



Dear resident,

Our mission is to meet the changing needs of the people who live, work, and study in Waltham Forest and respond to the challenges our residents face, including the ongoing cost of living crisis, climate change, community safety and difficulty accessing high-quality, affordable housing.

Like you, the council has had to make savings. We've worked hard to protect the services that residents rely on most. After more than a decade of austerity, during which real-term government funding has decreased by over a third, we cannot continue to meet your needs without increasing Council Tax. Even with a rise we are still having to make savings to balance our budgets. Across the country, Council Tax has increased steadily during the past 13 years. This has been a deliberate plan by government to raise funds locally, meaning Council Tax now accounts for more than half of our total funding, compared to 30 per cent in 2010. This is happening at a time of unprecedented demand for many of our services. Last year, there was a 70 per cent rise in families using council-funded foodbanks and the number of people approaching us at risk of becoming homeless was 50 per cent higher in November 2023 than the year before. These problems are not going away and for many they are getting worse. From providing housing, food, financial help to care in the home, we are the safety net that supports the most vulnerable and prevents the least well off in our society falling through the cracks.

Without funding we cannot continue this essential work, so we will be raising Council Tax by 2.99 per cent, as well as a further 2 per cent to be used exclusively for funding adult social care. That's an annual Council Tax for a Band D rated home of £1,702.32. This social care funding will go toward us looking after 1,000 extra elderly and disabled adults in their own homes since 2019 – but it will not fund it all. The element of Council Tax collected on behalf of the Greater London Authority to help fund the Metropolitan Police, London Fire Brigade, and Transport for London will rise to £471.40 for a Band D property. That means an overall increase of 5.75 per cent for a Band D property, to a total of £2,173.72. We've included information in this leaflet about some of things we do to serve the people of Waltham Forest. There's also information on help available if you're struggling to pay your bills. Please contact us if you are finding it difficult. Help is here for you – please don't suffer alone. Over the next decade, we will invest £749 million in local people and places.

This will be used to reduce inequalities, ensure everyone can access new opportunities, and help people feel safer. Your neighbourhood is already seeing the benefits of investment – in 2023, our Let's Talk programme asked people to suggest how you would use £10,000 to improve the ward you live in. This year, we're delivering these projects.

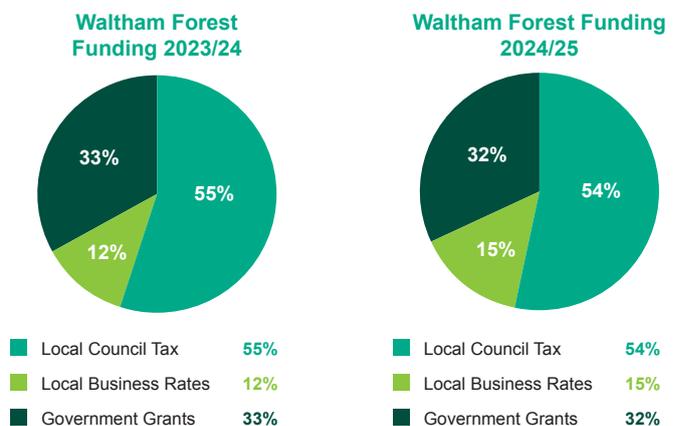
We have received one of the largest Levelling Up Fund totals in London. This will pay for the transformation of Leyton Tube Station, create a new cultural quarter around Soho Theatre Walthamstow, and improve Chingford Mount and Highams Park town centres. This extra investment is improving the infrastructure we all rely upon across the borough. There is always more to do. We are looking at everything we do, to improve our services and reduce the inequalities that hold too many people back. Our priorities are clear: our residents come first in everything we do and every decision we make – always.

Thank you for your time.

Yours sincerely,

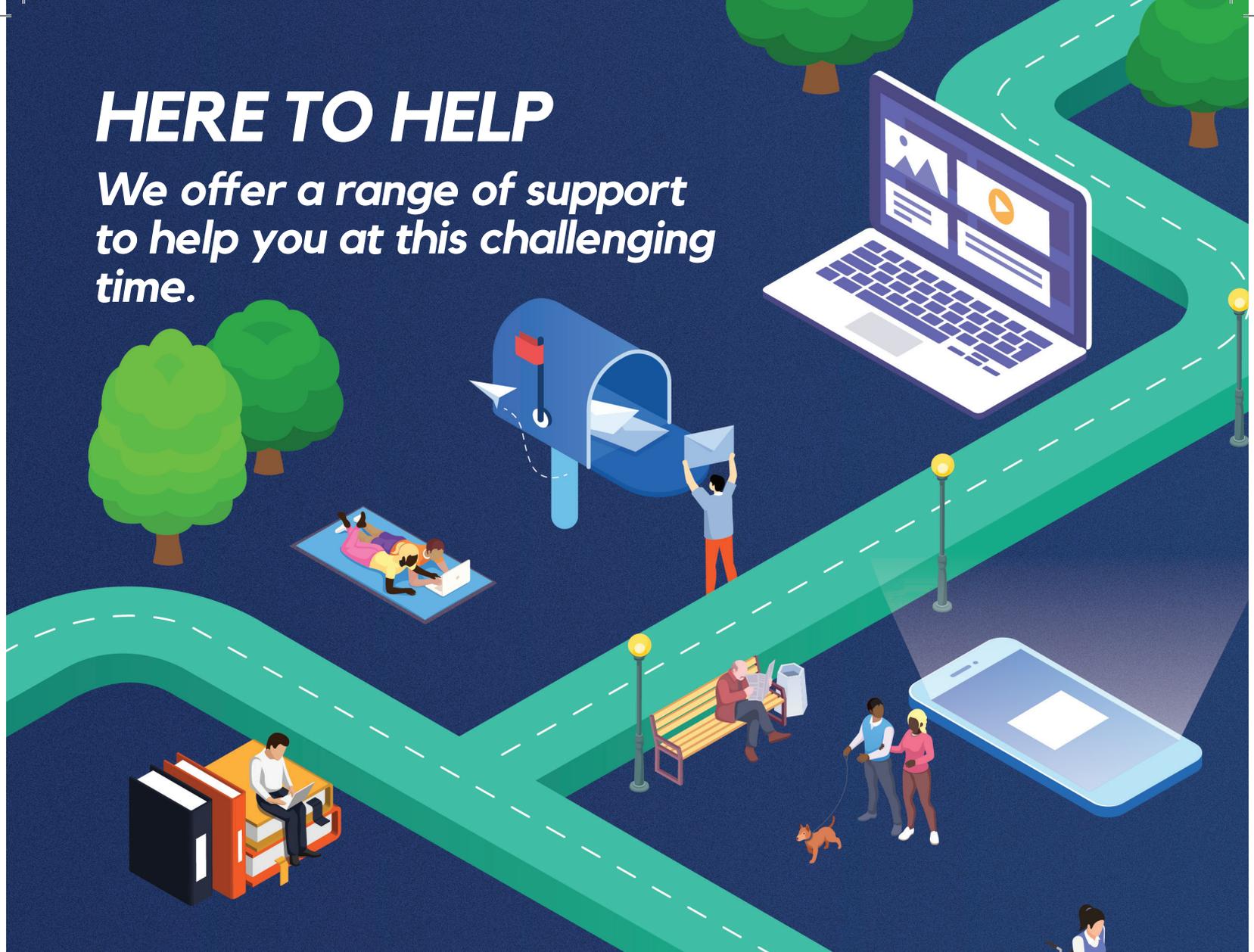
Councillor Grace Williams
Leader of Waltham Forest Council

Email: Leader@walthamforest.gov.uk



HERE TO HELP

We offer a range of support to help you at this challenging time.



Discretionary Housing Payment

A scheme that can offer additional support with rent payments for residents receiving Housing Benefit or getting help with housing costs through Universal Credit.

Discretionary Council Tax Hardship Scheme

This financial support can be awarded in addition to Council Tax Support and also help residents in temporary financial crisis who are not receiving Council Tax Support. Find out more and apply online.

Council Tax Support

This financial support helps individuals and families on low incomes to pay their Council Tax bill by reducing the amount they have to pay. Applicants of working age can get a reduction worth up to 85 per cent of their bill and those of pension age up to 100 per cent of their bill depending on their circumstances.

Local Welfare Assistance

Help for you or your family if you are in severe financial hardship and cannot afford basic essentials

Wider cost of living support

We are supporting our residents with the cost of living crisis, including financial aid and warm spaces.



To get more support to pay your council tax, please visit:
www.walthamforest.gov.uk/counciltaxsupport