



TOWN CENTRE BID

BID factsheet

Your BID
levy invoice

What is Watford BID?

A Business Improvement District – or BID – is a way for local businesses to work together to tackle issues that affect their trading environment. Watford BID Ltd began trading on 3 April 2016. A second BID term, of five years, was agreed following a successful renewal ballot in February 2021. Watford BID will deliver the projects and services set out in the BID business plan 2021-2026, which can be found on the BID website or you can request a hard copy from the team.

What is the BID levy?

The BID is funded primarily by all the eligible businesses and organisations in the BID paying an annual BID levy. This levy income allows the BID to deliver against the BID business plan. It is also used to lever in more funding; for example from public sector agencies, grant bodies and sponsorship during the 5 year term, maximising the potential funding stream and the benefits that the BID can achieve. Over the course of its first term, in 2020/21 Watford BID generated 29% additional income, which was reinvested back into the BID area to support businesses.

Who has to pay the BID levy?

The person or organisation liable to pay the non-domestic rates for the property, with a rateable value of £10,000 or more, is liable to pay the BID levy. Where a property is occupied, this will be the occupier, for empty properties the person or organisation entitled to occupy the property is liable to pay. This will normally be the leaseholder or the owner.

How is the BID levy calculated?

The charging mechanism is simple and fair. The BID levy is charged at 1.5% of the Rateable Value of each eligible business within the BID area on 31 March 2024. Retailers that pay a service charge to Atria Watford are charged at the lower rate of 1.25%. Registered charitable organisations not based within a retail unit pay a reduced BID levy rate of 0.5%.

What happens if I don't pay?

The BID levy is mandatory and Watford Borough Council, who collect the levy on behalf of Watford BID, will take action to recover any outstanding money owed. Any levy payer experiencing financial difficulties should contact the Council or the BID at the earliest possible opportunity to explore spreading payment over a period of months to help the situation.

Transparency and accountability

Watford BID is accountable to each and every levy payer. It is not-for-profit and all accounts are published in an annual report, which is available for all levy payers. Levy payers will also be invited to attend our AGM. The BID Board is made up of representatives from different business sectors operating in the BID area. Its directors are elected annually and are responsible for governance matters such as financial arrangements, contractual obligations, human resources, standards and compliance as well as providing strategic direction.

A snapshot of 2023/24

The team at the BID have been busy over the past 12 months delivering a range of projects and activities. Full details of the year's activities will be published in our Annual Report, but here are the highlights of 2023/24:


Watford Gift Card

- Signed up even more businesses to our Watford Gift Card scheme, with particular focus on new businesses that opened in our town centre. There are currently over 140 places to spend the Watford Gift Card.
- Increased the number of days the Gift Card sales desk was open in Atria in December from 8 days to 12 days.
- Sales of the Gift Card increased by 35.7% over the year to £50,890, following an extensive marketing campaign and direct sales via our Gift Card sales kiosk in Atria during December.

Safe & Secure

- Increased our Town Centre Ranger hours over busy periods to monitor street drinking, begging and rough sleepers and immediately notify the relevant authorities of antisocial behaviour issues.
- Continued to grow our Watford Business Against Crime scheme, helping members prevent thefts and recover stolen items.
- Contributed to the town's CCTV scheme.
- Contributed to Shopmobility to encourage and support accessibility.
- Installed an additional defibrillator outside Glow in One, on The Parade, for town centre use and connected it to the national network.
- Increased our partnership working with Watford Police and other Watford Town Centre partners to support the reduction of crime in the town.
- Support and actively participate in the ASB forums to identify and establish solid action plans for the most prolific offenders in Watford Town Centre.
- Held a Crime & Safety Partnership Event, enabling businesses to meet the town's policing team and gain valuable insights on the police priorities in the Watford Town Centre.

Watford Town Centre Rebrand

- Rebranded ourselves as Watford Town Centre BID, using the more consumer friendly handle 'Watford Town Centre' on all our social media channels to encourage even more people to follow us and find out about all things Watford Town Centre.
 - Launched the new Watfordtowncentre.com website in August, increasing our visitors by an incredible 776% compared to the previous website.
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Marketing & Communications

- Ran seasonal and event-led marketing campaigns to drive footfall, spend and dwell time in the town centre.
 - Increased our total following across Instagram, Facebook, X, LinkedIn and TikTok by over 10% in just 8 months.
 - Produced and delivered 2 BID newsletters to all BID levy payers.
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Festive Lights & Winterfest

- Installed impressive twinkly LED festive lighting throughout Watford Town Centre.
 - Introduced a brand-new event “Winterfest”, to improve upon the Christmas lights switch-on event.
 - Welcomed thousands of attendees to the event to help improve footfall, dwell time and enhance perceptions of Watford Town Centre as a Christmas destination.
 - Overwhelmingly positive feedback from attendees in our post-campaign survey.
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Colourful Displays

- Filled the Watford Town Centre with beautiful flower displays from June to late September.
 - Installed Union Jack banners on lamp columns throughout May to celebrate the Kings Coronation.
 - Celebrated Proud Watford, Pride, Halloween, Purple Tuesday and Remembrance Day by lighting up Watford Town Centre’s LED tree lights in appropriate colours.
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Going Greener

- Launched our free Cardboard Collection Scheme in Watford Town Centre, reducing operational costs for businesses and collected over 5 tonnes of cardboard.
 - Partnered with Atria to deliver the Green Apple award-winning Gift Swap Pop-Up event, which brought people into Watford Town Centre, encouraged them to stay and carried an important sustainability message, whilst helping reduce the overall carbon footprint of Christmas.
 - Joined and regularly attend the Environmental Manager Network alongside other Watford Town Centre partners and businesses to support the town’s wider sustainability strategy.
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Supporting Businesses

- Secured £28,500 worth of grant income from Watford Borough Council for redistributing via our small business improvement grant scheme.
- Utilised the grant funds to help improve 10 businesses with the quality in which they operate; including sustainable practices and technology advances.
- Introduced marketing 1-2-1 support for businesses, providing pertinent information to improve how businesses promote themselves.

B2B

- In response to the BID levy income reduction, we completed a 2023 (April) and 2024 (February) BID survey to give levy payers a voice in shaping the top priorities for Watford Town Centre.
- Introduced a “For BID Businesses” section of the Watford Town Centre website, which includes footfall reports, vacancy rates, B2B news and useful dates for the diary.
- Circulated relevant information and support from Watford Town Centre partners including Watford Council, Herts County Council, Watford Chamber of Commerce and Herts Police.

What's new for 2024/25?

We will continue to deliver the above projects, but we look forward to introducing some new elements into the mix including:

1. Retail Spend Insights. We'll be swapping out footfall data and investing in invaluable monthly retail spend insights across multiple sectors.

2. New Lamppost Banners. The BID will be investing in new colourful lamppost banners that will enhance the town and promote the Watford Town Centre brand, helping to increase website visitors.

3. Corporate Gift Card Strategy. The BID will be introducing a new gift card strategy to grow the Watford Gift Card scheme through corporate sales.

4. Events, Activities and the Early Night-time Economy. Following the feedback from the 2024 BID Survey, the BID will have a renewed focus on Watford Town Centre events, activities and additional support for the evolving early and night-time economy. We will be looking to increase town events and activities, ensuring they meet the needs of the diverse communities that use Watford Town Centre.

5. Breakfast with the BID. The BID will run quarterly breakfast meetings with levy payers, Watford Town Centre partners, and stakeholders. This will be a great opportunity to meet the team and regularly find out what's available to support your business.



Giving businesses the **opportunity to influence** and **invest** in the **town's economic prosperity** and **potential**



Getting involved

The value of what you get out the BID depends on how much you use the services available. The level of involvement is down to you. Having a BID in place provides an opportunity for all to work together positively for the benefit of the whole town.

You can access information about the BID at: www.watfordtowncentre.com

Or can contact us at our offices:

Email: enquiries@watfordtowncentre.com

Tel: **01923 919989**

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@WatfordTownCentre



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