

Watford's Environmental Strategy:

Addressing the Climate and Ecological Emergency

Delivery Plan 2023 - 2025



WATFORD
BOROUGH
COUNCIL

Foreword

Watford Borough Council recognises the seriousness of the climate and ecological emergencies. That is why we have committed to being a net zero carbon town by 2030.

Climate change is already affecting communities across the world and will impact local residents, businesses and community groups here in Watford. High energy prices caused by the war in Ukraine and other global pressures have also brought home the need to move quickly to a low carbon future.

This delivery plan sets out in detail how we will meet this challenge. We have committed significant financial resources to implement this plan but will also need external funding to reach our net zero target.

To achieve our ambition, we will also need to work with others and be accountable to others. Here, we show how we will lead by example and support local residents and businesses to improve energy efficiency, reduce waste and move away from fossil fuels.

Together, we can deliver a greener, healthier and more inviting Watford for future generations.



Peter Taylor
Elected Mayor of Watford



Councillor **Ian Stotesbury**
Portfolio Holder for
Transport and Sustainability



Introduction

We are facing a climate and ecological emergency. Locally we can see the changing weather patterns, with more torrential rains, floods, and heat waves. Globally governments have committed to limit global temperature change to below 2°C, and ideally below 1.5°C. Locally Watford Borough Council has signed climate and ecological emergency declarations.

There is still hope – with effort, leadership and co-operation, we can limit our environmental impacts. The earth is our home, and we must work with nature respectfully and with reciprocity.

The longer we leave it, the tougher and more expensive it gets – so the time to act is now.

This delivery plan 2023-25, sets out the actions we will take over the next 2 years, across the 2 overarching themes of Leading by Example and People Power, and the 4 sustainability topics of Achieving Net Zero, Nature and Ecological Restoration, Responsible Resource Use and Adapting to Change.

Some of these measures need actions from all those in the borough, others are subject to us achieving sufficient external funding. Where this is not forthcoming, we will do our best to achieve our targets, but the approach and timescales may change.

In addition, we have existing projects that are supporting the Environmental Strategy, such as the Town Hall decarbonisation project, and the River Colne Project. These major projects will significantly contribute to us achieving our targets.

Each year the Council will report on our progress against the key targets, based on best available data. It will also report on progress in delivering the actions within the plan. The delivery plan will be reviewed annually and updated every 2 years. There will be quarterly reporting to senior management and portfolio holders.

• Net zero carbon for Council emissions (CO₂equivalent) by the end of 2030

• We will report on progress of our emissions, against the 2019/20 baseline, and report on additional emissions as appropriate

• Council's own waste reduced to near zero by 2030

• We will monitor and report on the waste we generate and our recycling rates

• 30% by area of our green spaces managed to support nature by 2030

• We will report on our progress towards ensuring at least 30% by area of our green spaces are managed for nature

• Do everything in our power to achieve net zero carbon emissions (CO₂e) for the borough by the end of 2030

• We will report on the borough emissions, noting that best available data give a two year lag in information available

• Do everything in our power to reduce borough waste by 50% by 2030, with recycling making up at least 60% of the waste

• We will report on our borough waste and recycling rates, working with Herts WasteAware



Leading by example

The Council is committed to addressing the climate and ecological emergency, both within the Council and the borough. To achieve these objectives, the Council will need to work in collaboration with others as well as secure external funding. Therefore, it will both lead by example and work with others. Within this delivery plan, across the sustainability themes there are actions which will directly work towards those objectives, and there are actions the council will take to facilitate those in the borough to take actions to address the climate and ecological emergency.



Theme	Target	Interim Target	Actions	Timescale for Actions
Leading by example	To meet the Council Plan's Greener, Brighter Future commitments by 2026		Implement sustainability decision making approach across the council	Spring 2024
	Environmental strategy targets and associated actions embedded in all council strategies and plans as they are developed or reviewed, or by 2030 at the latest		For strategies to be updated by 2025, review Environmental Strategy Implications	Summer 2023 and Ongoing
	Councillors and all staff trained on the strategy and its impacts, climate change and the ecological emergency by 2024, and ongoing annual or biennial thereafter		Created/adapt e-learning training courses	Spring 2023
	Ensure that the Council is a leader in coordinating with stakeholders across the borough to address the climate and ecological emergencies		Host a cross borough stakeholder symposium	By Autumn 2023, and at least annually
	Ensure the Council lobbies regionally and nationally to improve ability of Watford, and the UK to meet their environmental targets		Proactive lobbying on environmental impacts affecting Watford and the climate emergency	Ongoing
	Annual reporting of key targets from 2024		Implement monitoring and reporting practice	Spring 2024
	Regular review of procurement strategy 2022-26		Annual review of sustainability targets in strategy	Spring, annually
	Ensure ESG remains a key consideration in where we invest		When tendering for Money Market Fund providers consider ESG as a key part of the tender evaluation. When Council's banking provider is next tendered, include ESG as a key part of the tender evaluation	Part of ongoing review. (Already part of Croxley Park Investment) Spring 2024
	Property investments (excluding FRI leases extending beyond 2030) to have EPC rating of B or higher by 2030	EPC rating of C or greater 1st April 2027	Property Asset review to determine baseline, actions and any other appropriate indications for good environmental investments	Spring 2025
	ESG/Environmental impacts to be a key consideration in all new JV and own projects by 2025		Develop policy and guidance on requirements, this will include EPC, BREEAM and/or other certification standards	Spring 2024

People power

We all have a role to play and opportunity to help to create happy, healthy and thriving people, communities, and businesses. Some targets require borough-wide action, and there needs to be engagement from everyone. The key action here is to develop an approach to engaging with all sectors of our community. The targets and actions below are ambitious and will require us to secure additional external funding. If this is not successful, lower cost options will be considered, which will affect the timeframe and level of delivery.

Theme	Target	Interim Target	Actions	Timescale for Actions
People Power	10% of Watford Households signed up to Count Us In or equivalent by 2025; 25% by 2027; 50% by 2030	10% of Watford households signed up to Count Us In or equivalent by 2025	Develop portal to engage with community. This addresses all targets within People Power. Develop a strategic approach to engagement across the targets and borough	Summer 2025
	Engage with 50% of fuel poor households on how they can reduce their energy costs by 2025; 75% by 2027 and 90% by 2030	Engage with 50% of fuel poor households on how they can reduce their energy costs by 2025		Spring 2025
	50% SME and large businesses sign up to sustainable business charter by March 2025 and 75% by 2027	50% SME and large businesses sign up to sustainable business charter by March 2025	Develop sustainable business charter Promote uptake of charter or equivalent	Summer 2023 Ongoing
	25% micro businesses sign up to sustainable business pledge by March 2025 and 50% by 2027	25% micro businesses sign up to sustainable business pledge by March 2025	Develop simplified charter for micro businesses Work with partners to promote and encourage uptake	Autumn 2023 Ongoing
	Increase uptake of local climate initiatives by 10% year on year from 2024 to 2030		Support GBGW in 2023 and 2024 Develop sustainability communication and engagement plan	June 2023; June 2024 Summer 2023
	Increase by at least 10% year on year opportunities for people to be engaged with educational or voluntary activities in this area		As above	As above
	Develop a skills and employment plan, with green skills and jobs as a key strand by 2024, implementing the targets and actions thereafter		Work with local partners to develop green skills and jobs plan	Spring 2024



Achieving net zero

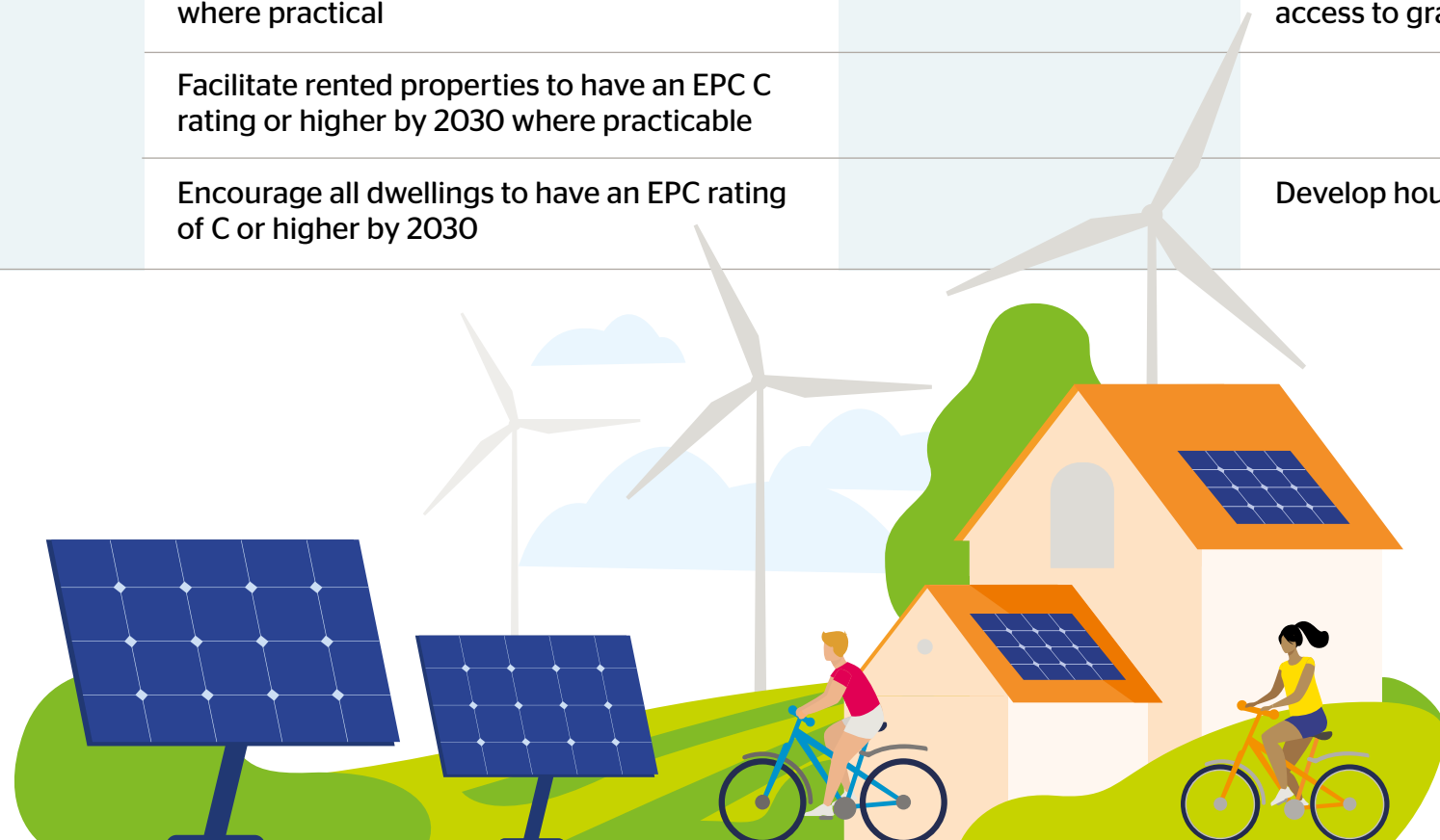
Watford Borough Council has committed to achieve net zero carbon (CO_{2e}equivalent) in its operations by 2030 and facilitate the borough to reach net zero by the same year. Net zero means we will measure and reduce our greenhouse gas emissions (direct and indirect) as much as we can, and offset any remaining. We have a baseline of emissions for 2019/20, and our reductions are based on this, we are also intending to go beyond the scope in the baseline to further address our emissions. These will be reported separately. To achieve a net zero carbon borough, government funding is required, as well as money spent by businesses, groups and individuals. The council will act as a facilitator where it can.

Theme	Target	Interim Target	Actions	Timescale for Actions
Achieving Net Zero - Council	To achieve net zero by 2030 for the Council emissions it is proposed to have a stepped increase in emissions reduction	22% reduction in CO _{2e} emissions and 6% offsetting	Overarching target: Specific actions are detailed below	
	Council business travel to transition to net zero by 2030, with the following interim reductions: 2025 - 50% reduction; 2027 - 75% reduction	Council business travel reduction by 50% by 2025		
	Staff travel and home working to transition to net zero by 2030, with the following interim reductions: 2025 - 25% reduction; 2027 - 50% reduction; 2029 - 75% reduction	25% reduction by 2025	Staff travel and home working survey Staff travel and home working plan	Summer 2023 Winter 2023/24
	Council services transport fleet to transition to net zero by 2030, with the following interim reductions: 2025 - 25% reduction; 2027 - 50% reduction; 2029 - 75% reduction	25% reduction by 2025	Produce fleet policy and strategy	Summer 2024
	Council buildings net zero by 2030 - i.e. scope 1 and 2 for our buildings	22% reduction by 2025	Implement initial actions in APSE carbon reduction report Community asset review and action plan	Spring 2025 Summer 2024



Achieving net zero

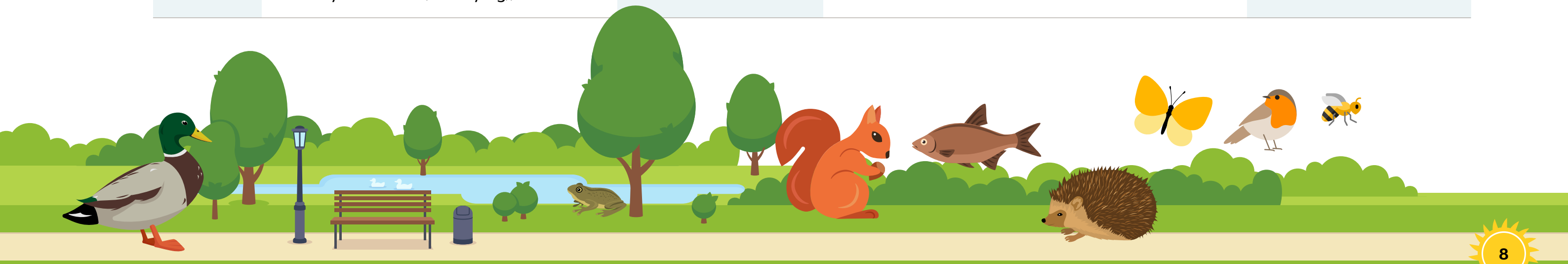
Theme	Target	Interim Target	Actions	Timescale for Actions
Achieving Net Zero - Borough	To achieve net zero by 2030 for the Borough emissions		Overarching target: Specific actions are detailed below	
	Modal shift away from private cars - Public transport shift from 11.5% to 15%; cycle modal shift from 2.5% to 7% and walking modal shift from 28% to 34% by 2030		Implement Transforming Travel In Watford strategy	
	Encouraging and facilitate developers to build all new buildings to net zero standards by 2030		Develop design codes and guidance on sustainable design and construction	Spring 2025
	Encourage and facilitate existing building owners to review their buildings for energy efficiency improvements, and implemented where practical by 2030		Lobby government on grants and apply for funding to support this	Ongoing
	Facilitate the means for all fuel poor dwellings to have an EPC rating of C or higher by 2030 where practical		Develop housing retrofit improvement strategy. Continue to work with partners to ensure residents have access to grant funding	Spring 2025 Ongoing
	Facilitate rented properties to have an EPC C rating or higher by 2030 where practicable			
	Encourage all dwellings to have an EPC rating of C or higher by 2030			Develop housing improvement strategy and action plan



Nature and ecological restoration

The UK is one of the least biodiverse nations and ranks low globally for biodiversity intactness. This is especially true in southeast England, where we also have rare chalk streams. Watford, a water-stressed area with high water usage, faces issues with nature, water, pollution, and food security. However, Watford has made good progress in managing its parks and green spaces, achieving 17 green flags in 2022. It has also been successful in its tree planting and giveaways.

Theme	Target	Interim Target	Actions	Timescale for Actions
Nature and ecological restoration - Council	30% by area of our green spaces managed to support nature by 2030; 20% by 2025	20% by 2025	Develop and begin implementing Biodiversity Strategy. Continue programme of investment and improvement in Watford parks	Summer 2024 Ongoing
	30% by area of our corporate estate green spaces managed to support nature by 2030; 10% by 2025	10% by 2025		
	Council to ensure separate water monitoring for council activities by 2025		Implement water monitoring programme	Spring 2024
	Council to achieve water usage of 12 l/employee/day by 2030 for office based activities. An interim target for 2027 will be set in 2025		Develop water management strategy	Spring 2025
	Ensure sports facilities, trees and amenity planting are primarily irrigated by rainwater where practicable by 2030		Develop water management strategy with Veolia	Spring 2024
	For the council to meet the International Dark-Sky Associations 'Five Principles for Responsible Outdoor Lighting' across all council-operated properties by 2025 (Five Principles for Responsible Outdoor Lighting - International Dark-Sky Association (darksky.org))		Implement Dark-Sky external lighting protocol	Autumn 2023



Nature and ecological restoration



Theme	Target	Interim Target	Actions	Timescale for Actions
Nature and ecological restoration - Borough	Biodiversity net gain of 10% or greater for all new development, with any offsetting occurring within the borough or adjoining boroughs/districts by 2030		SPD on Biodiversity Net Gain	Summer 2024
	Minimum canopy target 25% by 2030; interim target of 20% by 2027	20,000 trees by 2026	Work with our community to plant 20,000 trees across the borough	2026
	Work with partners to facilitate Rivers Colne and Gade in the borough meeting the Water Framework Directive (WFD) good standard for biodiversity and at least moderate for chemical water quality by 2030	2.2km of River Colne in the borough improved by Autumn 2024	River Colne Project Cassiobury Wetland Project	
	Maintain or improve access to private outdoor amenity space (e.g. gardens, balconies you can go out on, private communal spaces)		Develop design codes and guidance on sustainable design and construction	
	Maintain or improve the green space per capita and distance from green space and improve where practical		Develop and implement Green Spaces Strategy	Summer 2024 and ongoing
	Support residents to achieve an annual average residential use of 110 l/p/d by 2030; interim targets of 145 l/p/d by 2025 and 130 l/p/d by 2027	145 l/p/d by 2025	Work with partners to support residents reducing water usage	Ongoing
	All Watford to meet national Air Quality Objectives and Air Quality Standards Regulations		Develop and implement local air quality strategy	Spring 2025
	60% of waste food collected to be recycled 2030; with interim targets of 50% by 2027	50% by 2027	Work with partners to reduce food waste Work to ensure food waste is collected separately for recycling	Ongoing
	Improve the ability of those in the borough to grow food, year on year		Working with partners provide information, support and opportunity for food growing Review opportunity for Incredible Edible type project in borough	Ongoing Summer 2024
	All WBC café/concession operators to have in place an approach to include plant based options and provide information on the carbon implications of food choices on the menu by 2030, or as soon as the contract is up for renewal (whichever is sooner); this to be a requirement for all new operators by 2023	All new operators to have in place approach to include plant based options and carbon implications by 2023	Ensure appropriate clauses are put in tender and contracts for WBC café/concessions	Autumn 2023

Responsible resource use

A key part of our environmental impact comes from what we consume, such as fashion, technology, food, and leisure activities. This section focuses on non-food consumption, using the waste hierarchy, and promoting a circular economy. To achieve many of these targets will require residents and businesses to make a change in how they buy, consume and dispose of items.

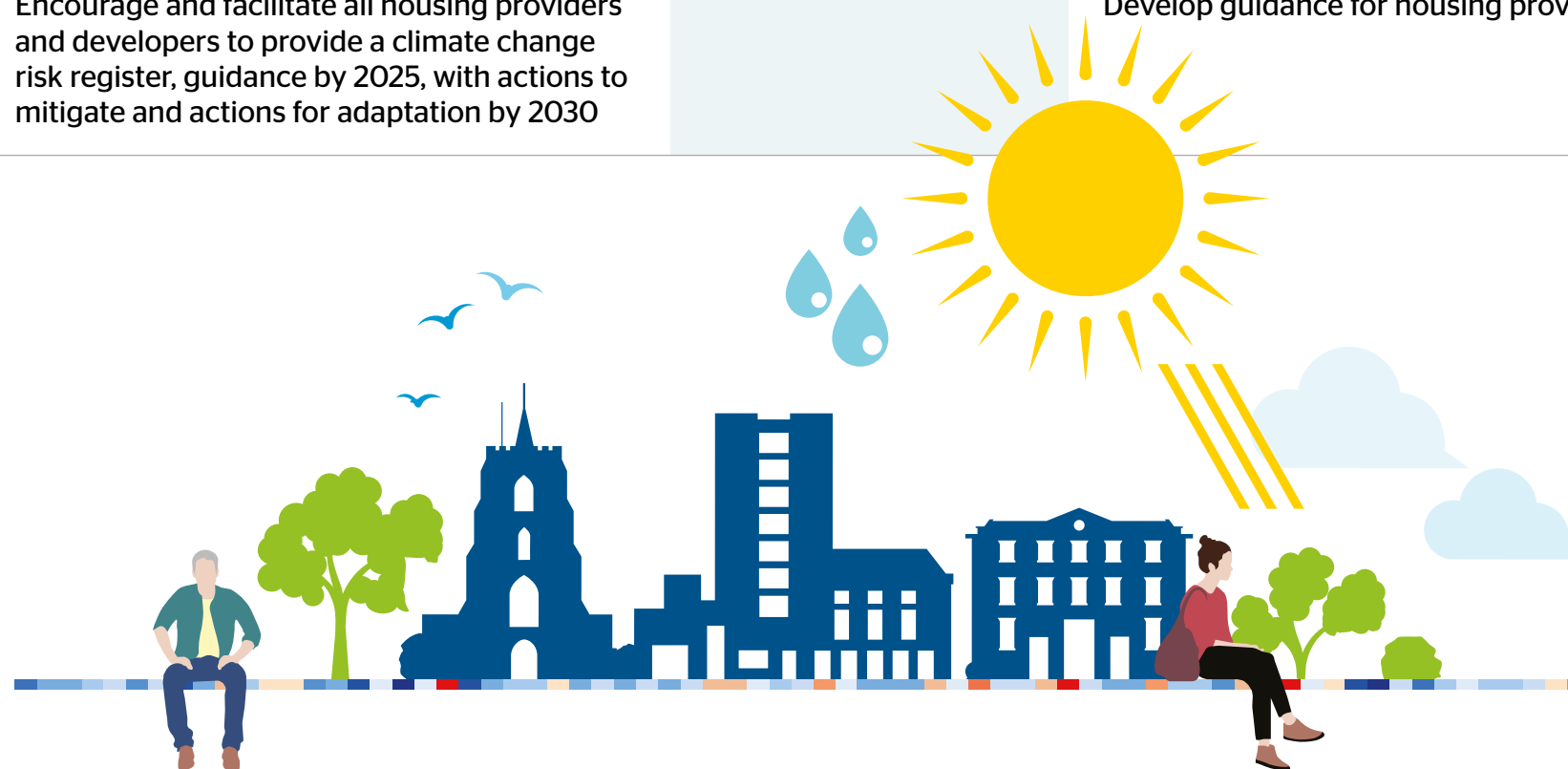
Theme	Target	Interim Target	Actions	Timescale for Actions
Responsible Resource Use - Council	Council-generated waste reduced to as near zero as practicable by 2030		Monitor waste generated by council Initiate waste reduction strategies and initiatives to engage with staff, such as clothes swaps	Summer 2023 Summer 2023 and Ongoing
	Ensure the Council is recycling 60% of its own waste by 2025 and 70% by 2028	60% of council waste recycled by 2025	Monitoring of waste and recycling Staff awareness initiatives	Summer 2023 Ongoing
Responsible Resource Use - Borough	Borough is recycling 60% of its residential waste by 2030; with an interim target of 54% by 2027	54% by 2027	Work with Herts WasteAware to encourage recycling	Ongoing
	Residential borough waste reduced by 50% by 2030, based on 2019/20		Action plan to encourage alternative approaches to waste, e.g. through charity shop trail, repair fairs/shop, resilience hub	Spring 2025
	Businesses to reduce their waste by 50% by 2030, based on 2019/20		Work with partners to support businesses reduce their waste and increase their recycling rates	Ongoing



Adapting to change

Meeting our carbon reduction targets and keeping global temperature rise below 1.5°C will still bring changes, like more intense rainfall and increased heat, affecting food production, ecosystems, and daily life. We must be aware of these risks and adapt to mitigate and manage them.

Theme	Target	Interim Target	Actions	Timescale for Actions
Adapting to Change	Corporate and service risk registers explicitly address climate change, and report on climate incidents by 2024		Provide training to senior officers Implement Local Partnerships toolkit	Autumn 2023 Winter 2023
	All our operations and services ready for future climates (based on most up to date climate projections for the UK) by 2030		Actively engage with external partners such as Water company, Environment Agency etc. on climate risks, mitigation and adaptation	Ongoing
	Ensure that the Council has addressed the Government's 8 priority risk areas by 2025		Review risk areas, identify actions and incorporate into service plans	Spring 2025
	Ensure that information and education is available about climate change, risk and adaptations for local people and groups by 2024, and regular (at least annual) updates are sent thereafter		Develop information pack on climate risk and adaptation for local people and groups	Spring 2024
	Facilitate the Borough to be ready for future climates by 2030			
	Encourage and facilitate all housing providers and developers to provide a climate change risk register, guidance by 2025, with actions to mitigate and actions for adaptation by 2030			Develop guidance for housing providers and developers





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