

London Borough of Waltham Forest

Report Title	Mission Waltham Forest
Meeting / Date	Council, 29 th February 2024
Directorate	Chief Executive's Directorate
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Wards affected	All
Public access	Open
Appendices	Appendix 1. Mission Waltham Forest: our plan for a more equal borough

1. Summary

- 1.1. The Council and borough are facing significant challenges in a time of ongoing instability, including worsening local government finances, the increase in cost of living, the housing crisis, worries around community safety, widening inequalities, and the climate emergency. These, and other challenges have compounded, and point to the urgent need for transformation in the way we work as an organisation, and the partnerships we form with residents, communities, and our partners, to deliver the best outcomes for Waltham Forest. This also requires more early, carefully targeted interventions and relentlessly focusing our efforts and resources on prevention and tackling the root causes of problems.
- 1.2. Mission Waltham Forest: our plan for a more equal borough is our response and sets out a mission-based approach to shaping a more equal borough, tackling inequality while driving the transformation the Council needs to deliver this. It sets the Council's strategic direction and our ambition.
- 1.3. The mission-based approach we will adopt helps translate the biggest and most complex challenges we face into measurable, achievable goals. Our approach includes six Borough Missions that focus on the issues that matter most to our residents and how we will respond to these, and four Council Missions that outline how we must transform how we work to deliver on our vision for the borough.
- 1.4. Missions organise Council activity and galvanise us to come together and work more collaboratively across the organisation, as well as shaping the ways we work with partners and our community, to realise our shared goals.

1.5. This report introduces Council to Mission Waltham Forest: our plan for a more equal borough.

2. Recommendation

2.1. Subject to approval by Cabinet (22nd February 2024), Council is recommended to:

2.2. Agree Mission Waltham Forest: our plan for a more equal borough, at Appendix 1.

3. Background

3.1. Waltham Forest faces a number of complex challenges at a time when residents are navigating an increasingly unstable and uncertain world. Councils across the country are in crisis and having to make increasingly difficult financial decisions. Although Waltham Forest is in a strong financial position, we are not immune and must be proactive and responsive to the challenges we face. If we are to meet both the increasing scale of the challenges we face in an ever-decreasing financial envelope, we need a new, long-term approach that can deliver real and lasting change that puts residents at the heart of everything we do.

3.2. Mission Waltham Forest: our plan for a more equal borough, attached at Appendix 1, sets out how we will work to secure a more equal future for all our residents through a mission-based approach that focuses on tackling the borough's biggest challenges and transforming the organisation to drive change in the ways we deliver help and support to the borough's residents.

3.3. Mission Waltham Forest: our plan for a more equal borough articulates our vision for the borough by 2030: "A more equal borough, where everyone can make the most of their strengths to live the life they want to lead." This provides us as a Council with our core purpose.

3.4. The scale and cross-cutting nature of our mission-based approach requires a break from our business-as-usual. To achieve our long term goals, we have to transform and become an organisation that is more resilient, dynamic, and capable of adapting to the ever-evolving needs of our communities.

3.5. Missions translate a big, complex challenge and can only be achieved through sustained focus. Missions define our direction and are:

- **Bold, inspirational** and promise an impact on our residents' daily lives
- **Common causes** that spark activity across collaborations and that people want to come together and contribute to
- **Ambitious but attainable** so we strive to make lasting change for the better

- 3.6. Six Borough Missions respond to the issues that matter most to our residents and set out how we will respond to these:
- **Ensure every family and every child are given every opportunity.** We will ensure every family and every child can access the services and support they need so all children can thrive.
 - **Build an economy that works for everyone.** We will shape a more inclusive local economy that attracts businesses and talent while unlocking opportunities for residents.
 - **Make Waltham Forest a great place to live and age well.** We will ensure all residents can harness their strengths and live healthier, longer, and more independent lives.
 - **Tackle the housing crisis head on.** We will deliver a new generation of homes that are affordable to buy and affordable to live in.
 - **Lead the way for a net-zero borough.** We will tackle the Climate Emergency head on, paving the way for net zero in Waltham Forest.
 - **Safe, green neighbourhoods where everyone can thrive.** We will ensure every resident feels safe in their homes and neighbourhoods and feels included and welcome.
- 3.7. Four Council Missions set out how we must transform how we work if we are to deliver on our vision for the borough:
- **A focus on services designed around residents.** We will constantly work to improve the design and quality of Council services and push ourselves to provide experiences and services residents deserve.
 - **A preventative approach for stronger communities.** We will have a joined-up approach to prevention, offering support in the right place, at the right time, in the right ways.
 - **An inclusive workforce that reflects our community.** We will build a culture of inclusion by closing pay gaps; our workforce will be as diverse as our community at every level.
 - **A firm financial footing.** We will achieve financial security by balancing the books and adopting a well-managed, sustainable approach to investment.
- 3.8. Further details of the six Borough Missions and four Council Missions can be found in Mission Waltham Forest: our plan for a more equal borough, attached at Appendix 1.
- 3.9. Prevention and early intervention are at the heart of Mission Waltham Forest: our plan for a more equal borough. We need to harness our efforts and resources on prevention and to ensuring the right services and support are available at the right time and in the right place so we are working with people and they are empowered to reach their potential and when necessary, stop escalation to crisis.
- 3.10. Mission Waltham Forest: our plan for a more equal borough recognises the Council must identify efficiencies and prioritise in the context of

continued financial pressures, putting our resources in the places that best serve our residents. We will plan ahead carefully, taking a long term view and investing in services and activities that have clear results and impact.

- 3.11. To deliver Mission Waltham Forest: our plan for a more equal borough, we will publish a detailed delivery roadmap in spring 2024, alongside regular updates and performance reporting.
- 3.12. Mission Waltham Forest: our plan for a more equal borough is aligned to the Council's ambitious transformation programme that will shape the organisation's direction of travel. The transformation programme is organised under areas of focus identified to orientate, prioritise, and guide our work.
- 3.13. Achieving the ambitions of Mission Waltham Forest: our plan for a more equal borough requires a shared effort across the organisation, with even greater collaboration and more join up of efforts across the Council. It also necessitates harnessing the work with our communities and our partners, to collaborate, innovate, and implement together. Working with communities and partners, consultation, engagement and participatory research will continue as programmes and projects are developed.

4. Implications

4.1. Finance, Value for Money, and Risk

- 4.1.1. Mission Waltham Forest: our plan for a more equal borough is a transformational approach for the Council. One of its Council Missions is to put the Council on 'A firm financial footing'. This will achieve on-going financial security for the Council by balancing the books and adopting a well-managed, sustainable approach to investment.
- 4.1.2. This transformation will result in a realignment of resources in how the Council works and ways resources are used. These resources could include current services, assets and funding. The benefits to residents and communities should see improved outcomes and pressures reduced for services, as well as efficiencies that can be considered to fund budget shortfalls in 2025/26 onwards. Further investment in services that deliver better outcomes for residents can be considered when funding gaps, in future years, have been resolved.
- 4.1.3. The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) is the Council's financial forecast for a three year period i.e. 2024/25 to 2026/26. Mission Waltham Forest: our plan for a more equal borough will be developed in alignment with 2024/25 Budget Report going to Cabinet February 2024. Proposals will require some reprioritisation of resource in services and some initiatives may require one-off or on-going investment. The business cases for these will need to be produced and considered for funding against competing priorities, the cases for which will be enhanced where impact can improve cross cutting outcomes. Business cases that require separate and subsequent approval will be

reported to Cabinet. The anticipated outcome of these business cases will be incorporated within the MTFs Refresh.

- 4.1.4. Mission Waltham Forest: our plan for a more equal borough will have benefits that will reduce the spending pressures on the Council. For example, through a greater focus on prevention and early intervention, better supporting the health and wellbeing of residents and reduced spending pressures in Adult Social Care is anticipated. Mission Waltham Forest: our plan for a more equal borough allows this important link to be made and opportunities, such as this, captured in the plans and benefits realised.
 - 4.1.5. Mission Waltham Forest: our plan for a more equal borough will give the Council the information to support the reallocation and targeting of resources, and the transformation agenda. This will ensure the funding available to the Council is optimised to deliver best outcomes from investment whilst allowing planned deprioritisation of services with poor outcomes. The approach will allow the Council to work better with partners, such as NHS, police, resident groups, and the private sector, in shaping communities and services provided to them.
 - 4.1.6. Mission Waltham Forest: our plan for a more equal borough is focused on early intervention, prevention and ensuring the on-going financial sustainability of the Council. As such, seed funding can yield financial and social returns for residents and any reprioritisation or new business cases should be considered in this context. If cost savings or demand management cannot be proven, investment decisions could consider the wider context of positive impact on residents through economic growth, climate impact, health and wellbeing outcomes, and community safety.
- 4.2. Legal
 - 4.2.1. Under Part 2 of the Council's Constitution approving or adopting the Policy Framework is a matter reserved to Full Council. Full Council is asked to agree the proposed Mission Waltham Forest: our plan for a more equal borough to be adopted.
- 4.3. Equalities and Diversity
 - 4.3.1. The vision for Mission Waltham Forest: our plan for a more equal borough is "a more equal borough, where everyone can make the most of their strengths to live the life they want to lead". This focus on equality is reflected in our Borough and Council Missions, demonstrating a clear commitment to strengthen our approaches to reducing discrimination and promoting equality within our communities.
 - 4.3.2. Mission Waltham Forest: our plan for a more equal borough is expected to have a positive impact on improving and promoting equality in the borough as well as advancing equality and inclusion within the Council.
 - 4.3.3. To enable this will require a stronger commitment to ensuring every decision we make is made through an equalities lens, and monitoring our impacts on inequality in the borough. This will involve:

- introducing a renewed approach to how the Council undertakes Equality Impact Assessments, making the process more accessible and impactful, and making services more accountable, to ensure every stage of decision-making is rooted in a more robust understanding of our impact.
 - developing a renewed Corporate Performance Framework to more closely align with the equality-based objectives set out in Mission Waltham Forest.
- 4.3.4. An Equality Analysis screening of this decision was undertaken and at this stage there is no impact on the Council's Public Sector Equality Duty. This will continue to be assessed as a delivery plan is developed and further Equality Analysis will be completed.
- 4.4. Sustainability (including climate change, health, crime and disorder).
- 4.4.1. Sustainability is at the heart Mission Waltham Forest: our plan for a more equal borough. It is expected to achieve positive outcomes across climate, health and wellbeing, and crime and disorder. This will continue to be assessed as a detailed delivery plans are developed.
- 4.4.2. We are facing a climate and environmental emergency and Waltham Forest is committed to reaching net zero carbon emissions. The Council has stated its intent to lead and inspire collective action and will place climate action and environmental sustainability at the heart of realising Mission Waltham Forest: our plan for a more equal borough. This will include interventions to accelerate climate action in Waltham Forest, adapting to the changing climate, and greater action to protect, preserve, and enhance local biodiversity and natural capital. Mission Waltham Forest: our plan for a more equal borough is aligned to the ambitions and areas of focus set out in Waltham Forest's Climate Action Plan. Local engagement will continue to identify specific aspirations and ideas to raise awareness and encourage behaviour change across all partners, businesses, and residents.
- 4.4.3. Good health and wellbeing are fundamental to residents leading full and rewarding lives and it is our ambition that Waltham Forest is a place where everyone is able and supported to have this. However, we know across the borough the benefits of good physical, mental and social wellbeing are not being felt by everyone. Healthy life expectancy unfairly differs in different areas of the borough and there are some with shared backgrounds having the worst outcomes across a wide range of health measures. Mission Waltham Forest: our plan for a more equal borough aligns with Building a Fairer and Healthier Waltham Forest: our response to the Marmot recommendations, with initiatives targeting health inequalities and improving health and wellbeing for all.
- 4.4.4. Residents consistently identify fear of crime and violence as a top priority and a quarter of residents say fear of crime has a significant impact on their lives. Mission Waltham Forest: our plan for a more equal borough re-casts community safety from being a 'service' directly delivered by the community safety team through direct interventions into a Mission which the whole Council and its partnerships are

galvanised by. There is strong evidence that vulnerability, opportunity, profit, the effectiveness of the criminal justice system, drugs and alcohol are the major drivers of crime. Reframing crime prevention as a Mission opens up opportunities to systematically build community safety into all we and our partners do to address drivers of crime, including how we support and safeguard vulnerable young people; design crime out of homes and public spaces; undertake our licensing and regulatory functions; and through the provision of support services (e.g. substance misuse). We have strong evidence of how crime is concentrated in cohorts, places and times; and there is strong evidence of 'what works' in crime prevention. SafetyNet, Waltham Forest's Community Safety Partnership will develop a Community Safety Strategy later this year, offering the Council an opportunity to lever partners contributions to make this a borough-wide Mission, provided they are well-aligned.

4.5. Council Infrastructure (e.g. human resources, accommodation or IT issues

4.5.1. Mission Waltham Forest: our plan for a more equal borough introduces how the Council must transform as an organisation. It will shape and inform the People Strategy Delivery Plan, as well as staff communications and engagement, to help all staff share in the Council's ambition, develop collective commitment and responsibility, and equip everyone to play their part.

4.5.2. Mission Waltham Forest: our plan for a more equal borough is aligned with the Council's ambitious transformation programme and the priority areas identified to orientate and guide work around the Council's transformation.

Background Information (as defined by Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985)

None.