

March 2021

**Dear Resident,**

The past year has been like nothing any of us have ever faced. If you have lost someone to this horrific virus my heart goes out to you. The human cost has been immeasurable.

Here at the council we have tried to support residents through this difficult time in practical ways by keeping us all safe, handing out over 78,000 free masks; caring for the elderly and vulnerable by making over 37,000 check-in calls to ensure everyone had food and medicals supplies; ensuring everyone can get tested – 38,000 tests so far; and going further to support our children – with free food vouchers in the school holidays. Frontline workers, from refuse collectors, carers, social workers and many more, have had to go the extra mile constantly adapting to changing regulations, sometimes with risks to themselves and others.

All of this has come at a huge cost with staff and resources under pressure like never before. Whilst there has been some additional funding, Government's expectation is that local authorities will increase Council tax to cover the ongoing costs caused by the pandemic. Since 2010 we have made £120 million in savings and now have over a thousand less staff (26%). At the same time the borough's population continues to increase and get older, placing more demand on services for our vulnerable residents such as social care, which now accounts for more than 50% of our total spend.

In this context, and to safeguard your vital services, council tax is increasing by a total of 5.84% which for an average household living in a Band C property will mean an extra £1.76 per week. This breaks down as:

- a 1.99% rise in your basic council tax and;
- a 3% increase in the Adult Social Care precept. Ringfenced money spent only on social care: including looking after people with complex needs, those in care homes, mental health provision and our elderly residents.
- There will also be an increase in the Greater London Authority precept, which includes additional police funding.

We know the economic impact the pandemic has had on many of you and how hard it has been. As well as supporting our businesses and creating jobs, we have also given out over £2 million in hardship funds. If you are one of the many struggling, I would urge you to see if you are eligible and what support is out there, please visit [bit.ly/WFassistance](https://bit.ly/WFassistance)

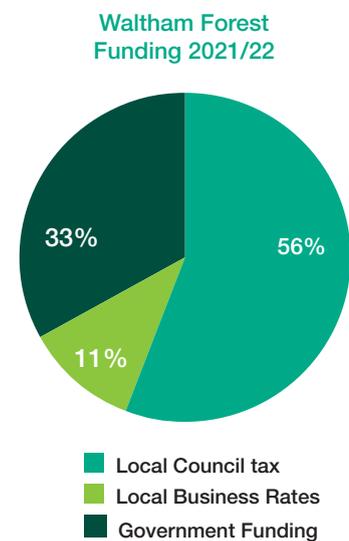
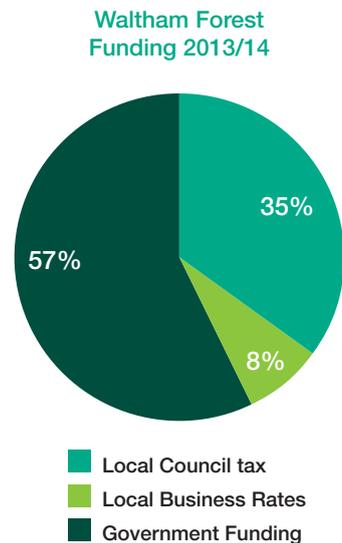
After months of uncertainty, we are finally starting to see the first signs of life returning to normal. As a council we are focused on the future and supporting the Waltham Forest vaccine roll out; working with our local businesses to help them restart and recover; holding a jobs summit to find ways to connect residents with meaningful jobs and careers; and working with our brilliant schools and teachers to support our young people as they go back into education.

Please do keep yourself and each other safe.

Yours faithfully



**Councillor Clare Coghill**  
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# OUR FOUR IMMEDIATE PRIORITIES

## Connecting people with jobs



## Safe and healthy lives



## Our 15-minute neighbourhood



## Confidence in the future



### Connecting people with jobs

#### What we've done

- We are investing in new housing and infrastructure in every part of our borough to directly stimulate the local economy
- We held our Local Business Recovery Summit to connect businesses to support services and have distributed more than £50m in grants

#### What we're doing

- We will hold a Jobs Summit and are developing a single front door for jobs to connect local residents to good, meaningful jobs in your neighbourhood
- We will continue to improve life chances of our young people, providing opportunities and guidance through apprenticeships, partnerships and services to improve our young people's employment and skills prospects

### Our 15-minute neighbourhood

#### What we've done

- Launched our Choose Local campaign to highlight our fantastic local businesses, and motivate residents to use their spending power locally
- We've created people-friendly streets, investing in parks, play areas and cycle hangars and seen a 56% increase in cycling journeys in 2020

#### What we're doing

- Work is ongoing to redevelop the EMD Cinema, which will bring £50m into the local economy over the next decade
- We will keep investing in our town centres, creating quality cultural, work and leisure facilities
- Make our borough greener, starting by opening up the refurbished Town Hall and Fellowship Square

### Safe and healthy lives

#### What we've done

- Rapidly set up Covid-19 testing facilities and our local contact tracing service carrying out over 38,000 tests so far
- Taken rough sleepers off the streets and implemented our landlord licensing scheme to ensure everyone has a decent roof over their heads
- Carried out more than 35,000 checks to ensure venues and businesses operate safely, and handed out more than 78,000 free masks

#### What we're doing

- Working with local health services to support the rollout of the vaccine programme and ensuring a new, modern hospital is delivered at Whipps Cross
- Launching a campaign to stop crime and ensure everyone in our borough feels equally safe and welcome
- Building on the connections made with our neighbours during the pandemic, we will set up a borough-wide befriending service

### Confidence in the future

#### What we've done

- We've provided 2,931 laptops to children with no access to online learning whilst schools are closed and spent £500,000 to make sure every child that needed a free school meal got one
- We've built a higher percentage of affordable housing than any borough in London
- Invested nearly £4 million to refurbish the Suntrap environmental education centre

#### What we're doing

- We will launch a Climate Action Plan this year to support a green recovery, create green jobs and plan how to achieve a zero carbon future
- We are designing a strategy to confront the stark inequalities exposed by the pandemic