

**BUDGET
CONSULTATION WITH
BUSINESS RATEPAYERS
2019/20 BUDGET**



**WELWYN
HATFIELD**

INTRODUCTION

Dear business ratepayers,

I am writing to you to invite you to comment on Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council's budget proposals and priorities for the financial year commencing 1 April 2019. This provides an important opportunity for you to comment on the Council's investment plans and the services provided to businesses.

It should be noted that since the start of the Government's austerity programme in 2010, the Council has delivered efficiency savings in the region of £15m. These are sizeable sums for a district council and sets out the Council's ambition to deliver better value for money services while continuing to keep council tax as low as possible. The Council plans to increase Council Tax by 2.5%, lower than both inflation and the referendum limits set by Central Government.

The Council's finances will continue to come under severe constraints and funding from Government is expected to continue to decline. The Government is piloting changes to the Business Rates Retention Scheme in some areas, aimed at retaining more of Business Rates growth at local level. It has been confirmed that Hertfordshire has been selected as a pilot area, and therefore a higher proportion of business rates growth will be retained locally.

We are committed to ensuring the continued prosperity and vitality of our businesses and communities. We have continued to invest to improve our town centre areas with significant investment into Hatfield and other areas, and further improvements are underway.

Our aims remain to deliver orderly, safe and well managed streets and an attractive environment as well as greater opportunities for residents.

This document provides details of our provisional budget over the next 12 months along with information on our capital programme, as well as the challenges which we are likely to face over the medium term.

We believe that Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council delivers excellent value for money, and we want to do even more this year to improve the services that impact on your daily life. We will also continue to strive for efficiency savings, while delivering services faster and of the highest quality.

Yours sincerely

Ka Ng
Corporate Director (Resources, Environment and Cultural Services)

COMMITMENT TO BUSINESSES

The Council is committed to delivering value for money and quality services to its customers, and recognises the important contribution the Council has to make to vitalise and support the local economy. “Our Economy” is one of the Council’s five priorities identified in the Business Plan for 2018 – 2021. A one page summary of the Council’s priorities can be viewed using the following link:

<http://www.welhat.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=13629&p=0>

The Council will:

- Promote the borough as an attractive place in which to invest
- Work with Hertfordshire’s Local Enterprise Partnership to access grants and external funding to support investment in our local economy
- Continue to attract businesses to the area by influencing the development of a high quality infrastructure.
- Provide appropriate support and signpost training to local businesses enabling them to grow and strengthen their market position
- Continue with a programme of regeneration works in Hatfield town centre while working closely with others to plan for the longer term future of the town.
- Strengthen local business participation in the Hatfield Town Team and Welwyn Garden City Town Centre Partnership.
- Work with others to increase footfall to our town centres and other shopping areas.
- Deliver and support community activities and events such as continental markets and festivals in our town centres.
- Encourage all businesses to take up any rates relief they may be entitled to.
- Maintain our good record in making prompt payments for suppliers of goods and services. In particular, over 97% of our invoices from businesses are paid within 30 days and more importantly, we pay over half of our invoices from businesses within 10 days.
- Continue to encourage local small businesses to bid for work from the Council by publishing opportunities online.

PROPOSED BUDGET 2019/20

The Councils proposed budget is published on the Councils website, as part of its Cabinet meeting held on 8 January 2019. This can be viewed using the following link:

<http://democracy.welhat.gov.uk/ielssueDetails.aspx?Ild=8837&Opt=3>

The budget proposals, and associated policies, are set out within the report. Particular areas that may be of interest are:

- Efficiencies and Savings summary – Appendix C (pages 43 to 47)
- Growth summary – Appendix D (pages 49 to 53)
- Fees and Charges – Appendix E (pages 55 to 82)
- The Council Capital Investment Programme – Appendix I (pages 91 to 97)

We would welcome any comments and views on the Councils proposed budget. Please send any comments to Ka Ng (Corporate Director - Resources, Environment and Cultural Services) and Richard Baker (Head of Resources) by e-mail using k.ng@welhat.gov.uk and r.baker@welhat.gov.uk by Friday 1 February 2019.

Please note that any comments you do make may be reported to the Council Meeting on Monday 4 February 2019 when the budget decisions will be made.