



WATFORD

Business
Improvement
District

Our Town Our Future

Together we are stronger

BID Business Plan 2021-2026

5 years on

– our achievements
and our need for
business support to
maintain investment
in the town

WatfordBID.co.uk



“Watford town centre is the heart of our town, providing an outstanding destination for retail, leisure, business and a place where our community can come together to enjoy all that it has to offer. Town centres do not thrive without vision, drive and commitment. Watford BID has played a vital role in providing our town centre businesses with a strong voice to make sure their interests are heard and now, more than ever, this is critical to the town’s long-term success. We are determined that Watford remains the region’s premier town centre and look forward to working with the BID and all our businesses to make this happen.”

Peter Taylor
Elected Mayor of Watford



WATFORD

Business Improvement District

“Tackling crime and anti-social behaviour is certainly not a job we can do alone and I am grateful for the continued support of our partners across Watford. We have enjoyed a strong working relationship with Watford BID for some time, and they have been instrumental in backing our youth crime project which aims to divert vulnerable teenagers away from gang and knife crime.”

Watford Chief Inspector
Ian Grout



Contents

Our vision for Watford town centre & the BID team	4
Chair’s introduction	5
The BID board	6
What is a BID and how does it work?	8
Watford – a snapshot	9
COVID-19: The impact on Watford	10
2016-2021: What has Watford BID achieved?	12
The BID in numbers	18
What our town will lose if you vote ‘NO’	19
Moving forward: planning the next five years of Watford BID	20
How the BID has kept in touch & shaped its future plans	21
2021-2026: Planning for the future	22
How will the BID measure success?	26
The BID budget	27
The BID rules	28
The BID area	30

Our vision for Watford town centre

A town centre where everyone feels safe, confident and comfortable, and where businesses thrive and prosper. It will be competitive and dynamic, a place that is attractive to businesses and investors.

The most successful places will be those with a commercial culture that supports entrepreneurship, investment and innovation to flourish.

PWC – Good Growth for Cities 2019

The Watford BID team

Watford BID employs a small team of staff to deliver the business plan. We are based in an office on the High Street and are committed to improving Watford town centre.



Maria Manion
Chief Executive

Maria is responsible for ensuring the BID company delivers against its five-year business plan and the town's interests are well represented.



Jill Farnsworth
Head of Operations and Development

Jill is responsible for the delivery of our large BID projects, communicating with levy payers and handling the contracts with outside organisations.



Glen Hempenstall
Marketing & Communications Manager

Glen is responsible for the BID's marketing and communications including the websites, social media networks, PR and promotional campaigns and projects.



John Hattingh
Watford Business Against Crime Co-ordinator

John is responsible for managing the business crime reduction scheme. He works part time and spends his time working with retailers and the police.

Sue Tappenden, a professional Company Secretary supports the company. The company accountant is **HW Fisher**.

Chair's introduction

It is vital we continue to invest in the future of Watford.

It is incredible to think five years have passed since Watford BID was established. The time has flown, and so much has happened. As we look back on what has been achieved in Watford, we need to ensure that we do not let the pandemic overshadow our success. We need to take a balanced view of what we are facing now and go forward with optimism.

Since early March 2020, the country has had to deal with the impact of COVID-19; a national lockdown, recovery, local spikes, a second national lockdown and a high degree of economic uncertainty. This has impacted on all aspects of business across the country, but especially on town centres. We have seen that the towns which are dealing with the challenges most effectively are those where community leaders and businesses work together. We are stronger together, and in Watford we can proudly say, this is a town where people work together.

Town centres are historically the social and economic hearts of our communities. How they are used and how they operate has changed over the years – and will continue to change. We need to ensure that Watford continues to offer its residents, businesses and employees the services and opportunities they need and want.

Over the past five years we have seen over £200m invested in our town centre via intu, Watford Borough Council and the BID, plus other public and private sector partners. Watford's townscape is the envy of many other towns: it has no graffiti, the streets are well maintained, the crime rate is very low and rough sleeping, while present in the town, is very well managed by all our statutory agencies.

The BID has worked hard to improve our town centre. There are the very visual enhancements such as the banners, floral displays and the stunning Christmas lights, but what many of you may not see is the amount of time that is spent behind the scenes getting the town to where it is today, and some of the battles that have been fought along the way.

We know and understand that for many of you COVID-19 has devastated business and recovery will be a long and hard process; we have therefore shaped and developed this Business Plan with this in mind. The first two years will focus on recovery, while years three, four and five will focus on the growth and development of Watford. As such, we have not increased the BID levy for the first two years of a new BID term. We are also better supporting our local charities through a greatly reduced levy rate.

The pandemic has changed how our town will operate and we need to be smart enough to recognise this and flexible enough to adapt to the challenges and opportunities as they arise. I believe the BID is part of the new emerging Watford and will play a fundamental role in shaping its future development. However, we can only achieve this with your continued support, so I would urge all businesses to vote 'YES' in the forthcoming ballot. Without the BID the town would be a very different place.

Vicki Costello
Chair, Watford BID
Director, Watford
Shopping Centre



The BID board



Vicki Costello (Chair)
Vicki is the Centre Director of
Watford Shopping Centre



Kwame Tefe
Kwame is the Manager of the Moon
Under Water, a JD Wetherspoon
Pub on the High Street

"I have been the manager here for the last 11 years; but I have worked for the company for 29 years. I can confidently say that the reason for staying in Watford so long is because of my involvement in what goes on in the town centre; firstly, through the Town Centre Partnership and then the BID.

The BID has contributed to raising the status of Watford as a vibrant town centre where people can shop, work, relax and visit as a destination, while feeling safe and secure. This has been achieved through us all working together I am very proud to be part of that.

In the last four years, I have seen the pub grow from strength to strength; and I believe that a lot of it is down to increased footfall triggered by a lot of projects and activities organised by the BID. Last year we had our best Christmas sales ever in the 25 year history of the pub, which I put down to the BID's spectacular lights, among other things.

It is my hope that all other businesses too have seen the benefits of the BID and will vote yes in the forthcoming ballot."



Daniel Berko (Vice Chair)
Daniel is a Director and Shareholder
at Aspect Property Group, a local
family-run property company



Gary Foley
Gary is the General Manager of the
Everyone Active Watford Central
leisure centre

"I moved to Watford as General Manager in 2015, at the same time as the BID was looking to secure its first term and saw then the benefits it might bring to the town. Now, I feel the BID is integral to the town. We have benefited enormously from being part of the BID through networking, business to business deals and the support from the team and Board."



John Gautrey
John is the Chief Operating Officer
of CitiPark Ltd, who manage Church,
Gade and Sutton town centre car parks

"With 20 years experience in operational management I joined Town Centre Securities in 2016, as their Chief Operating Officer for CitiPark who operate three car parks in Watford.

Since joining Watford BID, I have worked closely with the team on some significant high street improvement works and campaigns, including the pedestrian entry improvement works at Gade, the summer and winter hanging baskets placed on the Church and Gade branches in addition to working closely with other businesses in the BID to roll out the 'Designated Driver' campaign throughout the 2018 World Cup."



Phil Holby
Phil is the Manager of Walkabout
Bar & Comedy Loft, on The Parade



Kathryn Robson

Kathryn is the Executive Head of Strategy and Communications at Watford Borough Council

“Working closely with Watford BID over the last five years has really shown the value they have brought to Watford town centre, working with so many organisations including the council; continuing the BID will achieve even more. By listening and working with businesses, the BID has been able to successfully promote what is important to them and give them the opportunity to help shape the town centre’s future success. The council is backing the BID’s second plan for Watford town centre as it will benefit businesses and residents and visitors too, which is more important now than ever.”



Saeed Gillani

Saeed is the Founder of Gee Kay Farrar, Accountants and Business Advisors



Tony King

Tony is the Director of Warren Anthony, an independent estate agency on Market Street

“We’ve been based in Watford town centre for 17 years and have seen some huge improvements over that time. I’ve been really impressed with the work the BID has been doing and our estate agency has got involved in a number of the projects they’ve been running.

I decided to join the BID Board in 2019 so I could play a more hands-on role and help represent the independent business sector. I think the continuation of the BID will be fundamental in ensuring Watford keeps on improving and remains an attractive and viable place from which to run a business.”



Donna Nolan

Donna became the Managing Director of Watford Borough Council in February 2020

“I’m a strong believer in the power of collaboration and I work closely with partners to ensure an excellent quality of service for the communities and residents of Watford, so that everyone can reach their full potential. I also work with key stakeholders to ensure the delivery of our ambitious and sustainable regeneration plans for the borough. By profession, I am a solicitor and have worked both within the public and private sectors.

Less than one month into the role, I led the council’s response to COVID-19. This involved developing a new way of operating in a collective and ‘cell’ approach, building a shared understanding of what was needed and buy-in for how the council would effectively respond to the pressing needs of its communities and stakeholders.

Watford BID played a pivotal role during this time, partnering with us to bring about the safe reopening of Watford town centre and intu. In what has been – and what will continue to be – an incredibly unsettling time, the BID has been a constant, working tirelessly to reassure and encourage our town centre business community. We are united in our vision of a thriving town centre, driven by a creative and strategic plan for the future.”



Martin Witherden

Martin is the Business Manager of Metro Bank on Watford High Street

“Metro Bank prides itself on being active in the local community so when we knew we were opening a Watford store we contacted the BID to find out what they were doing and how we could get involved. I wasn’t prepared for how active the BID was and the variety of activities that were underway to make Watford a fantastic town centre. I think it would be a huge loss to the town to not have the BID in place for a second term and really hope that other businesses here see the value too and will join me in voting yes.”

What is a BID and how does it work?

A Business Improvement District (BID) is a business-led and business funded company, supported by government legislation and formed to improve the commercial wellbeing of a specified geographic area, the 'BID area'.

A BID has a maximum term of five years. Organisations within the BID area pay an annual levy to the BID company, based on a percentage of the rateable value of their premises. This money is then spent on delivering the five-year business plan.

There are over 300 BIDs successfully operating across the country. Locally, the number of BIDs in Hertfordshire has risen from two to eight BIDs in the last five years; with Hitchin and Letchworth having already successfully secured a third and second term respectively for their BIDs.

BIDs succeed because they are focused, cost-efficient and entrepreneurial. They do not replace local authority and police services, but they do provide additional, supplementary resources and activities.

BIDs are established through a ballot of businesses within a defined BID area. For the BID to go ahead, two conditions must be met:

- Over 50% of businesses that vote must vote in favour
- Those voting 'YES' must represent more than 50% of the total rateable value of all the votes cast

If both these conditions are fulfilled, payment of the levy becomes mandatory for ALL eligible businesses, regardless of how they voted.

What is Watford BID?

Watford BID Ltd is a business led, not for profit company, voted for by town centre businesses and supported by the public sector. We were established and began trading on 1 April 2016 following a successful ballot in October 2015. Of those of you who voted, 77% of the total number and 73% of the total rateable value said 'YES'.

Over the last five years, we have been delivering against our 'BID Business Plan 2016-2021' and represent approximately 350 businesses and organisations in Watford town centre.

This business plan sets out what we will deliver in a second five year term, from 2021-2026.

The ballot for Watford BID will take place from 8 January 2021 to 4 February 2021. Ballot papers will be issued by Watford Borough Council and must be returned to Watford Town Hall before 5pm on 4 February 2021.

If the ballot is successful, our second five-year term will begin on 1 April 2021 and will generate close to £3 million of investment over five years. After that time is up, you will have the opportunity to review and decide if Watford BID will continue for a third term.

Remember, a **'YES'** vote gives you the chance to make a real difference to the future of Watford town centre – your voice, your choice, your future – make your vote count.




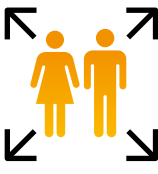
Watford – a snapshot

Watford Borough is
**8.3sq
miles**

Watford's
population
is around
96,600




with a total of
38,200
households (2018)


with around **4,515**
persons per km² it is one of
the most densely populated
districts in England

**Over
9 million
people**
pass through
Watford Junction
on an annual
basis

There are over
500,000 people
living within a
20 minutes travel
time of Watford and
5 million within
45 minutes

Watford is
the only
Hertfordshire
town **within the
M25**


Watford is
home to
over **5,900**
businesses

and it has a higher than
average number of large
businesses and Headquarters

GlobalData Consulting

Top 50 UK Shopping Centres – December 2019

Research identifies the top 50 shopping centres in the UK, metrics include annual turnover, size, footfall and shopper ratings.

The biggest movers – Watford

Following a **£180m investment** programme into Watford has rocketed up the UK shopping centre ranks, **up 13 places** from 28th in 2018.

**Watford is now overall ranked 26
as a retail centre compared
to 36 in 2018.**

*Watford
is the happiest
place in the East of
England region (2019,
Office of National Statistics,
ONS). The average happiness
score for respondents in
Watford was 8.02, positioning
Watford as the 14th
happiest place in UK.*



COVID-19: The impact on Watford

Watford town centre has not been immune to the impact of COVID-19. Several months of lockdown meant consumers adjusted to working from home, became more comfortable with online shopping and increasingly nervous about going to town centres. Some retailers, cultural venues and food and drink establishments remained closed beyond lockdown. Some have closed their branches in Watford permanently, including the major retailers John Lewis and Debenhams.

The impact of these closures on the town, its residents, and the way people perceive the town cannot be underestimated and will undoubtedly provide challenges in the short to medium term. However, there are also businesses that have taken the opportunity to refurbish, and new businesses are opening.

Throughout this pandemic we have witnessed the spirit of Watford. It is an intangible which cannot be measured or seen, but it is certainly there. Over 1,500 people volunteered to help out vulnerable community members; the town's businesses provided NHS workers with lunches, meals and refreshments as they worked flat out; and a raft of other goods and services to the third sector.

What the pandemic has shown – and something Watford people have known for a long time – is the town feels better and thrives when everyone pulls together, and that is the very essence of a BID.

Working
together
we are
stronger

“This year I was amazed that during these difficult times you were able to create, the same, or even, better, displays. We come into Watford on the bus from Chorleywood and it is really is a joy to be greeted by such an array of living colour. Thank you for the joy.”

Mrs C, Chorleywood
September 2020

How the BID helped reopen the High Street safely

Throughout the pandemic the BID has continued to support local businesses and levy payers. During the first lockdown, we maintained a core staff and furloughed a small part of the team.

The core staff managed all communications with businesses, set up a designated COVID-19 webpage, and provided weekly e-updates. An online and brand presence was maintained with regular social media posts; sharing positive community stories, fun online quizzes, encouraging locals to support their high street where they can, and informative updates on COVID-19 guidelines.

We also worked with Watford Borough Council to ensure those businesses eligible for support received it.

We received a grant of £18,085 from the government, which we invested straight back into supporting the town, its businesses and on making sure consumers felt safe and comfortable coming back into Watford. This money paid for:

- Five hand sanitising units installed in the town, and the maintenance and upkeep of these units
- One-way directional floor stickers throughout the town centre, supported by marshals in the first few weeks of re-opening
- A COVID-19 small grants programme, which directly supported 24 BID businesses
- Additional hand sanitiser and distancing floor stickers to other businesses

In May, Watford became the first town in Hertfordshire to have road closures put in place in the town centre. We funded 30 large flower displays to replace the fencing and cones being used to enforce parking restrictions. The road closures were extensive, so flowers ensured the town was bright and colourful, and did not look like a closed building site.

We also worked with Herts County Council, bus companies and taxi firms to ensure access in and out of the town centre was still possible.

During the November lockdown, the BID continued to support levy payers and promote the importance of visiting Watford, but in a COVID safe way. Hands / Space / Face lamppost banners were also created and installed.



2016-2021: What has Watford BID achieved?

Over the past five years, we have delivered a range of projects under the three themes of the BID Business Plan 2016-2021. Here is a brief summary of the projects delivered across the town.



Theme 1 – Enhancing the look and feel of the town

Helped catch shoplifters

In 2017 we took over the management of the 'Watford Business Against Crime' crime reduction scheme, through which retailers share information with each other and the police via radios to help reduce shoplifting. Since 2017 the number of participating retailers has increased from 41 to 63 and it is a well-used scheme, with high crime detection rates for members.

Funded CCTV cameras & improved access points

We contributed to the running, maintenance and development of the town centre CCTV system and improvements to lighting, paving and welcome signage at car park entry points.

Acted on rough sleepers and street drinkers

In 2017/18 rough sleepers and street drinkers became a noticeable problem in the town. We worked with the Police and the Safer Watford Crime Partnership and produced a leaflet advising businesses on what to do. This multi-agency approach has reduced some of the issues and we continue to work together on, what is an ongoing national issue.

Filled the town centre with flowers

Every summer, we installed beautiful, colourful floral displays throughout the town centre, rising from 116 displays in year one to 215 by year five, drawing praise from all that saw them. From 2018 we added winter flower displays. We also offered excellent value, spectacular hanging baskets to levy payers – both summer and winter variations, with our 2-4-1 offer.

Lit up the town centre at Christmas time

We took over festive lights from Watford Borough Council, combining their investment with the BID income meant there was a Christmas light on every (suitable) lamp column in the whole town centre for the first time ever.

For 2019 and 2020, we decided to move away from standard Christmas lighting and invested significantly in spectacular light installations to attract visitors into the town from across the region. These included massive, illuminated baubles, the word 'WATFORD' spelled out in giant glowing letters, laser displays, teardrop lights in 32 trees and a giant LED Christmas tree.

Celebrated excellent customer service

We ran our annual Service Excellence Awards, which became one of the most prominent events in the town's calendar, recognising the commitment of businesses to excellent customer service. Over the years the judging became more comprehensive, including customer votes, secret shoppers and exit surveys, culminating in a black-tie awards ceremony attended by over 350 guests from local businesses and sponsors.

WATFORD BID
SERVICE
EXCELLENCE
AWARDS





“Please pass on huge thanks for whoever is responsible for the Town Centre floral stacks. They are superb and such a lift for the High Street customers and traders when shops are having a tough trading time.”

**Janet
(Watford resident)**

“On behalf of WFRA Committee I would like to thank Watford BID for the stunning floral displays throughout the town centre. They look stunning and make such a difference to the town centre. We very much appreciate the efforts that have been made to create such beautiful displays.”

**Glenys Isaacs, Vice Chair,
Waterfields Resident
Association (2017)**

Added colour to the townscape

We brightened up the town centre with 72 colourful lamppost banners that featured local landmarks and icons, including Vicarage Road, Anthony Joshua and Cassiobury Park. 13 designs were produced in total by two young Herts designers. From 2019, we also installed Christmas themed banners to complement and promote our Winter in Watford campaign.

Retained the Purple Flag

We worked with stakeholders to retain the town centre’s Purple Flag Award which recognises good management of the night time economy, the wide offer, and the way partners work together to ensure the safety of people visiting.

Offered free training courses

In 2016, we teamed up with Watford Borough Council and local skills providers to help you access over 250 training courses that were free for your employees to attend, via European funding.

Helped wayfinding by installing and distributing town centre maps

As the town went through some major developments, we helped visitors find their way around by dressing development hoardings & empty shop windows with large town centre maps and information wraps. Foldaway maps were also distributed via regional tourist information points.

2016-2021: What has Watford BID achieved?



Theme 2 – Promotion, marketing and events

Switched on our Christmas lights

In 2016, we celebrated our first Christmas by inviting a stilt-walking, illuminated Snow King and Queen, to turn on our lights. In 2017/18 there was no switch-on in the town due to limitations caused by the intu development, so we ran alternative Christmas activities. Then in 2019 we celebrated our new lights with a switch on event attended by over 10,000 people.

Ran 'Watford Weekender' promotions

We invited businesses to run special offers, events or activities during our Watford Weekenders, which we promoted across all media channels. The number of businesses participating climbed by 25% from 2016 to 2017. In 2018 we added 36 new businesses to the activities, weekend footfall was up significantly and 80% of participants received enquiries or customers due the Weekender.



Did you know in 2018...

- Thomas Sabo was the best performing store in the UK for the Saturday of the Weekender
- Runners World had its busiest Saturday of the year
- Cath Kidston sales were up 36% on the previous year
- Everyone Active signed up 9 new members

Launched Watford Food & Drink Week

Our first Food & Drink Week ran in 2017, with 52 businesses offering bespoke offers. By 2019, it had evolved to being £5, £10 and £15 set menus, which narrowed participation to 21 restaurants but proved very successful with consumers. It culminated with a tasting festival in the new development of intu. Visitor figures to the website doubled in 2019 to 2,900 visitors. 73% of participating restaurants said they gained new customers.

Created & distributed Watford Food & Drink map

We featured all the pubs, bars, cafes, restaurants and take-aways in the BID area in a fold out leaflet and map, which was then distributed to hotels, shopping centres and other visitor information points around the region.



Did you know...

- The Christmas Lights were seen by **317,000 people** across Watford BID's social media channels
- There was **96% visitor satisfaction** rate with Winter in Watford activities

"The set menus are a great idea – if you are on a budget it helps to know how much you will roughly spend and encourage more people to take part."

Website feedback



Promoted everything Christmas related

We joined forces with Watford Borough Council, the Palace Theatre, Watford Colosseum and intu shopping centre and created Winter in Watford. All events and activities happening in Watford over the festive period were promoted on a dedicated website, backed by a strong advertising campaign. The campaign even went on the road, with bus backs promoting Watford. By 2019, the website received three times more visitors than the previous year.

Rewarded responsible drinking during World Cup

We teamed up with CitiPark car parks and several pubs and bars in the town, and created the Designated Driver campaign, offering free non-alcoholic drinks for designated drivers during World Cup games.

Getting behind Watford FC

When Watford reached the FA Cup final for the first time since 1984, we encouraged businesses to decorate their frontages and ran a best dressed window competition. It really contributed to a fantastic atmosphere in the town and created a lot of positivity over social media.

Supported outdoor theatre: Imagine Festival

Each year the Imagine Festival brings thousands of people into the town to see the spectacular Friday evening show and a weekend of live street theatre. We promoted, supported and sponsored this event.

Showcased the night-time economy

We have promoted Watford town centre's wide and varied night-time economy with a range of promotional activities including bus back adverts, social media campaigns, as well as contributing to the purchase of a bus for the Street Angels. We co-ordinated and managed the Purple Flag award which recognises the management and offer of night-time economy.



Launched the Watford Gift Card

In February 2020, the BID launched the Watford Gift Card, which is free to all BID businesses. The programme is designed to lock in additional money for participating businesses and raise awareness of those businesses. Promotion of the card continues into 2020/21. In 2020, 35 businesses were participating in the scheme.

Launched a Visitor Guide

In September 2016, Watford hosted the Master Golf Tournament at The Grove Hotel, the BID saw an opportunity to promote Watford to a new audience and produced a Watford visitor guide which was distributed on the buses to and from the tournament. It was then distributed via visitor information points across the region.

Launched Visit Watford

In 2019, following extensive research, Visit Watford was formed. Visit Watford is funded via a range of partners, including the BID – and is used to support and deliver the BID's consumer marketing. The Visit Watford team are based in the BID office and managed on a day to day basis by the BID, reporting to their own partnership Board.

Visit Watford undertakes a variety of destination marketing activities for the town including the online promotion of local businesses driving footfall to increase sales. With strong levels of engagement from over 5,000 followers on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, its dedicated website at www.visitwatford.com includes full listings of firms offering a comprehensive range of products and services across the area including town-centre hotels, tourist attractions, cafes, bars and independent retail outlets, along with the latest guide to scheduled cultural, leisure and business events.



2016-2021: What has Watford BID achieved?



Theme 3 – Working together to secure the future of the town

Supported the development of the town

The continuing development of the town is vital for its economic and social viability, and much of our Chief Executive's time has been spent working with partners, in particular Watford Borough Council and intu to ensure Watford is a joined up town, which can be enjoyed and accessed by all.

In 2017, we commissioned a transport study. It was this piece of work that brought together Herts County Council, Watford Borough Council, intu and the developers to resolve how the High Street looked and worked around the new intu extension.

We pushed for all High Street works to be completed in tandem with intu works, so there was no further disruption to businesses.

Clarendon Road improvements

We were instrumental in securing £4.8m of grant funding for improvements between Watford Junction and the town centre. The first phase included filling in an underpass. Improvements to the crossing were completed in 2019.

Monitored footfall and dwell time

We entered into an agreement with Watford Borough Council, where they managed the footfall camera contract, via Springboard, and we managed footfall monitoring. In March 2020 the Council's contract with Springboard ended and a new company is being sourced to take on the footfall count.

In early 2020 footfall was high, and the dramatic impact of the lockdown on the town was recorded:

	2018	2019	2020
January	755,177	885,586	1,091,502
February	732,402	1,040,007	921,913
March	878,520	1,365,644	202,021

Prior to COVID-19 the average dwell time was 89 minutes in 2019 up from 82 minutes on the previous year. This was higher than the national average, and higher than competitor towns.

Awarded over £18k for individual business improvements

In March 2018, we launched a small grant scheme aimed at helping levy payers develop their business and improve the quality of their customer experience. The maximum grant available was £2,000 or 50% of the total costs. In total, over £18,000 was awarded to businesses in the town. Grants ranged from £316 to £2,000, and covered improving equipment at a live music venue, to shop front and signage improvements, to businesses re-configuring their internal layout, and improving/or developing their online presence.

Supported police in reducing knife crime

We supported an innovative pilot project with Hertfordshire police and intu, which has funded two police officers who have been working with vulnerable children across Watford, showing them the dangers of gang and knife crime.

Raised money for St Mary's Church restoration

In 2017, Watford Borough Council installed commemorative Graham Taylor boards to dress up a recently vacated building next to the church. The boards were given to the BID to auction off to fans, raising over £700 for the major refurbishment of the Church.

Supported Shopmobility scheme

We recognise that for Watford town centre to be welcoming it is important that there is access for all, so have provided a £5k grant to Shopmobility every year for five years. Shopmobility is run by a team of volunteers from Church car park and its free mobility scooters are well used in Watford.

Watched Watford Grow

The intu extension works started in March 2016 and completed in September 2018. During this time, we tracked the developments with weekly photographs and updates – including the High Street improvements – and posted them on Facebook and Instagram under the hashtag #WatchWatfordGrow. This meant people could see how quickly progress was being made and also provided a fascinating insight into the transformation of the town.

Received British BIDs Accreditation

In 2018, we achieved British BIDs national accreditation. Only a small number of BIDs across the country have received this award, which recognises best practice in communications with levy payers, governance and marketing. As part of the assessment process, our financial management was scrutinised.

Won a national Place Management Award

We won the national British BIDs Place Management Award 2018 for our contribution to the High Street improvement works. The award acknowledges outstanding projects delivered by BIDs around the country.

Achieved industry recognised qualification

Two of our members of staff studied for and passed the British BIDs Certificate in BID Management course with Jill gaining a distinction and coming top in the class.

Hosted Professional Development Day for other BIDs

We were asked to showcase the work we do in Watford to other BIDs around the country by hosting a British BIDs Professional Development Day. This took place in April 2019.

Representing Watford BID and business interests

Our Chief Executive is the Chair of the Hertfordshire Vibrant Towns Group; is on the Association of Town and City Management (ATCM) national Advisory Board, the British BIDs Board and Visit Herts Partnership Board, plus locally she represents the BID and its levy payers on local stakeholder groups: Big Business Connect, Cultural Leaders and One Watford. During the pandemic she was a member of the Watford Together group and the Watford Business Re-opening Strategy Wider Taskgroup. Over the past five years, we have supported and offered guidance to developing and new BIDs across the country.

“It is terrific news for Watford BID, gaining Accreditation, winning the National BID Award and having a key member of staff graduate with the certificate in BID Management. All three were celebrated at the British BIDs conference, and all three are a sign that the levy payers of Watford are receiving a truly excellent service. We congratulate Watford BID on these successes.”

**Professor Chris Turner,
Chief Executive,
British BIDs**



The BID in numbers

Floral displays

Pre-BID  20 hanging baskets

2016 
116
floral displays

2020 
215
floral displays
including those for COVID road closures

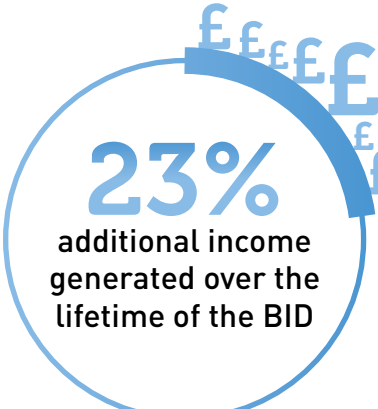
Annual Service Excellence Awards




360
business
representatives
attended



£12k
sponsorship
raised

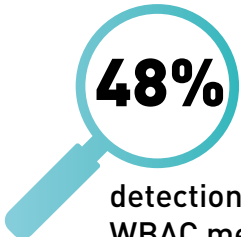

23%
additional income
generated over the
lifetime of the BID

(over and above the levy collected)


Over
10,000 people
attended the 2019 lights switch-on



£300m
invested in town centre
over the past 5 years


48%
detection rate for
WBAC members

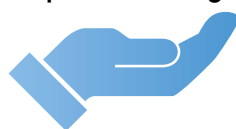



Retail Business Against
Crime members have
increased from
41 to 63



businesses
awarded COVID
grants, plus hand
sanitiser and floor
stickers distributed
to BID business

£18,500
awarded to BID
businesses for
improvement grants




18,000
new followers
to our social
media channels


Over **4,000**
entrants to Christmas
Calendar competition

What our town will lose if you vote 'NO'

- NO**... floral displays
- NO**... Christmas lights
- NO**... one to collaborate with the police & other partners regarding street drinkers, rough sleeping and anti-social behaviour
- NO**... one championing the town and its businesses, locally or nationally
- NO**... dedicated marketing of Watford town centre
- NO**... business crime reduction scheme
- NO**... BID website & social media to promote town's offer and individual businesses
- NO**... small business grants
- NO**... promotional activities that encourage footfall around the town such as Food & Drink Week, Watford Weekenders, town centre trails
- NO**... industry insights into best practice occurring in 300+ BIDs/towns across the UK
- NO**... Service Excellence Awards
- NO**... funding for initiatives to tackle crime
- NO**... one to work with stakeholders to shape local developments and improvements
- NO**... benefitting from new initiatives and technology, such as the Watford Gift Card, and Employee app
- NO**... Visit Watford and targeted consumer marketing
- NO**... lamppost banners
- NO**... one to manage the Purple Flag Award application

- NO**... support for Pubwatch
- NO**... funding for the development of the CCTV system
- NO**... support for Shopmobility, which promotes access for all in our town centre
- NO**... business networking and social events, specifically for town centre businesses
- NO**... relevant information sharing with businesses regarding local news and COVID-19 updates
- NO**... passionate, caring BID team dedicated to the prosperity of our town centre
- NO**... innovative, dynamic initiatives which aid economic recovery and future growth

NO...
£3m of
investment for
the town centre

YES...

Watford BID really
is that essential to
our local businesses,
employers, residents,
economy and future.



Moving forward: planning the next five years of Watford BID

It is wrong to say we live in especially uncertain times, the future is always uncertain.

"We are operating in a very different environment to that of 12 months ago, and we are facing a very unusual, uncertain future. The planning that we originally put in place has had to be reconsidered and for our next five years we have to think differently and plan differently.

We do know there is good support for what the BID does among levy payers and a desire for services and activities to continue, however, we have to be realistic in our expectations, the budgets in the first two years of a new BID will be tight, this combined with any continuing COVID restrictions, means we will have to be adaptable and creative in the way we approach things. We will have two exciting projects which we can carry through to the summer of 2021, we hope these will generate footfall and interest in the town.

Our 2021-2026 business plan is focused on continuing to deliver what levy payers want from us, but this is a very different world we are all operating in, so we know we will have to be flexible and maintain a constant dialogue with our levy payers, to ensure we are on track to deliver against the business plan and business aspirations."



Maria Manion
Chief Executive,
Watford BID

Five factors for good growth:

1. Start and end with citizen outcomes
2. Take a broad view
3. Balance today's challenges with tomorrow's opportunities
4. Build collaborative partnerships
5. Back up your ambitions with deliverable plans

PWC – Good Growth for Cities 2019



How the BID has kept in touch & shaped its future plans

Our communications with businesses

We recognise that there is no one size fits all approach when communicating with our levy payers.

For the past five years the BID has sent monthly e-updates to all businesses on its database. During the COVID-19 pandemic, this increased to weekly updates, to ensure businesses received the latest government and local information.

In addition to the e-update, the BID also produced quarterly printed newsletter which we hand delivered to all businesses in the town centre and to other stakeholders.

Once a year the BID holds an AGM meeting, which all company members and levy payers are invited to, and produces an Annual Report, which is available online, posted to stakeholders, and hand delivered to every business in the BID area.

All the above is in addition to the regular face to face visits carried out by the BID team when developing projects or looking into the viability of new projects.

We also share all information over our social media channels: Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram.

Our business networking events

The best ambassadors for the town are its businesses, their employees, and Watford residents. Our networking events are for businesses getting to know each other, the BID team and the Board.

Over the years, we have held different styles of events at different times of days, at different locations within the BID area. We started with the more traditional B2B style events with presentations and workshops – these were particularly helpful, while the town was going through redevelopment and were also attended by a lot of businesses on the periphery of the BID area, interested in what was going on in the town.

More recent events have focused on levy payers getting to know each other in a more social environment, understanding what is in the town, and how they can work together. These have been particularly well attended, with the last event in 2019 attended by 60 people.

How your feedback shapes the BID's future

Since we began operating we have listened to our businesses, we have consulted with businesses after each project to establish whether it was a success, if it delivered value for money, whether it should be repeated and if so how it could be improved. As a result of this constant business feedback we have modified and improved projects over the years.

We wanted to make sure that you, our businesses, shaped the future of the BID. As part of our commitment to you, we undertook a mid-term review of the BID to make sure we were on the right track and delivering what we said we would, plus we also asked what could be improved and what you would like to see moving forward. We undertook an online survey, plus Storecheckers visited businesses in town to talk in person with BID levy payers.

In the lead up to producing the business plan, we sent out 356 surveys, each week for 4 weeks, and offered a series of Zoom meetings to all businesses. We also hand delivered our annual report and used the opportunity to build our email database, recognising that face to face consultation is not desirable or permitted on a large scale due to the pandemic.



2021-2026: Planning for the future



Theme 1 – Safeguarding the future of Watford

Influencing and place shaping will be at the very heart of everything the BID does. It reinforces the BID's position with other partners and stakeholders, and the role of the BID in shaping and influencing how Watford will look in the next five to 15 years.

Influencing growth and development across the town and encouraging entrepreneurship

We will:

- Monitor and maintain a vacancy list for the BID area and identify market gaps
- Meet with agents and the Council every six months, to monitor trends, and identify hard to shift units and work on the concept of pop-up units and flexible workspace, with 'in/out' rental options
- Represent the interest of our businesses, the need to adapt, and maintain good and clear communication with the people who use the town
- Circulate information on key planning applications and consult with the Board to ensure a full and balanced commentary is presented

Supporting sustainable transport, and improving the town's infrastructure

We will:

- Continue to push for a sustainable transport interchange in the town centre, improvements to the High Street, with improvements to Watford High Street Station and improved access to nearby Waterfields Retail Park
- Continue discussions with partners, about a range of sustainable transport proposals for the town
- Work with the district and county councils to ensure commercial, consumer and business interests are represented in any discussions regarding the town's future and future developments

“It is clear that multifunctional town centres are on the rise and we now have the opportunity to accelerate this to meet the challenge of bringing back into productive use, redundant retail space.”

**Mark Robinson, chair of
High Streets Task Force**

Understanding the needs of our communities

We recognise Watford's local communities are at the heart of the town's future success – it is their confidence and support for Watford which will help the town bounce back fully.

We will:

- Consult with local resident groups, keeping them fully informed of developments and plans for Watford
- Support local community groups efforts in utilising redundant space in the town in a creative and innovative way
- Work with the Elected Mayor, the councils and utilise local consultations to inform communication and planning
- Work with the local cultural leaders, community leaders and religious leaders to reach our broader communities, to ensure as many people as possible are aware of Watford's offer, both socially and economically

In a new review of the high street titled **Build, Back, Better**, Bill Grimsey has recommended high streets take on a “massive shift in power” away from central government, instead empowering local communities to develop their high streets. He argues that for town centres and high streets to thrive after COVID-19, they will need to rediscover their community purpose.

“Faced with the huge challenge of rebuilding our high streets, we are presented with a golden opportunity to repair their neglected social fabric, lead a values-led period of social renewal and deliver lasting change.”



“Watford BID has been incredibly supportive of our charity Home-Start both with providing funding and an introduction to other businesses in Watford. Their grant enabled us to create a confidential space for us to meet with volunteers and families we provide services for. More recently their support meant we could invest in the resources we needed to begin to return to our charitable activities, safely, minimising the risks of transmitting COVID-19.”

Emma Power, CEO. Home-Start Watford & Three Rivers

Encouraging business development and networking

We will:

- Design a series of business development and networking events which will cover themes such as: finance/legal; marketing; social media; procurement; international trade; managing growth and wellness/mindset
- In Year 2 the Chamber will deliver ‘hub’ events and an extension of the Watford Business Festival. Levy payers and their employees will be given priority access to these events and the opportunity to host events and pitch their own business

Championing the third sector and charities

We will:

- Link businesses with support agencies and charities as part of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities; the priority will be to support local services and charities first
- Encourage individual businesses to become a local charity advocate or champion

Open to new ideas and staying ahead of the game

We will:

- Continue to ensure that all business views are represented at a national level
- Continue to participate in national discussions on your behalf and inform submissions to central government across a range of topics, including the Business Rate Review and the state of the High Street
- Embrace new ideas and undertake imaginative and innovative projects that will make Watford an attractive destination. The BID will however always manage the risk to ensure the interests of levy payers remain the top priority
- Continue to be recognised as one of the Country's highest performing BIDs, with Watford being recognised as a centre for excellence
- Learn as much as possible about the BID industry and lessons from other BIDs to ensure we deliver the best service we can

2021-2026: Planning for the future



Theme 2 – Enhancing the look and feel of Watford

People use Watford town centre in many ways. We want you, your staff, customers, or clients to have a positive experience, and feel safe and comfortable when in town.

Maintaining a commitment to safety and access

We will:

- Continue to run and develop the Watford Business Against Crime scheme to help reduce retail crime, with its own dedicated member of staff
- Continue to contribute to the CCTV system and its development, and to schemes such as Shopmobility and the Street Angels.
- Continue to monitor street drinking, beggars and rough sleepers, immediately notifying the police and other key partners of issues of antisocial behaviour; working with them, businesses and landlords to both offer solutions and minimise the impact on the town centre and its users
- Work with Watford Borough Council to source additional funding and secure works for areas or access points that our levy payers have identified as requiring improvement
- Support our night-time economy by maintaining our Purple Flag award, and the encouraging the development of Pubwatch

Enhancing our townscape

We will:

- Continue to brighten up the town centre with eye-catching floral displays
- Think creatively about Christmas lighting, learning from both major UK and European towns and cities, to ensure Watford continues to have stunning displays
- Find other cost-effective ways of enhancing and brightening up the townscape, such as lamppost banners
- Work with our partners to ensure we maintain a high-quality townscape free from graffiti, which is clean and well cared for

Emphasising the importance of service excellence

We will:

- Encourage and reward excellent customer service, recognising that post COVID, a positive face to face experience will encourage repeat visits and draw some sales back from online
 - Celebrate those businesses and their employees that do it well at our annual black-tie Service Excellence Awards

Watford Crime Stats August 2019 – July 2020

Public order offences decreased **9.2%** on the previous year

Shoplifting dropped **25.3%**

Theft from the person showed an annual drop of **35%**





Theme 3 – Marketing, communications and events

Communication is key. There is no point of the BID committing your levy to a range of projects if you or the consumer do not know about it. With the current restrictions in place and uncertainty for the future, it may be necessary to approach events and marketing in a slightly different way, but this will be done in consultation with levy payers, and imaginatively, to maximise success.

Promoting Watford during and immediately after the pandemic

We will:

- Create marketing and communication plans that will encourage people to come safely back into our town, venues and businesses in years one and two, then deliver high visibility consumer marketing and promotional campaigns once the new normal is established
- Continue to inform you about the latest government guidance on COVID-19 and legislation; and how to access grants and cost-savings initiatives

Communicating with levy payers

We will:

- Continue to provide regular newsletters, e-updates and visit your business to keep you informed about the latest news from the BID, and our partners
- Develop a portal on the BID website where levy payers get exclusive access to important town centre information, footfall statistics, insights into consumer data, and a message board to get in touch with other levy paying businesses
- Host meetings, social and networking events to ensure we stay in touch with you and your employees, and feel part of a business community where businesses support and understand each other. We want our businesses and their employees to be Watford's ambassadors
- Listen to your concerns, and use your feedback to inform BID activities, local decisions, and regional and national discussions
- Utilise other available channels to share important information with you, such as the shopping centre business newsletter and Pubwatch meetings
- Invite you to our AGM, and publish and hand deliver annual reports

Reaching out to residents and beyond

We will:

- Continue our financial support of Visit Watford, and work with the Visit Watford team to promote Watford, BID events, projects and activities to consumers
- Grow our existing social media channels of a combined 18,000+ followers by sharing engaging content which encourages visitors and enhances people's perception of Watford
- Use digital assets to capture data on who the Watford town centre user is and how to effectively reach out to them, before sharing these insights with levy payers
- Be open to new ideas and embrace change to ensure the town retains its competitive edge and use technology to both promote the town and extend our reach and engagement
- Support existing activities and events being run by our levy payers and other key partners
- Showcase examples of best practice, and shout about Watford's success – being proud about what we have and can achieve as a town and as a BID

Events and activities to attract people to the town centre

We will:

- Look at how we effectively develop events and promotions which safely allow people to move around Watford. Previous successful promotions including the Food & Drink Week and the Watford Weekender will be reviewed for inclusion, and we will look at good examples from other large towns and cities and see how they could work in Watford
- Continue to promote Watford town centre as a wonderful Christmas destination via our Winter in Watford platform
- Continue to support the events held by other organisations, either via marketing or by sponsorship, such as the outdoor cinema, beach, Diwali and Imagine Festivals



How will the BID measure success?

Success means different things to each of us, and for each project, our measurement of success will be different. However, we need to ensure this Business Plan delivers for you and the town, and this will always be at the heart of our work.

- Business feedback provides a lot of information, we will continue to survey participating businesses after each activity, to see if they offer value for money both for the business and consumer
- We will conduct consumer surveys to support business and event surveys
- We will hold an Annual General Meeting, providing business to feedback on the years' work and produce annual reports which will be hand delivered to local businesses and posted to Head Office voters
- We will independently review the performance of the BID mid-term
- We will ensure we maintain the British BIDs accreditation for high quality management and governance
- We will monitor vacancy rates, new business start-up rates and business survival rates

Knight Frank's High Street Ranking – where's hot, where's not?

Where next when investing in high street retail? Bury St Edmunds, Basingstoke and Watford. Three towns that wouldn't necessarily be top-of-mind hotspots of retailing excellence. But all three rank in the Top 30 in Knight Franks High Street Investment Ranking of 200 locations across the UK. With strong fundamentals, the investment case for each is a decent one.

The BID budget

Watford BID	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Totals	%
Income (£)							
BID Levy	364,512	364,512	488,436	488,436	488,436	2,194,332	81%
Additional Income*	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000	500,000	19%
Total Income	464,512	464,512	588,436	588,436	588,436	2,694,330	
Expenditure (£)							
Operating Costs	72,000	72,000	78,000	80,000	85,000	387,000	16%
Theme 1	70,400	70,400	80,000	80,400	82,000	383,200	15%
Theme 2	181,100	181,000	220,000	220,000	220,000	1,022,100	41%
Theme 3	110,500	110,500	150,000	150,000	150,000	671,000	27%
Renewal Process					20,000		1%
Total Expenditure	434,000	434,000	528,000	530,400	557,000	2,483,300	
Annual Reserves	30,512	30,512	60,436	58,036	31,436	210,932	9%

How much will it cost me?

The levy is set at 1.25% of your rateable value. In real terms what does this mean.....

Rateable value**	What your annual levy will be	Equivalent to
£20,000	£250	68p/day or £4.80/wk Less than a first class stamp or a cup tea/coffee
£50,000	£625	£1.71/day or £12/wk Less than a daily bag of chips or milkshake
£100,000	£1,250	£3.43/day or £24/wk Less than a daily meal deal
£500,000	£6,250	£17.12/day or £120/wk Less than going out every night for a meal

* Includes voluntary BID levies, sponsorship income, ticket sales and WBAC scheme.

** Businesses with a rateable value under £10,000 will not be subjected to a levy.

The BID rules

The Ballot

1. Watford Borough Council will send those responsible for properties or hereditaments to be subject to the BID a ballot paper prior to 8 January 2020.
2. Each property or hereditament subject to the BID will be entitled to one vote in respect of this BID Proposal postal ballot which will commence on 8 January 2020, and close at 5pm on Thursday, 4 February 2020. Ballot papers received after 5pm on 4 February 2020 will not be counted. The result of the ballot is due to be announced on the following day.
3. In order for the proposal to be successful at ballot the result will need to meet, as a minimum, two independent criteria which are: (a) of those ballots returned by the close, those voting in favour of the renewal proposal must exceed those voting against it, and (b) of those ballot papers returned by the close, the total rateable value of those properties or hereditaments which vote in favour, must exceed the total of those voting against.
4. If successful at ballot, the BID will commence delivery of services on 1 April 2021 and will continue for a period of 5 years to 31 March 2026.

The Levy

1. The levy rate to be paid by each property or hereditament is to be calculated as 1.25% of its rateable value as at 31 March each year, for year 1 and 2, rising to 1.5% in years 3, 4 and 5. This returns the BID to its originating levy rate in years 1 and 2.
2. Only properties or hereditaments with a rateable value of £10,000 or more will be eligible for payment of the levy.
3. The number of properties or hereditaments liable for the levy is approximately 456.
4. The levy will be chargeable annually in advance of the chargeable period (April to March) and charged as at 1 April each year (chargeable day), starting in 2021. No refunds will be made.
5. The owners of untenanted properties or hereditaments will be liable for payment of the levy. This includes listed buildings.
6. Occupiers within the shopping centre (currently known as intu) that are subject to a service charge will pay 1% of the rateable value in years 1 and 2, and 1.25% of their rateable value in years 3, 4 and 5.
7. Registered Charitable organisations not operating from a retail unit will pay a levy of 0.5%.
8. Watford Borough Council will be responsible for collection of the levy. Charges will be made at cost for the printing and distribution of levy bills.





Accountability and Transparency

1. The BID Body will continue to be Watford BID Ltd a not for profit organisation, limited by guarantee.
2. The Directors of the BID (the 'Board'), will meet every two months. The Board will have responsibility for governance matters such as financial arrangements, contractual obligations, human resources, standards and compliance.
3. The Board shall appoint a Chair.
4. Project sub groups will be formed on an as needed basis, and will comprise of Directors, and interested levy payers.
5. Provided that the BID is meeting its overall objectives, subject to consultation it shall have the ability to vary service delivery and expenditure allocation according to the changing demands of levy payers. However, in accordance with the BID Regulations, changes to the BID boundary or to the levy rate proposals may require an Alteration Ballot.
6. The Company shall meet with the Council, as the Billing Authority, quarterly to monitor service delivery, levy collection and financial management issues.
7. Levy paying businesses will be eligible to become Members of the BID Company.
8. The BID will file annual accounts compiled by independent accountants with Companies House. The accounts will be available to all levy payers. An annual report on activities, including finances, will be published. An Annual Meeting for Members and levy payers will be held.
9. An Operating Agreement, which includes the Council's Baseline service commitments, has been agreed with Watford Borough Council. A copy can be found at www.watfordbid.co.uk
10. Notification of the intention to hold a ballot was sent to the Secretary of State on 18 May 2020.

Finances

1. A cautious approach has been adopted to budgeting for the BID term due to ongoing and unknown impact of COVID-19. In the first term, collection rates in the early years were very good, and on average an additional 24% additional income was generated per annum. However, given COVID-19, a full and cautious revision of budgets and forecasts have taken place.
2. A levy collection rate of 85% in year 1 and 2 rising to 95% in years 3, 4 and 5 has been assumed. This reflects the medium and long term impact of COVID-19.
3. The average annual levy available to be spent by the BID in year 1 and 2 is £364,512 and £488,436 in years 3, 4 and 5.
4. By the end of the new term, the BID is budgeted to have reserves of £210,932 (9% of expenditure). In addition, contingences on planned expenditure would increase reserves to £244,381, if unspent.
5. During the first term, the BID had some success in generating additional revenue. The additional income provision within the budget for the renewed BID takes account of committed amounts only and totals 19% of income.
6. Operating costs of the BID are estimated as 16% of total expenditure.

Definition

The term 'Renewal' means replacement of the existing BID at the end of its current term (March 2021) with new BID Arrangements covering the BID area and subject to the rules and arrangements described herein.

The BID area

For a full list of streets in the BID area visit: www.watfordbid.co.uk



How to vote



1. You should receive one ballot paper for each property that you are eligible to vote for by post. If you do not, please email: enquiries@watfordbid.co.uk



2. Please check that each ballot paper has its own return envelope.



3. Complete the ballot paper putting a cross (x) beside your choice to retain the BID for a further five years or not.



4. Write your name in BLOCK capitals and your POSITION in the business and then add your SIGNATURE.



5. Each ballot paper must be returned in its own separate envelope.



6. Return your completed ballot paper(s) by post in the pre-paid envelope provided.



Ballot timetable

Ballot opens 8 January 2021

Ballot papers issued to businesses

Ballot closes: 4 February 2021

Ballot papers must be received no later than 5pm

Ballot result announced: 5 February 2021

YES 

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