX**

or email kathryn.robson@watford.gov.uk
or telephone **01923 278077**.

This plan is also available on our website
www.watford.gov.uk

This information is available in our
community languages, in large print or
on audio CD on request.

Urdu

اگر انگریزی آپ کی بول چال کی زبان نہیں ہے،
تو ہم آپ کے لیے ایک انٹرپرائزر (زبانی ترجمہ کار)
کا اہتمام کر سکتے ہیں۔ برائے مہربانی ہمیں یہ
بتائیں کہ آپ کی مطلوبہ زبان کون سی ہے۔

Gujarati

જો ઈંગ્લિશ તમારી માતૃભાષા ન હોય
તો અમે તમારા માટે દુભાષિયાની
વ્યવસ્થા કરી શકીશું. તમે કઈ ભાષામાં
વાત કરવા માંગશો તે ભાષાનું નામ
દર્શાવવા વિનંતી.

Hindi

यदि इंग्लिश आपकी मुख्य भाषा
नहीं है तो हम एक इंटरप्रिटर
(दुभाषिए) का प्रबंध कर सकते
हैं। कृपया अपनी जरूरत की
भाषा बताएँ।

Polish

Watford Borough Council
ch tnie dostarczy ustne
tłumaczenie dla Ciebie.

Bengali

ইংরেজি আপনার মাতৃভাষা না হলে,
আমরা আপনার জন্য একজন
দোভাষী (ইন্টারপ্রিটার) এর ব্যবস্থা
করতে পারবো। দয়া করে বলে
দিন, কোন্ ভাষার দোভাষী বা
ইন্টারপ্রিটার আপনার দরকার।

Please call tel: **01923 278077**



www.onewatford.co.uk



www.onewatford.co.uk