



**TOWN CENTRE BID**

**2023**

**Annual Report**

# About Watford Town Centre BID

Watford Town Centre BID, formally Watford BID is a business-led not for profit company voted for by the organisations and supported by the public sector.

Watford Town Centre BID represents 484 businesses and organisations in Watford town centre. It is one of over 300 BIDs across the UK. Watford's was established on 3 April 2016 and secured a second term in February 2021.

Watford BID delivers against the Watford BID Business Plan 2021 – 2026. It is the employed team who are responsible for the delivery of the Business Plan and the day to day management of the company. The team report to the Board of Directors which is made up of business representatives from across the town.

## The Team

**Kara Mesiano**  
BID Manager &  
Company Secretary

**Glen Hemsensatt**  
Marketing Manager

**John Hattingh**  
Watford Business Against  
Crime Coordinator

**Steve Shaw**  
Watford Town Centre BID Ranger



## The Board of Directors

**Kwame Tefe Chair**  
Moon Under Water

**Daniel Berko**  
Aspect Property Ltd

**Donna Nolan**  
Watford Borough Council

**Kathryn Robson**  
Watford Borough Council

**Simon Plumb**  
Atria Shopping Centre

**Mark Ryan**  
Metro Bank

**Saffron Johnson**  
Chamber of Commerce

**Donna Lawrie**  
One YMCA

**Kara Mesiano**  
Watford BID Ltd

## Introduction from the Chair

I was reappointed Chair of Watford BID Board in July 2022, taking up the baton from Vicki Costello who left Watford for an exciting new position in East London. It's my second time as Chair and always a pleasure to be able to play such an important role in driving forward the success of the BID and Watford town centre.



Watford BID's vision is for Watford Town Centre to be a place where everyone feels safe, confident and comfortable, and where businesses thrive and prosper. To achieve this vision we must continue to work more collaboratively with key partners in the town, as we cannot do it alone.

We are facing significant financial pressures because of the recent business rates revaluation. Our BID levy income will reduce by 23% for years 2024/25 and 2025/26 and like all businesses around us we are facing increasing costs from our suppliers. We cannot continue spending at the levels we have in previous years, so have spent time talking to levy payers and reviewing all BID activities to find costs savings, while ensuring we still deliver the projects that matter most to you.

Our former Chief Executive Maria Manion stood down at the end of March 2023 after 7 years of running the BID. Watford BID has also sadly said goodbye to Jill Farnsworth, Head of Operations & Development, who has been announced as the new Chief Executive of Milton Keynes BID. Kara Mesiano has recently been appointed Watford BID Manager and will now be providing the leadership and direction to ensure the team successfully delivers the BID's 2021 - 2026 business plan that was endorsed by Town Centre businesses when they voted in the last BID ballot. Kara brings a wealth of experience to the new role, having been Watford BID's Business Manager since 2020. The staffing restructure prompted new objectives that support business growth and improve the Watford town centre experience for our levy payers, their employees and their customers, but on a reduced income.

July and August saw the rebrand of Watford BID to Watford Town Centre BID and the launch of our new website [www.watfordtowncentre.com](http://www.watfordtowncentre.com). We will be using our 'Watford Town Centre' name and logo in all our public facing marketing and communications for greater synergy, but our registered name will continue as Watford BID. The team are now wearing Town Centre BID branded jackets so you can identify them more easily – they want you to keep talking to them, so please don't hesitate to reach out.

Watford Town Centre is a great place to have a business and we all – as the people that work in the town centre – are its greatest asset. By working together, we can drive forward positive change that benefits us all and keeps our local economy thriving.

**Kwame Tefe**

**Watford Town Centre BID Chair**

**General Manager, The Moon Under Water**

# What we delivered in 2022/23



## A snapshot of 2022/23

The team at the BID have been busy over the past 12 months delivering a range of projects and activities. Here are the highlights:



### The Watford Gift Card

- Signed up 53 more businesses to our Watford Gift Card scheme, meaning there are now 150 places to spend the Gift Card.
- Sales of the Gift Card increased by 400% over the year to £41,784, following an extensive marketing campaign and direct sales via our Gift Card sales desk in Atria during December.

### Safe & Secure

- Appointed a Town Centre Ranger to monitor street drinking, begging and rough sleepers and immediately notify the relevant authorities of antisocial behaviour issues.
- Retained the Purple Flag Award for the early evening and night time economy.
- Re-introduced Best Bar None accreditation for licensed venues.
- Funded additional medical support in the town over the busy weekends in the summer and throughout December into early January.
- Continue to grow our Watford Business Against Crime scheme helping members prevent thefts and recover stolen items.
- Contributed to the installation of new lights around St Mary's Church, the CCTV scheme and Shopmobility.
- Installed a defibrillator in the Moon Under Water for town centre use and connected it to the national network.



### Marketing & Communications

- Ran seasonal and event-led marketing campaigns to drive footfall, spend and dwell time in the town centre.
- Increased our following across Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn, and joined TikTok.
- Introduced marketing 1-2-1 support for businesses.
- Produced and delivered 4 seasonal BID newsletters to all BID levy payers.



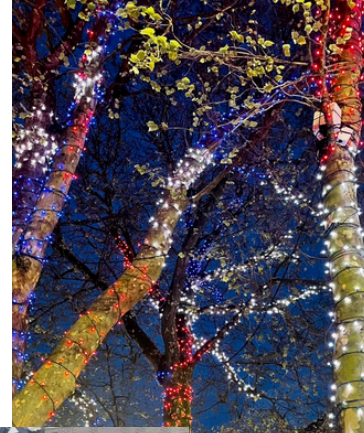
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### Colourful displays

- Filled the town centre with beautiful flower displays from June to late September.
- Installed Watford icons banners on lamp columns from April to August
- Celebrated the Queen's jubilee, commemorated her passing and showed solidarity with the people of Ukraine, by lighting up the town centre trees in appropriate colours.



### Festive lights, switch on & Winter in Watford

- Installed impressive twinkly LED festive lighting throughout the town centre.
- Installed a giant LED Christmas Tree in the town centre event space.
- Footfall in the town centre was up by 78%, year on year, on the day of our switch-on event.
- Visitor numbers to our Winter in Watford website increased by 83% and content reached over 90,000 Instagram accounts.



### Experience Watford this Winter

*Spectacular Lights, Joyful Panto, Festive Dining, Christmas Events and more!*



### Going greener

- Won a silver award in the Sustainability category of the Hertfordshire Business Awards 2022 for our efforts to go greener.
- Hosted 10 sessions for Watford businesses to tour the former John Lewis unit and the rehoming of 300 items of left over furniture and fittings for new use.
- Partnered with Atria to deliver The Gift Swap Pop-Up Shop, which brought people into the town centre, encouraged them to stay and carried an important sustainability message, helping reduce the overall carbon footprint of Christmas.
- Purchased an Electric Vehicle to offer FREE cardboard collection to levy payers.





## Supporting businesses

- Secured £30,000 worth of grant income from Watford Borough Council for redistributing via our small business improvement grant scheme.
- Partnered with the Shaw Trust to support levy payers with the recruitment of staff during a period of staff shortages.
- Recognised 13 individuals working in BID businesses with an Excellent Employee Award.



## B2b

- Organised free taster sessions at leisure venues in the town centre for BID businesses, lunch & learn training sessions on wellness related topics, a steps challenge competition among town centre businesses as part of our Wellness Week.
- Hosted our 2nd black tie October Ball event for BID businesses at The Langley.
- Hosted a Christmas social event at Shots Watford and a March event at Boom Battle Bar.
- Increased the number of users and variety of content on our b2b platform Watford LinkUp.



## Financial Report 2022/23

### Income

BID Levy Income	£427,635
External Income	£94,121
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>£521,756</b>

**Central & Fixed Costs**      -£138,708

### Project Costs

Theme 1 – Safeguarding the future of Watford	-£215,325
Theme 2 – Enhancing the look and feel of Watford	-£248,492
Theme 3 – Marketing, communication and events	-£189,873

**Total Expenditure**                      -£792,398

**Projected Surplus/savings\***              -£269,800

\*The Board of Directors approved additional expenditure during 2022-23 from 2021/22 surplus/reserve funds for additional town centre events, sustainability projects and business support and additional marketing.