

# PUBLIC SERVICE

STANDING TOGETHER IN WALTHAM FOREST



# INTRODUCTION FROM THE LEADER AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE

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**Last year, Waltham Forest became London's first ever Borough of Culture. Residents, businesses, and visitors celebrated the vibrant culture, sense of community and everyday acts of kindness that make Waltham Forest the best place to live in London.**

Today, these festivities seem a lifetime ago. The tragedy and disruption caused by Covid-19 has hit Waltham Forest hard. We face traumatic and uncertain times. Many of us worry about the health, livelihoods and education of ourselves and our families, and face the difficulty of being separated from loved ones. Unfortunately, the crisis is here to stay for the foreseeable future, and the Government have made it clear that we face ongoing restrictions and further interventions to keep us safe.

The pandemic's impacts have not been felt evenly. Covid-19 has shone a stark light on the endemic social and economic inequalities faced by some of our residents. As we continue to respond to the unfolding health and economic crisis, we will do all we can to address the structural challenges and financial pressures too many of our residents and businesses face.

As we drive Waltham Forest's Covid-19 response, we will recognise the borough's many strengths. The scale of the challenge is unprecedented, but we can be confident in our ability to deliver locally. We will continue to build on our collective strengths, which we have shown in both celebration and adversity.

Since the start of the pandemic the response from people in Waltham Forest has been inspirational.

Many of our residents are key workers: from shop staff, to bus drivers and food distributors as well as those working across our public and health services. They have kept our borough going throughout the crisis, alongside considerable work from important local charities and support groups. Local NHS and social care workers have given vital service in the face of huge adversity. We owe them all our deepest gratitude, and in some cases our lives.

People have volunteered in unprecedented numbers, with more than 4,000 residents registering to help within our communities, alongside self-organising groups throughout the borough. Everyday acts of kindness have been inspiring: acts of help from neighbours; the patience of parents facing the difficult task of home-schooling; and volunteers on the front-line delivering food and providing care. We saw that public service can be performed by anyone, anywhere.

The Covid-19 crisis has required us to innovate and find new ways to make a difference for our residents and businesses. As a Council we have sought to listen, understand, and lead, through unparalleled uncertainty. We have been right not to wait for instructions from central Government or rely on old definitions of our roles. We have worked flexibly, alongside communities, solving problems across organisational boundaries.

This Public Service Strategy creates a new, all-encompassing definition of public service. It focuses on the most pressing challenges we face, to allow us to quickly respond to the issues Covid-19 has brought to the borough. This includes new responsibilities to embrace to keep our residents safe but also bold new actions to support our residents while remaining focussed on a long-term positive future for Waltham Forest.

It recognises everyone's role in public service and alters the role of the Council from provider to partner.

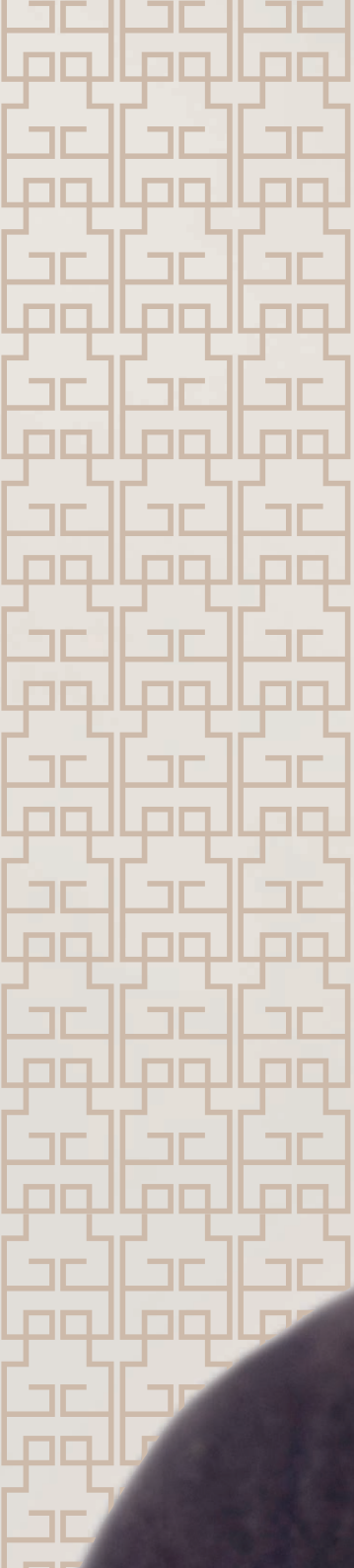
Achieving our priorities will require us to stand together in Waltham Forest. It is through public service, in all its forms, that we will support the borough through the Covid-19 crisis, and ensure that Waltham Forest emerges better and stronger in times ahead.



**Cllr Clare Coghill**  
Leader of Waltham Forest Council



**Martin Esom**  
Chief Executive  
of Waltham Forest Council



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Lawrence  
from L&T Vans  
arranged food parcel  
deliveries and other  
transport services to  
those in need during  
the pandemic.

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# A PUBLIC SERVICE STRATEGY

## Our public service approach

**The response from residents to the pandemic, giving time, energy, and compassion, has been inspiring. People have demonstrated care, resourcefulness and a desire to make a difference. The extraordinary mobilisation of community action alongside staff has demonstrated that public service can happen everywhere, every day.**

Public service has been at the heart of Waltham Forest's response to the pandemic, both in how residents helped each other and how the Council has faced the challenges.

For us, public service is not about who does it, or how it is delivered. In Waltham Forest we see public service as the act itself.

This understanding of public service requires more leadership and responsibility from the Council, not less. We will need to listen more and find new ways to work alongside residents, partners and businesses.

This direction is radical. It recognises the crucial roles our residents, businesses and communities play in performing public service, and the importance of collaboration between these groups and the Council as we support everyone to strive for the best for our borough.

This understanding of public service is at the heart of our strategy.



Hinnah has helped set up and run the Community Help Network food hub as part of her redeployed role at the Council during the pandemic.



## A strategy for uncertainty

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**The Public Service Strategy sets out how we plan to take on the immediate challenges faced by residents, businesses and communities through the Covid-19 pandemic.**

We have faced challenges before, and we have overcome them. A decade ago, Waltham Forest was the 10th most deprived borough in London and faced over £100m of budget cuts. But in 2019, we won MJ Council of the year and were London's first Borough of Culture.

Our strategy has been inspired by the views of our residents. We received over 11,000 responses to quantitative surveys and have conducted a variety of focus and research groups. We have gathered extensive data on the impacts of Covid-19 on our local economy and communities.

**The Public Service Strategy sets out four immediate priorities, each underpinned by a five-point plan.**

These priorities are:

- ♦ **Connecting people with jobs**
- ♦ **Safe and healthy lives**
- ♦ **Our 15-minute neighbourhood**
- ♦ **Confidence in our future**

The uncertainty we face means this strategy cannot and should not be a long-term vision for the borough. It is our response to the most pressing challenges Covid-19 has presented, and a way to tackle the impacts of the ongoing crisis.

# IMPACTS OF COVID-19

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## **To understand better the impacts of the pandemic on the borough, we have been working and engaging with our residents and local businesses throughout the crisis.**

The Covid-19 health crisis have meant almost 8,000 residents have been shielding in the borough. Over 250 residents have died, and many more face longer-term health needs. We understand how traumatic this experience has been for those directly affected by the virus, and for the families and friends of people who have sadly passed away. We collectively grieve the loss of those residents.

The wider effects on well-being will be long-lasting. Residents have told us that the pandemic had made them anxious and uncertain about their futures.

Beyond the acute health impacts, the pandemic has brought to the forefront the systemic inequalities experienced by some of our residents. Our diverse communities were hit with disproportionate levels of infection and deaths from the virus. As one of the most diverse places in London, we must continue to understand and act on this issue.

There are also considerable economic impacts. We distributed £1.6m to families through the financial hardship fund, while 2,000 households in the borough received support from the community help network during lockdown. Over half of residents think that one of the main problems over the coming months will be people struggling to cope financially. Local businesses also suffered from the crisis, despite the Council distributing over £47m of grants to support them. The scale of the recession we are facing is unprecedented in recent times.

Although there are many challenges, it is important to recognise what has been valued by residents. The environment and local neighbourhoods have been a crucial part of wellbeing and support during this period. Almost half of residents want more information on walking and cycling, and cycling has increased by up to 178 per cent in parts of the borough. The increase in air quality and reduction in traffic and pollution has been cited by residents as a positive from this otherwise difficult time. Many residents have also re-discovered their local shops and green spaces. Overall, the pandemic highlighted the importance of having balanced neighbourhoods, where residents can easily access what they need for a fulfilling life.

As the borough faces new challenges, so does the Council. We are facing a sizeable financial challenge, despite being in a solid position at the pandemic's outset. We have estimated a financial pressure of £23m against this year's budget, arising from our mobilisation to support residents and local businesses, and a significant reduction in the fees and charges that we use to fund services.

While the impacts and financial constraints are stark, we are determined to build on the many unique strengths and assets in the Borough.

Sanah  
is part of a family  
which runs the PL84U  
Al-Suffa food bank in  
Walthamstow and was  
personally affected by  
the Covid-19  
outbreak.



## Impacts of Covid-19



6 out of 10 residents say the lockdown had a **negative impact on their mental health**



132% **rise in unemployment** in Waltham Forest between February and July 2020



55% decrease in **levels of nitrogen oxides** in the air



By 2030, the **income gap** between higher-earners and lower-earners is **predicted to reach £30,000**



Between February and June 2020, the number of **Universal Credit claims increased by 142%** in Waltham Forest, compared to 108% in London

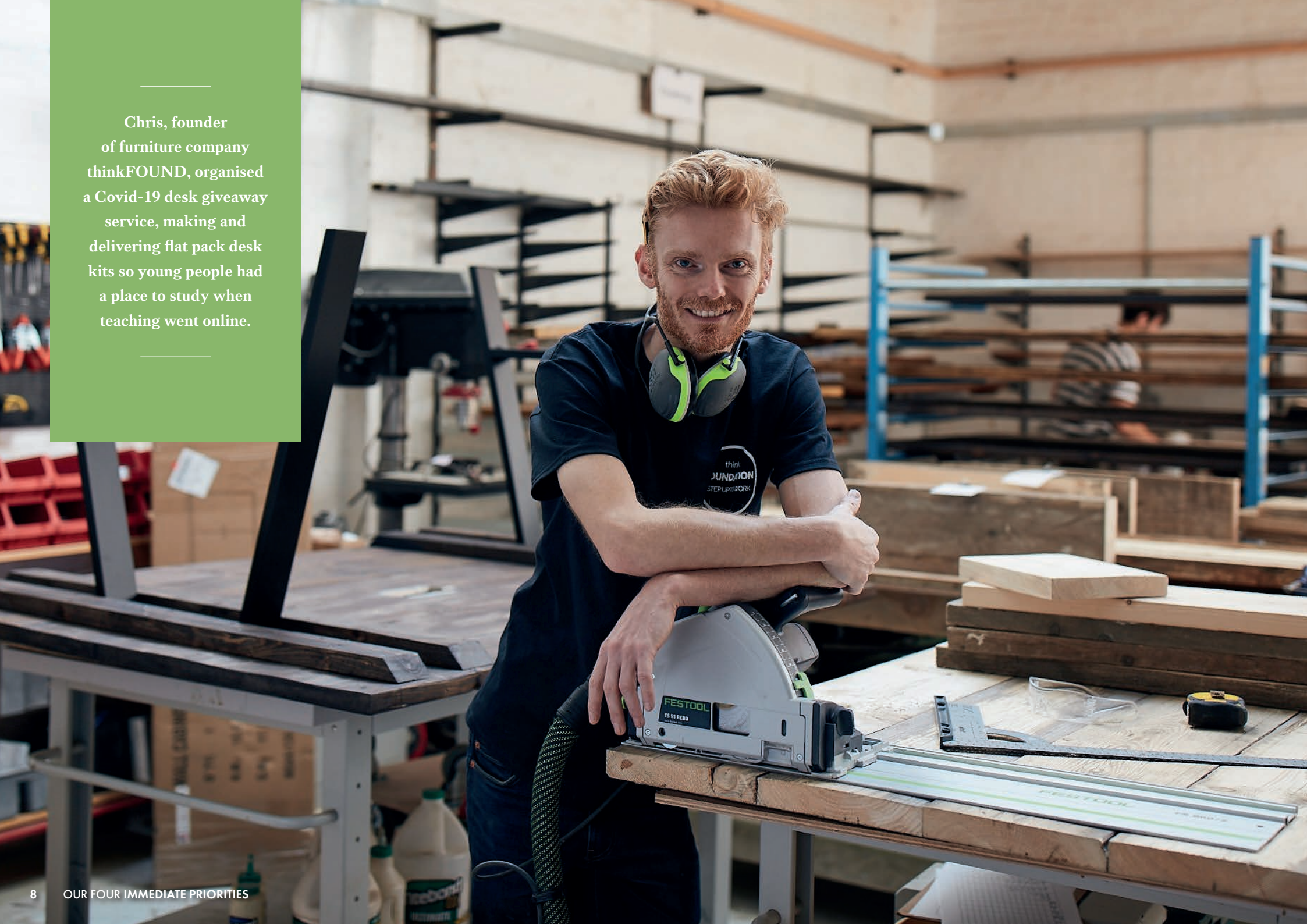


**5.4 times increase in the total number of residents requesting help** with Council Tax Support, discretionary housing payments, discretionary Council Tax and local welfare assistance between April 2019 and April 2020

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Chris, founder of furniture company thinkFOUND, organised a Covid-19 desk giveaway service, making and delivering flat pack desk kits so young people had a place to study when teaching went online.

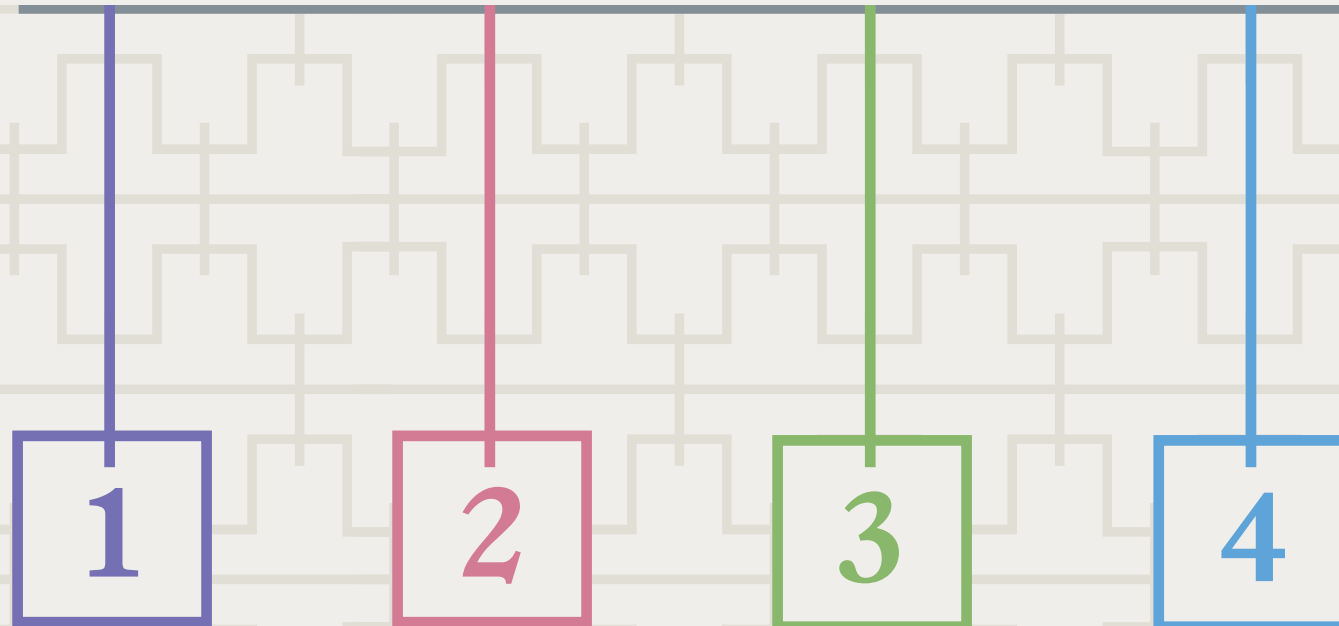
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# OUR FOUR IMMEDIATE PRIORITIES

CONNECTING PEOPLE WITH JOBS  
SAFE AND HEALTHY LIVES  
OUR 15-MINUTE NEIGHBOURHOOD  
CONFIDENCE IN OUR FUTURE



During the pandemic, we carried out extensive research to understand its impacts on our residents and to act to address them. Over 11,000 people took part in surveys, and a range of focus and research groups were held. We have linked this research with wider economic and social indicators.

Residents' top concerns were the impact on jobs and family finances, alongside continuing worries about public safety and health.

Residents also wanted to make sure that in the longer-term we tackle the inequalities which have been highlighted throughout the pandemic and maintain a focus on the prosperity of the borough.

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Kiechelle  
is a lecturer  
and works for the  
Adult Learning Service  
(ALS). She helped her  
91 year-old neighbour  
during lockdown, and  
made befriending calls  
to around 80 contacts  
she had made while  
working with  
the ALS.

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1

**CONNECTING  
PEOPLE WITH JOBS**

# 1

## Jobs are our residents' top priority.

Prior to the pandemic, London experienced almost full employment. The help that was given to find jobs was focussed on those very far from the labour market, and on improving residents' skills so that they could increase their incomes.

Now, claims for Jobseeker's Allowance in the borough are up by 122 per cent since the start of the crisis, and 38,000 residents have been furloughed. The challenge has become the supply of jobs.

We will do everything in our power to ensure that employers who work and profit in the area seek to employ our residents. This commitment must start with the Council and our partners.

We want to make sure all residents can fulfil their potential and find rewarding work. We will support our residents, and work with investors and established local businesses to help create jobs.

## Priority one: Connecting people with jobs

1

### Creating a local jobs economy

We will strive to ensure jobs for our residents, with a focus on those that have faced disadvantage in the past, and who now face even greater economic challenges.

We will hold a summit of major employers to help create as many local jobs as possible. We will support organisations who work in the borough to advertise and hire from our community, and celebrate those who do. Importantly, this must include Council contractors and service providers.

2

### A single front door for jobs

Our residents should not have to ask twice for help in finding a job. If there is a suitable job out there, we want to help people find it quickly.

This means we will take a lead role helping employers advertise and hire locally. We will ensure our residents can easily find opportunities on a live jobs feed, and every Council worker will be able to signpost people to help and support.

3

### Opportunities for our children and young people

The future is most challenging for our young people. We want to provide opportunities, support and guidance to help them meet their potential, especially those who face inequalities that are deeply embedded in our society.

Building on the Council's progress to improve life chances we will form a new coalition with higher education providers, employers, support services to improve our young people's employment and skills prospects.

4

### Community support for jobs and skills

Community efforts can help people into meaningful work and prevent longer term unemployment. We will establish a service for skilled volunteers to help residents with the tools and confidence needed to find work, harnessing local expertise to the benefit of everyone.

We will launch an ongoing programme of skills surgeries and expand our ESOL provision. We will support businesses to keep going and help new businesses to open, redoubling our campaign to ask our residents to choose local and support everyone.

5

### Waltham Forest as London's green jobs borough

Our commitment to tackling the climate emergency is also a commitment to local jobs. We will create a pathway to green jobs, making sure our people have the right skills and entrepreneurial support to benefit from the growth of the green economy.

The Council will work with community groups to deliver green retrofitting services, benefitting from Government funding and taking on trusted provider status. This will help making buildings more energy-efficient, lowering their impact on the climate, and helping to tackle the borough's carbon footprint.

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**Maria from the  
Leaders Community  
which offers dance and  
drama classes, continued  
to provide support  
virtually to disadvantaged  
young people across  
the borough.**

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2

**SAFE AND  
HEALTHY LIVES**

The pandemic has deeply disrupted the lives of our residents, affecting their physical and mental health.

Residents remain very concerned about the pandemic, scoring an average of 6/10 for worry levels. Over 57 per cent are concerned that others will not stick to physical distancing guidelines. 61 per cent of our residents say that the pandemic has had a negative impact on their mental health, while 50 per cent say that it has had an impact on their physical health, which rises to 62 per cent for those with a long term illness.

The pandemic is not over yet, and we must work together to be able to keep our families, friends and neighbours safe from Covid-19.

To do this, we want to work in new ways, building on what we have learnt during the crisis. We will work together with our partners and residents.

## Priority two: Safe and healthy lives

1

### Protecting people from Covid-19 and placing them at the centre of decision-making

We will do all we can to ensure our residents can get Covid-19 support, information and testing within Waltham Forest. We will listen to our communities, proactively educate businesses and residents with accessible information, and enforce measures introduced to prevent the spread of Covid-19.

We have set up a 'Citizens' Panel' of 75 residents from all walks of life across the borough to help guide our work over the year ahead. We will also work with national Government as constructive and honest partners, and we will keep working to understand the health and economic impacts of Covid-19 on our diverse communities.

2

### New ways to work together

When we act together, we can achieve more. Covid-19 has demonstrated the need to work in a radically different way with greater collaboration.

During the crisis, we cut through bureaucracy to better support the NHS and Whipps Cross Hospital's discharge service. This flexible way of working must continue across the public sector if we are to serve our residents effectively. The provision of modern healthcare will be central to all our development plans, as we work to ensure the delivery of a much needed new Whipps Cross Hospital. We will continue to work with our residents and partners to solve community challenges, playing a unifying and leading role to ensure there are no organisational barriers to services.



3

### Safe neighbourhoods and town centres

We will focus on keeping our neighbourhoods and town centres safe. We will introduce measures locally to ensure our high streets are safe spaces for people to shop, to do business and to spend time, and we will be visible in our communities, offering reassurance and advice, to keep people safe from Covid-19 and help to stop its spread.

We will also continue to work on issues we know matter to people so that everyone can feel safe in Waltham Forest. This includes being ambitious in standing up to hate and divisions in our communities. Working with residents, we will reduce hate incidences, doing so through a range of initiatives, including a pioneering bystander intervention.

4

### Improving mental health support

Our residents have spoken bravely about the impacts on their mental health. The restrictions and impacts of the pandemic unfortunately continue to limit people's access to social and familial support networks.

With our volunteers and partners, we will deliver a borough-wide befriending service and work with residents to help their communities. We will support the new self-help and mutual aid organisations, working together to tackle upcoming challenges.

5

### Homelessness and quality housing

A decent roof over everyone's head remains a priority. One-off Government funding enabled us to house all of our street homeless people within weeks in the midst of the crisis. We will push for longer term funding and support to tackle homelessness, and fight hard for a fairer deal on tenants' rights around evictions.

We will implement in full our new landlord licensing scheme, ensuring high standards in the private rented sector and taking over properties where landlords fail to provide acceptable standards.

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Kristin  
from local business  
Wild Goose Bakery, has  
organised suspended  
care packages for the  
local food bank during  
the pandemic.

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# 3

## OUR 15-MINUTE NEIGHBOURHOOD

# 3

Before the pandemic, we knew in Waltham Forest that old-fashioned concepts of cities did not always make people healthier and happier. We want everyone to be able to meet most, if not all, of their needs within a short walk or bike ride from their home. This will enable a deeper, stronger recovery from COVID-19 and to help foster the more local, healthy and sustainable way of life that many residents are calling for.

Many residents have told us about a new-found appreciation for their neighbourhood, while getting to know the nearby shops, cultural hotspots or high-quality green spaces that had always been on their doorsteps.

Residents have also expressed that they enjoyed having less traffic and air pollution during lockdown. Almost a quarter think that the Council should focus on the environment and the climate emergency in the long term.

This has underlined the need to keep developing our borough so that every one of our residents can easily access what they need to live a fulfilling and healthy life within their local area.

## Priority three: Our 15-minute neighbourhood

1

### Local neighbourhood life

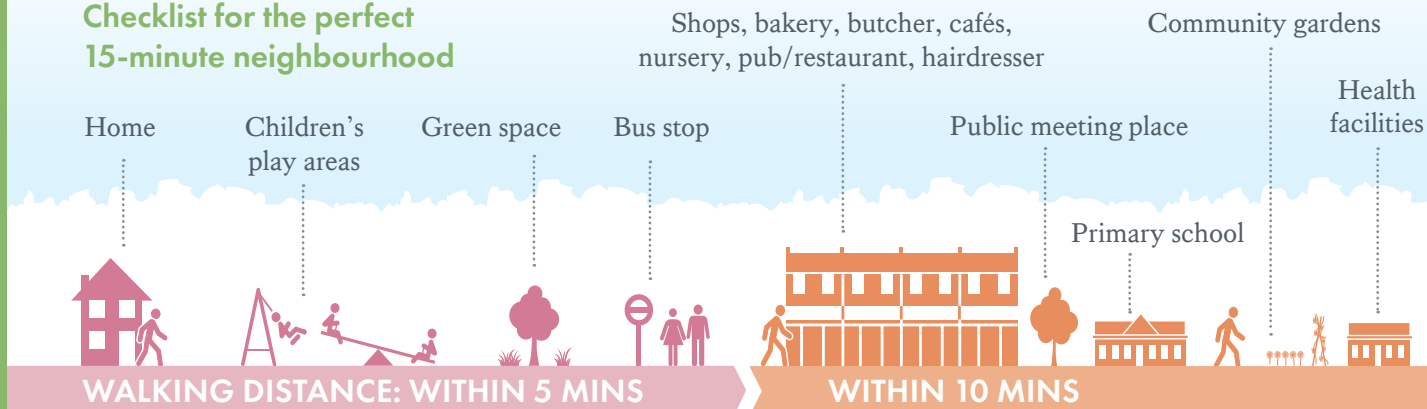
We want to continue to revitalise local neighbourhood life as people spend more time in the borough. Residents of every neighbourhood should have easy access to everything they need to live well - including high quality local services. We will support local shops, and sustainable local deliveries through low-carbon modes of transport, such as ZED cargo bikes and electric vehicles. By creating jobs and working spaces in the borough, and developing hyperlocal cultural events, we will ensure that residents of Waltham Forest can meet most of their needs within a short walk or bike ride from their home.

2

### People-friendly streets

Waltham Forest has a lot to offer, and active travel allows residents to enjoy their neighbourhoods, and stay healthy. The Council's Enjoy Waltham Forest programme has led the way, increasing walking and cycling in the borough, and improving air quality. We will go further to support active travel, shaping our urban design to enable a healthier borough, with new cycle routes and low-traffic neighbourhoods. More cycle hangars are also being installed around the borough. We will also grow our school streets programme to reduce air pollution around schools.

### Checklist for the perfect 15-minute neighbourhood



3

**Regeneration for everyone**

We will keep investing in the commercial and community hearts of our borough. By recognising the unique identities of our five main town centres and investing in their future, we will create quality spaces where residents can live, travel, shop and strengthen our communities. We will encourage the temporary use of vacant and idle spaces for innovative community-led projects with a high local impact. We will also sustainably improve homes by working with local community organisations.

4

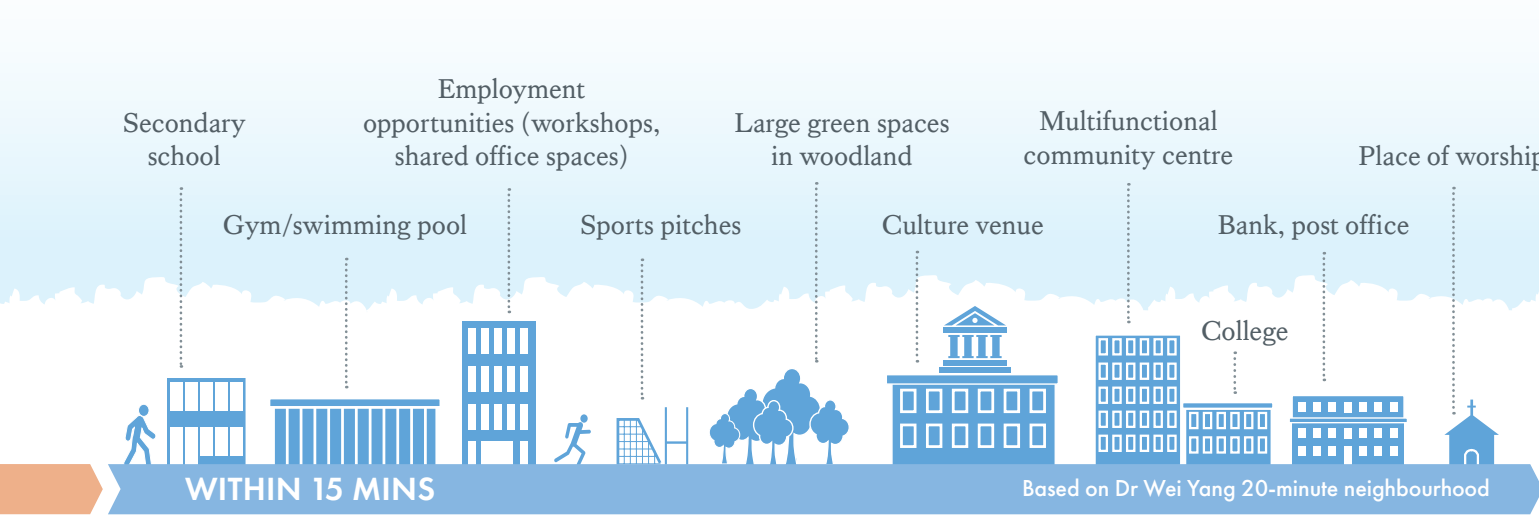
**The greenest borough**

Waltham Forest is one of the greenest boroughs in London, and we want it to be even more so. We will use our green spaces to mitigate the effects of climate change. They will provide shade and natural drainage solutions to cope with heatwaves or heavy rainfalls. We will plant more trees and create new green spaces such as the landscaped gardens of Fellowship Square. We will involve and empower residents more to increase biodiversity across the borough, by allowing them to deliver greening projects in public places and on public realm.

5

**Celebrating culture in challenging times**

Culture is more important than ever to bring people together, and address the issues we are facing in a creative way. We will continue to put culture at the heart of our regeneration work everywhere in the borough, and to invest in the legacy of our Borough of Culture year. We will invest in good quality, accessible infrastructure to support cultural activities across the borough. We are pressing ahead with the redevelopment of the former EMD Cinema on Hoe Street into a 950-seats theatre, bar and restaurant, community space and more.



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When volunteering for the Mutual Aid group, William went shopping for an elderly neighbour and picked up her medicines, as well as checking in on a nearby friend with down syndrome who was lonely and vulnerable.

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4

**CONFIDENCE  
IN OUR FUTURE**

## Priority four: Confidence in our future

The pandemic has been a time of uncertainty, where many plans were disrupted or put on hold. It has also been an opportunity to think about the future we want, with many residents telling us they were able to pause, think, and realise what was important in their lives. We want to keep having conversations to develop a shared vision for the Borough.

While it is difficult to think too far into the future at the moment, residents have told us we must continue to invest in the longer-term prospects of the borough. We also want to stay hopeful about the future. We have local strengths in our residents and assets, we are creative and aspirational. The pandemic has brought us closer, and this will help us build a bright future for Waltham Forest.

Of course, we will have to tackle acute challenges, addressing inequalities so that all residents can access the same opportunities. We will continue our work on the climate emergency, and plan ahead by developing a thriving economic environment to help residents get local, affordable homes.

1

### Facing and tackling inequalities head on

Confidence in our future can only exist if it is held in all our communities.

The impacts of Covid-19 have highlighted inequalities some of our diverse communities experience, such as race, socioeconomic or health inequalities.

We will face these challenges head on. Before the end of the year, we will publish a 'state of the borough' equalities report and engage across the borough on its findings and the action we will take.

With our communities, we will design a Waltham Forest Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion strategy with deliverable actions and clear accountability.

2

### Growing local economic strength

A strong local economy will foster confidence in our future. We can build on the existing unique assets in the borough, from our great neighbourhoods within easy access to green spaces, through to our diverse high streets and the world-class culture of our Borough of Culture year.

We have supported our businesses throughout the early months of the pandemic and will continue to do so via our high streets' action plan. London's economy is shifting locally, with more people staying in the borough, and we will work with everyone to take advantage of new opportunities for the Waltham Forest economy.

We will maintain a focus on growing long-term economic strength by driving forward with the new Fellowship Square and the target of 18,000 new homes across all tenures over the next 10 years. We will make choices to develop a fairer economy and address the local economic weaknesses arising from the pandemic.



4

### Building the highest percentage of affordable housing in London

The future must meet local residents' housing needs. We are committed to driving forward with plans to deliver much needed housing, community facilities and health services.

We want to support the housing needs of our younger people, ensuring they have options to meet their aspirations for affordable and high-quality homes. We want to help this generation and we understand the security of a home is crucial for young people to prosper and thrive.

We will continue to build a higher percentage of affordable housing than any borough in London and take action to make sure that homes are for local people.

3

### Local leadership in building back greener

We will focus on creating a borough that is resilient and sustainable, to make Waltham Forest a place where people want to work, rest and spend time on recreation. The Council will show leadership to take our Borough towards a greener future, by investing and changing behaviours.

Our Climate Emergency Commission will publish its report in November to help us plan for a sustainable, zero-carbon future, recognising the impacts of Covid-19. We will launch a Climate Action Plan in the spring of 2021 to support a green recovery, with specific funding of £1 million per year as our core investment.

### A conversation about the future of Waltham Forest

The future has never been more uncertain, and we are rightly focusing our efforts on the immediate challenges of the ongoing Covid-19 crisis. But it is also important that we begin to look to the future.

In the first half of 2021 we will launch an engagement programme to develop a longer-term vision for Waltham Forest. We will invite all of our residents to take part in thinking about the future of the borough and finding new ways to tackle some of our most difficult problems.

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Connie is a Community Health Nurse whose team works to provide a group of patients with long term conditions such as sickle cell and thalassaemia, with clinical care and treatment so that they are able to avoid hospital attendance, especially during Covid-19.

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# HOW THE COUNCIL NEEDS TO RESPOND

# HOW THE COUNCIL NEEDS TO RESPOND

The Covid-19 crisis has also had an impact on Waltham Forest Council.

**To effectively address the challenges in the borough, we will build on what we have learnt during this period and re-organise to serve residents effectively.**

We will be even more radical and innovative, with the values of public service at our core. We must play a uniting and leading role in the borough, and more widely within local Government.

Five principles will guide our approach to becoming a fundamentally different Council:

## 1 Financial sustainability and commerciality

Over the last decade we have faced profound austerity, but we have not used this as an excuse for inaction.

It is imperative for our public service values that we continue to innovate and work in new ways.

We will not let a lack of money stand in the way or become an excuse.

The outbreak has provoked uncertainty and financial challenges, which will mean that finding ways to increase our efficiency will be key to a successful recovery.

This may mean finding new commercial opportunities to benefit local residents while delivering new service funding streams.

## 2 Working differently

The pandemic has highlighted our workforce's strength in adapting to new challenges and innovating to overcome them. To take this further, we will produce a new workforce strategy, highlighting the strength of performance within the Council, and challenging us to further improve and enhance productivity.

We will design a completely different way of working and develop new ways of measuring the success and efficiency of our services.

## 3 Radically agile

Public service requires creativity and adaptability to the demands of the people it serves. The pandemic created flexibility in the Council with over 200 staff redeployed to provide new services and support others. Moving forwards, we will enable the Council and its staff to work more flexibly, including with the use of resources, to ensure that we can move quickly towards our residents' needs. We will increase the use of technology to make services more responsive and efficient, and our workforce more agile.

## 4 New approaches to partnership and communities

It is more important than ever that we stand alongside our residents, and that we develop new partnerships with a shared sense of mission. We want to be uniting, and accountable to our communities. We have worked hard to listen and will encourage new conversations with anyone who wants to take part. We will use this resident and community insight to improve how we operate and deliver services.

Our Citizens Assembly on hate incidences took a pioneering and collaborative approach to decision making. We will be bolder in using new approaches to work alongside communities to tackle complex challenges by focusing on our shared understanding of public service.

## 5 Providing exceptional service

The pandemic has demonstrated the importance of our core services in supporting residents, with new public appreciation for services such as repairs and maintenance services and waste collection.

Whatever the challenges facing the borough, we will agree a new customer experience strategy to ensure that our customer service is high quality, responsive and reliable. We will constantly drive improvements in all our services, ensuring they are easy to use, accessible and responsive for our residents. Above all, we need to listen to our residents on big and small issues.



Ezster's volunteering position for the Community Help Network during Covid-19 has seen her help an older woman in Highams Park with everyday chores and shopping.

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David delivered prescriptions and groceries to vulnerable people who were shielding in his local community, as well as phoning people who were isolating, who needed someone to talk to.

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## DELIVERING OUR PUBLIC SERVICE STRATEGY

**To deliver this strategy, we will publish a detailed roadmap in November 2020. This plan will be publicly available on the Council's website, alongside regular updates and performance measures.**

We will meet our objectives with the involvement of our communities and partners, as the challenges we are facing require everyone to play their part. We will keep engaging, and feedback from residents will continue to shape our plans transparently.

**Together, we can ensure everyone has the opportunity to act, contribute and make change.**

