



WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24



**WELWYN
HATFIELD**



Introduction

from the Leader and Deputy Leader

Welcome to our 2023-2024 annual report.

We hope you find this a useful snapshot to understand what we have achieved this year and how we have managed our budget.

This year all our achievements have been focused on putting you, the community, at the heart of everything we do.

We have been thrilled to deliver new amenities to you, including the Oak Hill Crematorium, recycling centre in Welwyn Garden City as well as new homes as part of the Hatfield One Town Centre regeneration and High View development in Hatfield.

We celebrated Campus West turning 50 in style and saw bumper pantomime sales as well as providing many free events as part of our This Girl Can, Big Summer and half term events.

We have continued to engage with our tenants and leaseholders, with over 800 of you responding to our first satisfaction survey to help us identify where we need to make changes to meet your needs. This year, you will have the opportunity to give us feedback each quarter.

We know there is always room for improvement, and we have set out our new key priorities.

Thank you for being part of our community and together, we will make 2024-25 another great year.

Max Holloway
Leader of the Council

Jane Quinton
Deputy Leader of the Council

Our year in numbers



Borough population is
120,231
(a 0.4% increase from mid-2021)



We collected over
4 million
bins
and recycled
19,000
tonnes



We welcomed
128,697
visitors to Campus West to make use of our cinema, Roller City and Soft Play



We inspected **89**
landlords and
14 letting agents



351,107
people got fit at our leisure centres

and, working with partners, we have delivered

7,691
swimming lessons



We cleared
3,037
fly tips and issued
110 penalty notices

We prevented

419

cases of homelessness



and rehomed
351
new home seekers



We planted
300
new trees



We welcomed
7,968
visitors to the Mill Green Museum and Roman Baths



We received
1,018
planning applications



We consulted with
11,889
properties for
10 new parking schemes



804
tenants responded to our satisfaction survey



Our key projects and achievements

Recycling and waste management

The new Tewin Road Recycling Centre and Depot in Welwyn Garden City opened in May. The multi-million-pound site was jointly funded by WHBC and Hertfordshire County Council and is of strategic importance to the continued improvement of waste services and recycling provision in Welwyn Hatfield and across Hertfordshire.

Oak Hill Lawn Cemetery and Crematorium

A new, modern crematorium, the first in the borough, opened in September at Oak Hill Lawn Cemetery in Hatfield. The crematorium will help meet the demand for improved cremation services for Welwyn Hatfield and the surrounding area.



Hatfield One Town Centre regeneration

Hatfield's One Town Centre was officially opened by the Mayor in September. The development consists of three blocks (Fourways House, Newton House and Corner House) providing 71 new homes, including 38 affordable housing units and commercial units on the ground floors.

One Town Centre has been fully funded by the council and is a key part of the council's wider regeneration programme for Hatfield, providing much needed housing and facilities for people in the town and across the borough.

High View

This year, residential and commercial tenants continued to move into High View, the £45 million regeneration programme to transform the heart of South Hatfield with brand new shops and homes, including affordable homes and properties for sale.





Climate Hub

This year, we launched our Climate Hub to engage with the community on climate related matters, including sharing our progress in developing sustainable practices, reducing carbon emissions, and enhancing local green spaces for a healthier, more resilient future. The hub empowers residents to provide their feedback on our climate action initiatives and stay informed with the most recent climate news, valuable resources, and details of upcoming events.



Website accessibility

Our main website climbed to the top 3 spot in an independent national website accessibility survey of 393 local government websites. This outstanding achievement reflects the Council's commitment to making our website as accessible and user-friendly as possible for everyone that uses it.

Community Awards

The first ever One Welwyn Hatfield Community Awards ceremony was held in February. The awards celebrated inspirational people, sport clubs, community organisations and businesses in the borough, recognising the achievements of our local heroes.



Local Plan

Last October, we formally adopted our Local Plan for 2016-2036. The Local Plan is now the Statutory Development Plan for the Borough and will be used to determine planning applications and development decisions.



Campus West turns 50 and Panto success

In 2023, Campus West, Welwyn Garden City's premier family entertainment centre, celebrated its 50th anniversary. The momentous milestone was marked at a celebratory event in December attended by the Mayor of Welwyn Hatfield, WHBC Leader, and guest of honour, TV Director and Writer, Mark O'Sullivan who began his career at the iconic venue. A special display of old props, photographs and memorabilia from the last 50 years was mounted, for a trip down memory lane.

Our 2023-24 panto, 'Robin Hood' and its adult version 'Robin: Keep on Riding' had the highest ever sales for a Campus West panto. Over 11,000 people enjoyed both shows.



Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy

This year, our new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy was approved by Cabinet. The new Strategy sets out the council's commitment to championing equality and embracing diversity and inclusion, both as a service provider and as an employer.

Anglia in Bloom and Tree City of the World success

In September, Welwyn Garden City and the wider borough triumphed in this year's Anglia in Bloom competition, scooping two gold awards and two best in category awards including 'Overall Best BID Town' for Welwyn Garden City and 'Overall Best Historical Parks and Gardens' for Danesbury Nature Reserve.

We were also awarded Tree City of the World recognition for 2023 for the fifth consecutive year! The global scheme, which celebrates and promotes places that create green space in urban areas, recognised 170 cities across 21 countries.



Community Lottery

The Welwyn Hatfield Community Lottery had a bumper first year. The lottery costs only £1 per ticket, with 60 per cent of the proceeds going to local charities and groups. Since its launch in September, over 50 good causes have signed up.

Community buses

A partnership between WHBC and local charity, Communities 1st, saw two community bus services continue to operate for 2023-24 and beyond. The Shopper Hopper service provides elderly and vulnerable people with trips to local supermarkets and there is a separate regular bus service to the Jimmy Macs Lunch Club in Hatfield.

Generation Welwyn Hatfield Careers Fair

In February, Welwyn Hatfield students and residents had the opportunity to network with over 40 local businesses at the Generation Welwyn Hatfield Careers Fair. The event, which was organised by WHBC in conjunction with the LEP, highlighted different job sectors and opportunities open to residents and young people including at TK Maxx, Sky Movies, Barclays, Royal Air Force and Tesco, whose headquarters are in the borough.



King's Coronation celebrations

In May, we celebrated the Coronation of His Majesty King Charles III with street parties and events across the Borough. The council's clock tower was lit red, white, and blue for the momentous occasion, as was the Arcade lights in Hatfield, and the very appropriately named Coronation Fountain on Parkway, Welwyn Garden City, was coloured royal purple for the celebrations.

This Girl Can and Big Summer

There was a Big Summer of fun in July and August across Welwyn Hatfield with events and activities for toddlers, teens and everyone in-between. From sports to arts and crafts taking place as part of the council's BIG Summer programme, with many activities free.



Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement

We are committed to putting our residents at the heart of what we do. We will listen to you and learn from your experiences so we can continually improve our housing services and create a sense of community that people are proud to be part of.

There are lots of different ways tenants can be involved, from simply keeping up to date with the latest news in our Community Edit newsletter, answering a survey, coming to see us on one of our community catch ups, right through to joining our Residents Panel.

However you choose to be involved, we'd like to thank you for your time. Your contribution helps us to shape our housing services and focus on the things that matter to you.

Some of our involvement highlights from this year include:

Residents Panel

The Residents Panel work in partnership with the council and act as a 'critical friend', looking at our services, policies and performance data.

This year, the Panel gave feedback on our new Pet Policy, Resident Involvement Strategy, Tenancy Strategy and new tenant handbook.

The Panel hosted a successful drop-in event in White Lion House in Hatfield in June 2023, and have been out and about meeting residents at various council events, including the Hatfield Community Fair and the Purple Tuesday in Welwyn Garden City.



"I really enjoyed it. I learnt a new skill and my children were very impressed with what I made."

Brilliant Boxes participant.

Training Courses and Workshops

We worked in partnership with Step2Skills and Oaklands College to provide a variety of free training sessions and workshops for our tenants.

Community Days

We held four Community Days across the borough, supported by our repairs contractor Morgan Sindall Property Services. Neighbourhood officers, repairs staff, members of the Community Safety Partnership, the Police and Fire Service were all on hand to talk to residents.

We also removed around eight tonnes of bulky waste and litter, reported fly tips, logged repairs and ground maintenance requests and explored prospective neighbourhood improvement bids.

Consultations

Our tenants and prospective tenants were consulted on phasing out our flexible tenancies and replacing them with secure tenancies. Of those who responded to the consultation, 94% supported this change, which has now been made.





Meet the Contractor events

We held successful drop-in events for tenants in Hatfield whose homes have been earmarked for energy efficiency works. They had the chance to meet council officers and members of the Morgan Sindall team carrying out the work to learn about the benefits of these improvements as well as have any questions answered.

Neighbourhood Improvement Bids

We completed 22 Neighbourhood Improvement Bids over the year. These are small projects suggested by tenants that will enhance their local area and make it an even better place to live and this year we have installed new benches, bike storage and standing planters.

Tenant Satisfaction Survey

As your landlord, we want to know where we're doing well and where we can do better.

This year, we undertook our first tenant satisfaction survey. We received 805 responses from tenants who gave us their views on our housing services.

Overall satisfaction with our housing services is 60%.

Tenants scored us well on:

- the level of service from our repairs service
- maintenance of tenant's homes
- our staff treating tenants fairly and with respect
- feeling safe in their homes (with high levels of compliance in gas safety checks, fire safety measures and electrical checks)

We have identified we need to make improvements in resolving your queries on the maintenance of communal grounds and tackling antisocial behaviour.

We now have an action plan in place to address this.

Our next Tenant Satisfaction Survey will start in June 2024. The survey will be conducted by market research specialists Kwest Research who will contact a randomly selected representative sample of our tenants by telephone, email or letter.



Our tenants in numbers

We manage and maintain 10,168 homes.

Property type	Tenure type				TOTAL
	General needs	Leasehold	Sheltered housing	Temporary accommodation	
Bungalow	107	9	1,040		1,156
Bedsit	154	61			215
Flat	1,729	1158	583		3,470
House	5,096				5,096
Maisonette	131	99	1		231
TOTAL	8,544	1,327	1,624	182	10,168

Property type	Number of bedrooms							TOTAL
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Bungalow	4	398	749	5				1,156
Bedsit	215							215
Flat		2,059	1,312	99				3,470
House		12		3,708	300	14	3	5,096
Maisonette		18		101				231
TOTAL	219	2,487	3,232	3,913	300	14	3	10,168

We have commenced a new planned works programme in Autumn 2023, achieving over **80%** satisfaction with works completed so far, which included the replacement of **36** bathroom, **48** kitchens, **136** windows/doors, and **36** roofs.



We have carried out major works costing **£993,000** on **24** leasehold blocks



79.67% of our repairs have been completed on time.



We have answered **46,420** from our tenants.



We have inspected **1,405** properties as part of our stock condition survey.

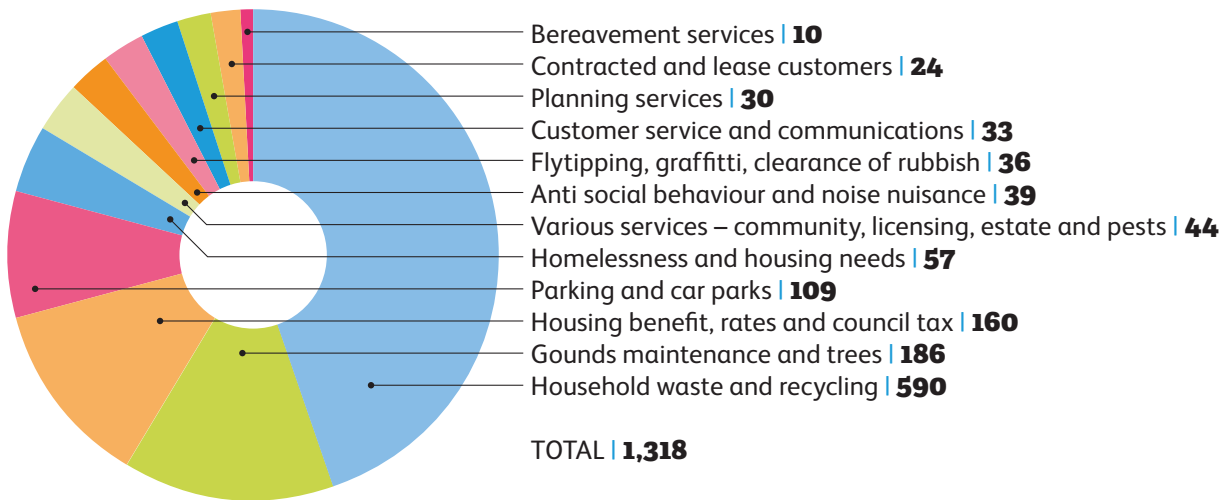


Our customers

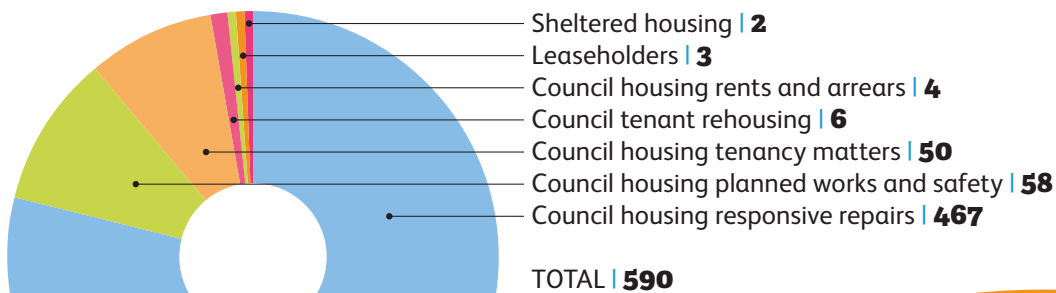
Our customers are important to us and we are committed to providing you with high quality services to meet your needs.

We strive to investigate complaints quickly and effectively. When we get things wrong, we will apologise and take action to put things right.

We received 1,908 complaints this year.
1,318 of these related to the following council services:



The remaining 590 complaints related to the following tenant and leaseholder services:



Compliments

We received 96 compliments this year.



“Please pass on our thanks to the team emptying the black bins. They were very quick and efficient, and we really appreciate that the bins were brought right back to the correct property.”

“The men who carried out the cutting of her hedge have done a marvellous job. Just wanted to pass on my thanks.”

“Thank you to the garden team for continuing to keep our town centre looking so beautiful. It really makes a difference.”

“Cannot thank you enough for the lovely service you gave my family and what a wonderful venue to hold a funeral.”

“Made a call to report a missed bin collection. The call centre staff who picked up my call was amazing, they were professional whilst being empathetic and understanding of my feelings/frustrations.”

“I emailed Income Team and received a very quick response. I would like to say thank you to the council. It was lovely to feel respected and treated nicely and politely.”

“Thank you to the gardeners for the work where they have carried out in my street.”

“Well done to start a trial of collecting extra cardboard. I hope it proves to be successful and you see a benefit, we certainly do. Well done!”

“The member of staff has been extremely understanding and supportive when I’ve been going through a difficult time.”

“Thank you for your kindness and support. We all felt cared for and the modern crematorium was a lovely setting.”

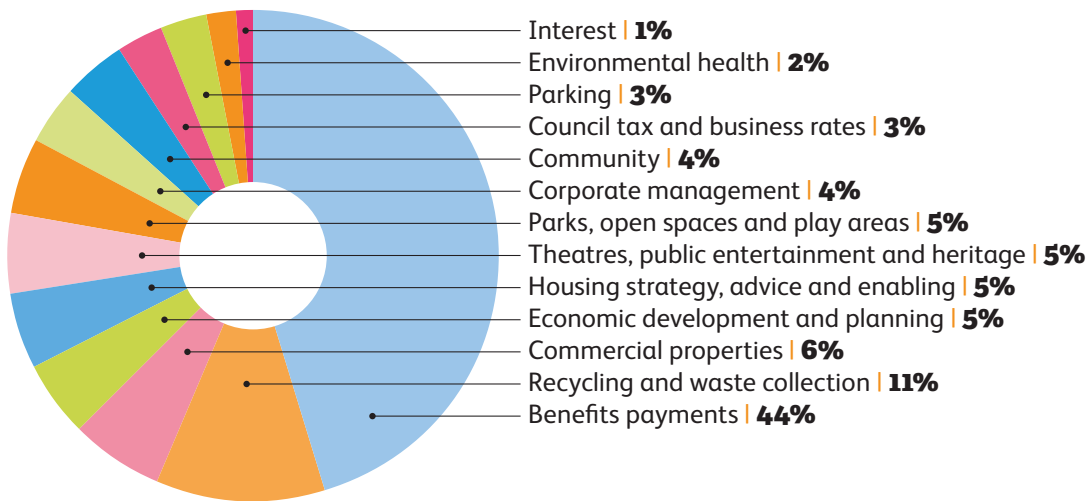
Our finances

Gross expenditure

Our budget was set to respond to financial challenges including inflation, reduced funding and ongoing recovery from the pandemic which impacted the council's income streams.

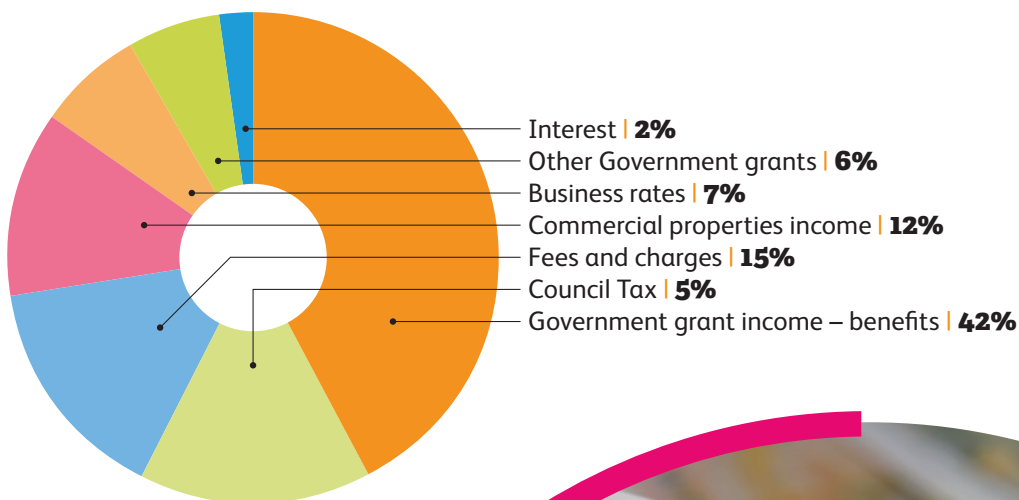
We have focussed on improving efficiency whilst also embracing new technology and ways of working. This year, we successfully implemented savings whilst also contributing to our strategic reserves.

2023/24 £64m gross expenditure by service area:



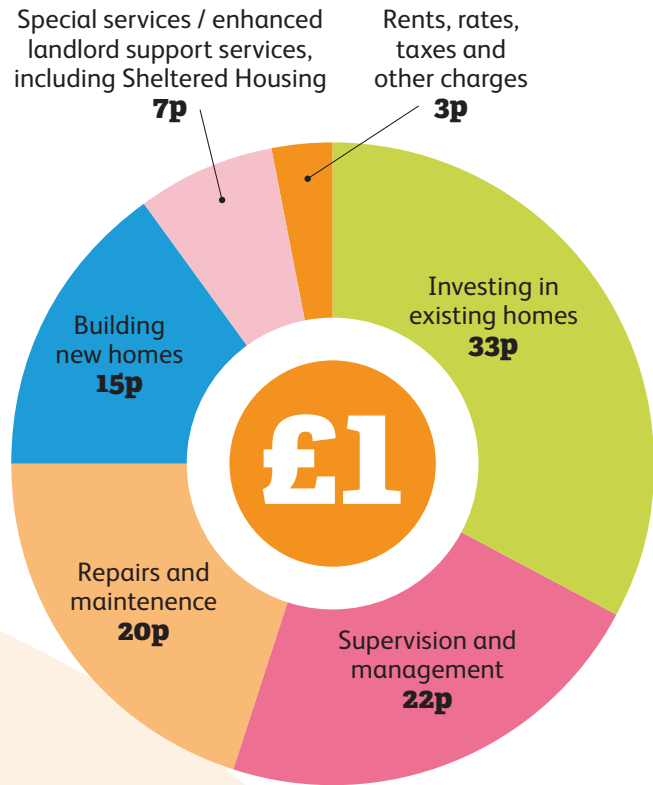
Gross income

2023/24 sources of gross income:



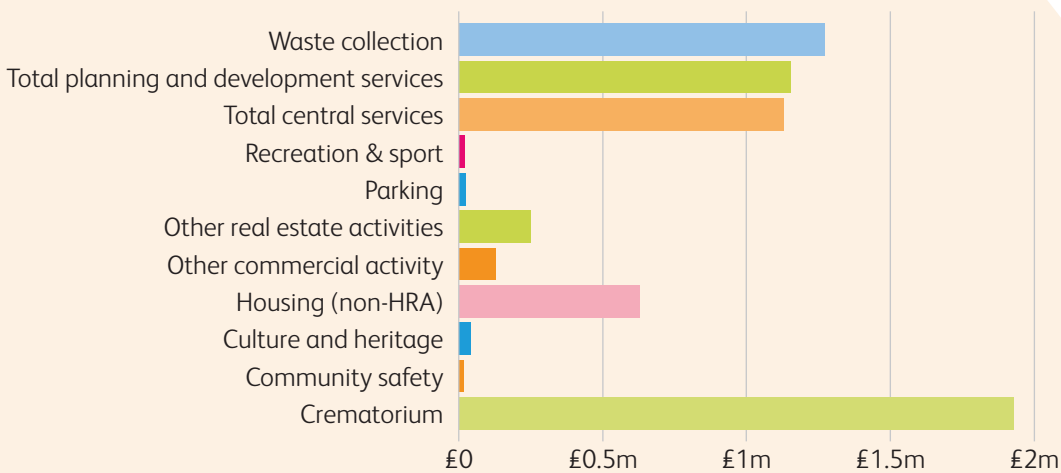
Council homes

This year, we received £54.76 million in rental income from our tenants. The chart on the right illustrates how each £1 of rental income is spent.



Capital expenditure

We have invested almost £6.6m in capital projects in 2023/24. This includes expenditure on the new Oak Hill Crematorium which opened in 2023/24, various regeneration projects including Highview and Welwyn Garden City Town Centre North and works to the Tewin Road Depot. The council's capital expenditure for 2023/24 is shown below:



Our future

Community at our HEART

We conducted a community survey in September 2023 to find out what is important to you. We used this information to set our Vision and Priorities for the next three years.



H

Homes to be proud of



E

Enable an economy that delivers for everyone



A

Action on Climate Change



R

Run an effective council



T

Together, create opportunities for our communities

Our Vision is to put the 'Community at our Heart', with the following five key priorities:

Homes to be proud of; with a commitment to creating a sense of pride and satisfaction in the quality of homes and living experience in the Borough, as well as constructing new social and affordable housing and advocating high-quality homes for everyone.

Enable an economy that delivers for everyone; through championing local businesses, supporting vibrant town centres, facilitating access to amenities in neighbourhood centres and promoting economic growth in rural areas.

Action on Climate Change; including reaffirming the Council's commitment to being Net Zero by 2030 and setting an example to others.

Run an effective Council; through smart financial decisions, being transparent and building positive reputations both locally and with external partners.

Together, create opportunities for our communities; increasing collaboration within the community by fostering pride, celebrating diversity and inclusion through a variety of activities and events, and collectively working towards a safer living environment.

Key to delivering our vision, plans and strategies are our CORE values. Our staff will work in line with these values to be:



Collaborative

Working together to get things done.

Open

Behaving with integrity and fairness.

Responsible

Taking responsibility for our decisions and actions.

Excellent

Performing at our best and striving for excellence.

The Council turns 50 in 2024. Look out for our celebratory logo.



For community news and events, please visit our website one.welhat.gov.uk and follow us at:





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