

# Ware

## Town Council



# ENVIRONMENTAL

# SOCIAL GOVERNANCE

# PROGRESS REPORT 2024

## Document Control

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## Foreword

Ware Town Council commit to ensuring it's buildings and operations are carbon neutral by 2030 for both production and consumption emissions and any offsetting needed will be directed to benefit our local community.

All Council policies and practices within our control will be compatible with the goal of carbon neutrality. We will strive to assist the citizens and businesses of Ware to reduce their carbon footprint using the means available to us so that Ware continues to be a thriving vibrant town that fosters a sustainable future for generations to come.

This Environmental Social Governance (ESG) Report summarises progress on the ESG Policy directives. As the first Progress Report, it consists of a general update with specific reference to recent actions. Future Progress Reports will concentrate on the applicable financial year.

# Contents

Introduction	Page 1
ESG Policy Directives :	
Environmental	Page 2
Social	Page 3
Governance	Page 4
Environmental Progress Update:	
Energy Usage & Efficiency	Page 5
Waste Reduction & Recycling	Page 7
Biodiversity	Page 8
Carbon Footprint Reduction	Page 9
Carbon Footprint Reduction in our Community	Page 10
Pollution	Page 11
Water Management	Page 12
Plastic Usage	Page 13
New & Refurbished Buildings	Page 14
Social Progress Update:	
Fair Pay & the Living Wage	Page 15
Wellbeing	Page 16
Workplace Health & Safety	Page 17
Community Engagement in Decision Making	Page 18
Responsible Supply Chain Partnerships	Page 19
Encourage Diversity	Page 20
Bullying & Harassment	Page 21
Data Privacy & Cyber Security	Page 22
Healthy Living	Page 23
Governance Progress Update:	
Governance & Compliance	Page 24
Risk Management	Page 24
Ethical Business Practice	Page 25
Avoiding Conflicts of Interest	Page 25
Accounting Integrity & Practices	Page 26
Investments	Page 26
Decision Making & Leadership	Page 27
Grant Income & Distribution	Page 28
Partnership Working	Page 29
Summary	Page 30

## Introduction

Ware Town Council is committed to promoting sustainability and understands the range of impacts it's activities can have on our community and the wider environment. It is the policy of Ware Town Council to protect the environment through sound practices that reduce waste generation, minimise the risk to the environment and preserve energy.

The Council will follow the ESG Policy adopted on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2023 and report annually on progress towards these objectives. This will be lead by the Climate and Biodiversity Manager, newly appointed on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024.

This Report details the progress we have made so far together with our objectives for the 2024-2025 financial year and attributes a progress score to each Policy item. All targeted aims will be in line with the Eco Audit Report and 2023 update which can be referred to under separate cover for further details.

The key focus is to become carbon neutral for the Council buildings and operations by 2030 and where this cannot be achieved, to offset remaining carbon emissions within our local community, utilising the approved budget available.

We will use an internationally recognised ESG platform such as Green Business Benchmark to track our progress and provide a live ESG score for the Council buildings and operations.

We aim to lead by example and by doing so encourage the community of Ware, with the means available to us, to be mindful of their own environmental impact.

## ESG Policy Directives

The ESG Policy was adopted on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2023 and will be reviewed in September 2026. Progress will be reported annually.

The key contents consist of the following:

### Environmental

**Energy Usage and Efficiency** : We will reduce our energy usage, all energy will be sustainably sourced.

**Waste Reduction and Recycling**: We will work on the basis of reduce, reuse and recycle.

**Biodiversity** : We will promote biodiversity in all areas controlled by Ware Town Council and those areas where we have influence. We will encourage wilded areas.

**Carbon Footprint Reduction** : We will be carbon neutral by 2030, we will use carbon offsetting to cover any overage based on our targets and we will include this in our financial budget.

**Carbon Footprint Reduction in our Communities** : We will lead by example by providing information and guidance to our communities to facilitate reduced carbon output.

**Pollution** : We will encourage modes of transport that are less polluting. We will adhere to rules and guidelines to avoid polluting rivers and water courses.

**Water Management** : We will introduce water reduction measures at all our facilities and seek options for rainwater harvesting. We will ensure that water is safe for the use that it is intended.

**Sustainable Transport** : We will be an advocate and work with others to provide access to safe, affordable , accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety and reducing pollution at an affordable cost.

**Plastic Usage** : We will eliminate the use of single use plastics in all our organisations and reduce the use of other plastics. We will encourage the same practices with contractors and suppliers.

**New and Refurbished Buildings** : When developing new buildings or adopting ones that we own the freehold for, we will consider energy efficiency, water waste management and the passive environmental impact of transporting materials as part of the design. Our sites will aim to have meet latest environmental standards and will have solar panels, recycled water, top grade insulation and PIR sensors to minimise energy use.

## Social

**Fair Pay and the Living Wage** : All employees will receive pay and benefits based on market forces for the locality, we will become a Living Wage employer.

**Training and Development** : All new employees will receive induction training. Employees requiring specific training will be supported in line with the training policy to provide individual support and support for the wider organisation.

**Wellbeing** : We will promote the emotional and physical wellbeing of employees.

**Employee Benefits** : We will provide a range of employee benefits including local government pension to aid recruitment and retention.

**Workplace Health and Safety** : We will ensure that our facilities are safe for employees, visitors, customers and tenants. Our staff will be provided with appropriate training.

**Community Engagement in Decision Making** : We will engage with the community in decisions that impact on the, to support the building of sustainable cohesive communities with improved outcomes, supported by our community engagement policy. We will recognise excellent in our communities by the Freedom of Ware awards and the annual town council award scheme.

**Responsible Supply Chain Partnerships** : Where we can source locally and achieve value for money this will guide our procurement. We will endeavour to procure products and services that meet the following requirements: supply chain traceability and transparency; fair labour and work conditions; supply chain sustainability initiatives; responsible sourcing and procurement; sustainability assurances and verification.

**Encourage Diversity** : Members and officers fully support diversity and inclusion in the organisation.

**Bullying and Harassment** : We will create and maintain a safe organisation, free from bullying, intimidation and harassment.

**Data Privacy and Cyber Security** : We will ensure the correct use of data we hold and we will be mindful of the information we share.

**Youth Engagement** : We aim to build meaningful relationships with young people through youth clubs, multi-sport sessions and in partnership with voluntary, statutory and community groups.

**Healthy Living** : We will encourage a healthy lifestyle to our community and colleagues through a programme of communications and subsidised events.

## Governance

**Governance and Compliance** : We will comply with all financial and legal requirements for the operation of Ware Town Council and associated organisations.

**Risk Management** : We will meet our requirements for financial and other risk management including the assessment of risk for those projects with a greater value than £25,000.

**Ethical Business Practice** : We will adhere to the seven principles of business ethics: accountability; care and respect; honesty; healthy competition; loyalty; transparency and respect for the rule of law.

**Avoiding Conflicts of Interest** : We will maintain a register of declarable interests and ensure that members and officers are aware of their obligations through training and information sharing.

**Accounting Integrity and Practices** : We will ensure that the integrity of our accounting practices meets both the requirements of our Anti-fraud and corruption policy and that any data provided is trustworthy to enable improved business decisions.

**Investments** : We will seek to achieve the best return on investment versus risk in organisations with an ESG rating higher than 70. We will not invest in organisations that have fossil fuels as part of their portfolio of investments.

**Decision Making and Leadership** : We will scope the information that is required to inform our decision making and measure against KPIs. We will encourage a leadership style that is aligned with our organisational values.

**Grant Income and Distribution** : We will seek grant income and other income for all projects with a value greater than £50,000. We will offer grants to local organisations that support the aspirations of our grant policy.

**Partnership Working** : We will create partnerships with individuals, organisations and tiers of government with a shared interest in order to ensure our communities receive high quality joined up outcomes.



# Environmental Progress Update

## Energy Usage and Efficiency

The reduction of our energy usage is key to reducing the overall carbon emissions of our buildings.

The Ware Town Council building portfolio consists of: the Priory, a 14<sup>th</sup> Century Grade 1 listed building; Fletchers Lea, a 20 year old 2 storey building consisting of event space and ancillary rooms and the Lido, a 1963 single storey building providing changing facilities and ancillary rooms to facilitate the outdoor heated public pool.

The electricity used by the Bowls Club comes from the Ware Town Council supply however the building is owned by East Herts District Council therefore the Bowls Club are entirely responsible for their own usage and are contra charged accordingly. The emissions from this usage are therefore not included in the remit of Ware Town Council.

The Museum is owned by Ware Town Council but is leased in it's entirety to Ware Museum who have their own electricity supply. The emissions from this usage are therefore not included in the remit of Ware Town Council.

The main energy usage within public buildings comes from heating, hot water, ventilation and lighting with nominal IT usage dependant on the use of the building.



New Lido pool and Air Source Heat Pumps

## Progress

**The Priory:** All lighting has been switched to LED. PIR sensors have been fitted in all bathroom facilities and the first floor corridor. The Conservatory event space is heated and cooled via an HVAC unit. The main building is heated by 2 new gas boilers which also provide hot water. Passive infrared heaters were purchased for members of staff who particularly feel the cold so that the temperature did not have to be turned up across the office space. Remote controlled radiator thermostats are programmed to be fitted to the majority of the within the Priory in the summer of 2024 to increase heating efficiency.

**Fletchers Lea:** All lighting has been switched to LED. PIR sensors have been fitted in all bathroom facilities and reception. The main hall is no longer heated with gas fired underfloor heating but instead is now heated and cooled via internal HVAC units, with the lobby heated by passive Infrared. Hot water is currently heated by gas but now has a new efficient immersion cylinder.

**The Lido :** All lighting has been switched to LED. There are currently no PIR controls. This building is predominantly unheated with the exception of a plug in electric heater in the office, some electric panel heaters in the bathrooms and reception which are not used and 1 in the function room. Hot water is via a number of electric immersion cylinders which frequently do not meet the hot water demand. The external pool has been renewed and is slightly shallower to reduce the amount of water to be heated. An insulated cover has also been added to reduce the heat loss. The pool is unheated in the winter with the exception of a week at Christmas during which it is heated by gas boilers. During the summer the initial heat up is typically done by gas with 2 Air Source Heat Pumps (ASHPs) taking over to maintain the water temperature. It is currently being tested whether, given a longer lead in time, the ASHPs are capable of getting the water to temperature from cold. If this is successful, it will further reduce the reliance on the gas boilers.

## Aims

1. Review heating and hot water timers, temperature settings and zoning controls for all 3 buildings.
2. Get a quote for M&E installers to put together a spreadsheet for each building identifying plant and controls in user friendly terminology. Spreadsheet to be updated when amendments or additions are made as buildings are upgraded. Links to be included to plant user manuals and operation training given to key staff members. This will reduce energy waste, help to identify problems earlier and avoid duplication or conflict between existing and new systems.
3. Consider passive infrared heaters for the Priory Garden Room as gas fuelled radiators are inefficient when the door is left open for public access during the Food Bank hours.
4. Consider passive infrared for all Priory rooms which have high ceilings and sporadic usage. This will reduce reliance on gas boilers.

5. May 2024: Grant funding has been secured for surveys of all three buildings to ascertain additional energy saving and carbon reduction measures, especially those that could be included in the refurbishment of Fletchers Lea and the Lido, planned for January 2025.
6. Review the potential for photovoltaic and solar thermal provision at Fletchers Lea and the Lido.
7. Ensure any new white goods purchased achieve high energy rating standards. Whilst generally replacement is not encouraged, the Fletchers Lea and bar fridges are very old and would benefit from being replaced with more efficient models.
8. The Switch to electric ovens at the Priory when replacing.

Rating 4/10

### Waste Reduction and Recycling

The implementation of reduce and reuse before recycling is key as many plastic products in particular are not recyclable more than once or indeed at all.



Recycling bins in the Priory grounds

#### Progress

The volume of printing has considerably reduced and recycled paper is now predominantly used.

Specific recycling bins have been provided and labelled accordingly within the Priory office spaces and new recycling bins have been provided around the Priory grounds.

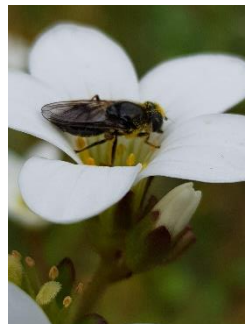
Mixed recycling and paper trade bins are now collected from the Priory and Fletchers Lea.

## Aims

1. Provide internal labelled recycling bins to all spaces.
2. Carry out a waste audit for all premises and action accordingly.
3. Review catering contracts and event booking forms to stipulate recycling protocols for both internal and community events.
4. Contact suppliers/caterers to obtain sustainability statements and keep details up to date.
5. Review use of Amazon supply chain for event procurement and replace where possible with more sustainable sources.
6. Write and implement a procurement policy.
7. Write and implement a recycling policy.
8. Look to provide a garden and vegetable waste compost bin in the Priory grounds for use by the garden maintenance team, food bank, staff and caterers. Compost can then be used on the flower beds.
9. Promote an anti littering campaign.

Rating 5/10

**Biodiversity** : We will promote biodiversity in all areas controlled by Ware Town Council and those areas where we have influence. We will encourage wilded areas.



Meadow Saxifrage at Ware Cemetery

## Progress

The main grassed areas at the cemetery plots have been left to grow long and will be cut twice yearly to encourage wild flowers and insect pollinators. The rare Meadow Saxifrage is now spreading across these areas. Tended graves continue to be mown.

130m of new hedge planting has been provided in the Priory and cemetery grounds.

A community orchard has been planted at one of the allotment sites.

A community apiary with 3 bee hives has been installed adjacent to the orchard.

A small area at the cemetery has been sectioned off and sown with wildflower seed to investigate the best conditions, seed mix and maintenance required to expand wildflowers to larger areas.

The grounds maintenance team are using many native species plants within the flower beds and leaving some areas unmown.

We are engaging with a consultant with regards to our Green Flag accreditation for open spaces by 2025.

A local community group, Ware in Bloom, produce award winning floral displays within the town centre.

Progress is being publicised by social media, on the website and at external events.

#### Aims

1. Introduce procedure to remove/rake away mown grass to avoid adding enrichment into the soil which is detrimental to wild flowers.
2. Provide tips for residents to encourage wildflower planting.
3. Increase native and insect friendly species to flower beds and planters.
4. Assess the success of the wildflower area and work to increase wildflower planting.
5. Achieve Green Flag accreditation.
6. Review additional tree planting for 2025.
7. Liaise with Ware in Bloom about using more native species, insect attracting plants.

Rating 7/10

**Carbon Footprint Reduction** : We will be carbon neutral by 2030, we will use carbon offsetting to cover any overage based on our targets and we will include this in our financial budget.

#### Progress

The Town Clerk successfully completed a CMI Sustainability Leadership course.

The Council are now using Positive Energy, a green energy provider, therefore negating the carbon of any electricity used.

The recommendations made in the annual Eco Audit review are gradually being implemented where feasible and budget allows.

Heating, lighting and water reduction measures have already been implemented across the Council buildings.

A budget has been set aside for offsetting residual emissions and it is the aim of the Council to offset within the Ware community where feasible.



Two electric vehicle charging points have been installed in the Priory grounds which are regularly used.

The Eco Audit Update calculated that the carbon emissions for the Council premises have reduced 48% between 2021 and 2023.

#### Aims

1. Review switching from SEFE to a Green gas supplier to negate the carbon for any gas usage that is unable to be removed from the Council buildings.
2. Continue to implement Eco Audit recommendations and monitor progress to inform the 2025 update.
3. Investigate local beneficiaries for carbon offsetting funds.
4. Carry out energy efficiency/carbon reduction surveys to ascertain practical and economical ways of reducing emissions across the buildings.
5. Assess Fletchers Lea and the Lido for suitability for Photovoltaic panels.
6. Install additional electric vehicle charging points.
7. Aim to provide vegetarian food stalls at community events to reduce meat carbon.
8. Investigate the provision of ice machines for events rather than purchasing pre-packed ice.

Rating 6/10

**Carbon Footprint Reduction in our Communities** : We will lead by example by providing information and guidance to our communities to facilitate a reduced carbon output.



Sustainability Market Stall

### Progress

An Eco event was held at the Priory for the community with speakers including Hertfordshire Wildlife Trust, Community Orchard, WWF, Waste Warriors, Neighbourhood Plan, Hertford & Ware Beekeepers, RSPB and Wombles of Ware.

We have started liaising with Library of Things with regards to providing the tools borrowing scheme in Ware. This will save carbon by reducing the production of tools that people only need occasionally. A budget has been approved for the current financial year.

A stall was held at the Southern Maltings Sustainability Market on 5<sup>th</sup> May to highlight what the Council are doing within it's own responsibilities as well as within the community to reduce environmental impact. There was considerable interest in the Library of Things with 60 people signing up, 6 of whom wanted to volunteer when it was launched.

### Aims

1. Assess potential interest from Ware residents for the Library of Things. Secure a location for the lockers and move forward with delivering the scheme.
2. Add a page to the Council website containing energy, water and waste saving tips, links to information on home upgrades and grants available and updates on the Council's environmental journey. This could also have features such as plant based recipes and healthy eating tips.
3. Work with EHDC's Energy HUB to provide a public event and information giving home heating upgrade links and heat pump facts.

Rating 3/10

**Pollution** : We will encourage modes of transport that are less polluting (see Sustainable Transport section). We will adhere to rules and guidelines to avoid polluting rivers and water courses.

### Progress

Our grounds maintenance team no longer use chemical weed or pest control in the Priory and cemetery sites.

Cleaners and tenants of the Council buildings now use environmentally friendly cleaning products to avoid polluting water courses.

#### Aims

1. Review contract documents to ensure policy wording is kept up to date and contact cleaners for their sustainability documents.
2. We will adhere to Prevention Pollution Guidance documents with regards to air and water pollution during the course of our refurbishment works.

Rating 6/10

**Water Management** : We will introduce water reduction measures at all our facilities and seek options for rainwater harvesting. We will ensure that water is safe for the use that it is intended.



New Lido Filtration System

#### Progress

**The Priory** : All bathroom taps and urinals are now fitted with controls to limit the time in use. WCs are either manual or hands free single flush. The Priory public toilet block is currently closed whilst plans are agreed to refurbish it.

**Fletchers Lea** : All bathroom taps are now fitted with controls to limit the time in use. WCs are dual flush.

**The Lido** : A new pool has been built which is slightly shallower than the old one, reducing the amount of water used and heated. A new filtration and treatment system has also been installed to reduce water usage and maintain a healthy water quality.

#### Aims

1. Include water efficient sanitary ware within the specification for the Lido and Public Toilet Block refurbishments.
2. Review the potential for rainwater harvesting within the specification for the Lido and Fletchers Lea refurbishments. It is envisaged that this may not be possible for the Public Toilet Block due to the small roof collection space and surrounding archaeology.
3. Ensure any new white goods purchased are water efficient.

Rating 7/10



**Sustainable Transport** : We will be an advocate and work with others to provide access to safe, affordable , accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety and reducing pollution at an affordable cost.

#### Progress

The Council are a founder member of the Community Rail Partnership (CRP), finding ways to improve the facilities and environment along the Hertford to Broxbourne stretch of the line, together with promoting rail use by increasing awareness of the facilities and locations of interest along the line.

The Priory grounds now hosts 2 electric vehicle charging points and plans are in place to provide more in the coming year.

We will be looking at the potential for walk to school and cycle bus schemes for which a budget has been approved.

We have adopted the Neighbourhood Plan looking at public transport in our area.

#### Aims

1. Continue to take an active part in CRP.
2. Increase the number of electric vehicle charging points.
3. Review schemes already in operation and speak to stakeholders with regards to bringing walk to school and cycle bus schemes to Ware primary schools.

Rating 3/10

**Plastic Usage** : We will eliminate the use of single use plastics in all our organisations and reduce the use of other plastics. We will encourage the same practices with contractors and suppliers.

#### Progress

Labelled recycling bins have been provided in the Priory offices which are regularly emptied into the trade recycling bins. A new soft plastics bin has been introduced which is taken to the local supermarket for recycling.

A review has been carried out of single use plastics (SUP) across the Council activities and measures to remove any residual SUP are being identified.

Ware Town Council has now signed up alongside Hertford Town Council to the City to Sea Refill Scheme which promotes water, coffee and lunch refill destinations within local businesses and encourages the community to use them via an interactive app.

#### Aims

1. Provide labelled recycling bins across all Council buildings to ensure residual plastic waste is diverted from landfill.
2. Work with Council teams to find alternative solutions and remove SUPs. Write procedures to maintain and amend these solutions moving forward.
3. Review catering contracts and event booking forms to stipulate SUP protocols for both internal and community events.
4. Encourage local businesses to sign up to Refill and raise public awareness at an event in time for World Refill Day on 16<sup>th</sup> June.
5. Encourage reduction in single use plastics at the cemetery.
6. Hire a portable water fountain for events.

Rating 5/10

**New and Refurbished Buildings** : When developing new buildings or adopting ones that we own the freehold for, we will consider energy efficiency, water, waste management and the passive environmental impact of transporting materials as part of the design. Our sites will aim to have meet latest environmental standards and will have solar panels, recycled water, top grade insulation and PIR sensors to minimise energy use.

#### Progress

Decarbonisation surveys will be carried out in May on the Priory, Fletchers Lea and the Lido to identify energy, carbon and water saving measures with regards to the building fabric, heating, hot water, ventilation, lighting and controls. Consideration will also be given to the suitability of Photovoltaic and solar thermal panels.

We have approved budgets in place for the refurbishments of the Lido, Fletchers Lea and Café/Toilet. Project Managers are in place to deliver these with sustainability and energy efficiency as a key focus.

Internal refurbishment of the heating, hot water and lighting systems within the Priory have been started and will continue with the provision of more efficient control systems in 2024.

#### Aims

1. Ensure the surveys inform the refurbishment specifications of the Lido and Fletcher Lea. Specialist advice is likely to be required for the Lido which has more complex hot water requirements.
2. Include energy, carbon and water reduction measures within the specification for the Public Toilet Block refurbishment.

Rating 4/10

## Social Progress Update

**Fair Pay and the Living Wage** : All employees will receive pay and benefits based on market forces for the locality, we will become a Living Wage employer.

<b>Progress</b>
An independent review of Scale Points (SCP) and salaries was completed in January 2023. 2/3 <sup>rd</sup> of employees grades were increased. New job roles of Lido Manager and Climate & Biodiversity Manager were checked using the same criteria / benchmarking.
<b>Aims</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Complete registration for Living Wage Employer (TP)</li> <li>2. Continue to review rates of pay relevant to the locality and if appropriate complete a formal review.</li> </ol>
<b>Rating 8/10</b>

**Training and Development** : All new employees will receive induction training. Employees requiring specific training will be supported in line with the training policy to provide individual support and support for the wider organisation.

<b>Progress</b>
All new employees will receive induction training including health and safety, GDPR and other specific training relevant to the role. Employees requiring specific training will be supported in line with the training policy to provide individual support and support for the wider organization. All employees will receive an annual appraisal where training needs will be identified. The Town Clerk will achieve 18 CPD pa. Members are expected to complete training commensurate with their role.
A training budget of £4000 has been set for financial year 2024/25
Training has been completed for the WTC team on project management (May 2024)
<b>Aims</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Request HAPTC have a greater variety of hours related to training provision (TP).</li> <li>2. Review induction procedure and ensure it reflects current needs.</li> </ol>
<b>Rating 7/10</b>

**Wellbeing** : We will promote the emotional and physical wellbeing of employees.

**Progress**

**Emotional Wellbeing:**

WTC offer an employee assistance program (EAP) that provides free, confidential counselling and resources for stress, anxiety, depression, etc.

- We encourage work-life balance by the management of holiday and TOIL aiming to ensure that roles are properly resourced to avoid excessive hours.
- Foster a culture of open communication where employees feel comfortable expressing concerns individually or at monthly team meetings.
- Recognise and appreciate team members contribution.

**Physical Wellbeing:**

- Encourage breaks, stretching, and physical activity during the workday.
- Encourage employees to review home working set up to avoid musculoskeletal issues.
- We allow flexible work-from-home and varied hours.
- Encourage the use of cycle to work schemes.
- Lido usage 25% discount

**Aims**

1. In 2024 we will set up new workstations to facilitate the avoidance of musculoskeletal issues.

We will consider :

2. Provide training on stress management, resilience, mindfulness, etc.
3. Provide affordable and comprehensive health insurance options.

**Rating 7/10**

**Employee Benefits** : We will provide a range of employee benefits including local government pension to aid recruitment and retention.

Progress
We will provide a range of employee benefits including local government pension to aid recruitment and retention.  Other benefits include. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Agile and home working</li><li>• Employee Assistance Programme</li><li>• Cycle to work scheme</li><li>• Free parking</li><li>• Lido usage 25% discount</li><li>• EV charging use</li></ul>
Aims
1. We will consider the introduction of health insurance schemes for permanent employees.
Rating 9/10

**Workplace Health and Safety** : We will ensure that our facilities are safe for employees, visitors, customers and tenants. Our staff will be provided with appropriate training.

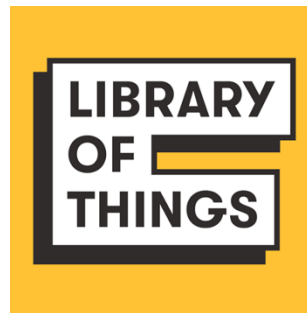
Progress
We will : <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Conduct regular risk assessments to identify potential hazards in our facilities and take steps to mitigate them, including fire safety, proper storage of materials, maintenance of equipment etc.</li><li>• Regular play areas inspections take place including annual ROSPA inspection.</li><li>• Appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) will be issued and renewed as required.</li><li>• Lido staff will receive induction and ongoing training relevant to their role.</li><li>• Provide ongoing safety training to all employees on relevant topics.</li><li>• Ensure visitors and customers are also aware of safety rules they need to follow while on the premises through things like signage, verbal instructions.</li><li>• Encourage employees to speak up about any safety concerns and have a system for reporting and addressing issues.</li><li>• Stay updated on relevant safety regulations relevant to our areas of activity</li></ul>

#### Aims

- Assign safety responsibilities and have a team focused on continually improving the safety culture.
- Complete Fire evacuation and review effectiveness
- Complete external review of effectiveness of risk assessments and other documentation.

Rating 6/10

**Community Engagement in Decision Making** : We will engage with the community in decisions that impact on them, to support the building of sustainable cohesive communities with improved outcomes, supported by our community engagement policy. We will recognise excellence in our communities by the Freedom of Ware awards and the annual town council award scheme.



#### Progress

The Council considers that the community of Ware includes residents, users of the Town Council services, all those that work in Ware, young people that attend school or college in Ware and all voluntary organisations, clubs, societies and community groups. The Council recognises that other bodies are crucial to the quality of life in Ware and will maintain strong working relationships with East Herts Council Hertfordshire County Council, Hertfordshire Police and local Town and Parish Councils.

We pride ourselves in the relationships we have made with the community via our public consultation process and within the various steering and voluntary groups.

We have carried out a number of resident surveys including for the Ware Neighbourhood Plan, the Skate Park and the Lido pool. A public consultation is being held in May 2024 with regards to what additional services would be most beneficial to include in the proposed Lido extension and refurbishment.

Community engagement is also very active with groups such as the Town Centre Steering Group, Cemetery Liaison Group and the Allotment Society.

We had a stall in the Southern Maltings Sustainability Market in May 2024 on which we sought public interest in the Library of Things and this is continuing at other events. An accessible location and maintenance support is key to the potential success of the scheme.

We are currently putting together information for the community on the upcoming Refill scheme which is due to launch in June this year.

The Freedom of Ware award was presented to 4 people in 2023 and a further 3 people in 2024 who have, over a number of years, demonstrated a considerable commitment and service to the community.

#### Aims

1. Conduct a Monkey survey with regards to the Library of Things to further assess public engagement.
2. Secure an accessible location, preferably in the town centre, which is staffed and open for 40 hours a week.
3. Approach local businesses to sign up for providing free water refills to the public.
4. Launch the Refill scheme in June 2024 in conjunction with Hertford Town Council.
5. Engage with local businesses to reduce Single Use Plastics and encourage further uptake by recognising achievements via our social media.

Rating 8/10

**Responsible Supply Chain Partnerships** : Where we can source locally and achieve value for money this will guide our procurement. We will endeavour to procure products and services that meet the following requirements: supply chain traceability and transparency; fair labour and work conditions; supply chain sustainability initiatives; responsible sourcing and procurement; sustainability assurances and verification.

#### Progress

Initial meetings have been held with Council teams to discuss supply chain partnerships and responsible sourcing.

#### Aims

1. Obtain sustainability statements from all providers within our supply chain. It is understood that due to the small scale of some of our suppliers, this information may not yet be available therefore we will work with these suppliers to consider their environmental impact and provide a statement for future works with Ware Town Council.
2. Review and update supplier contract documents and event booking forms to reflect our sustainability directives with particular emphasis on single use plastics.
3. Encourage circular economy practices with suppliers.

19

4. Review our internal procurement policy, internal ordering processes, action sustainability initiatives and put new procedures in place.

5. Provide sustainability awareness training to Council staff to introduce new procedures and embed an understanding of it's importance.

Rating 3/10

**Encourage Diversity** : Members and officers fully support diversity and inclusion in the organisaton.

#### Progress

Ware Town Council is committed to a policy of equality of opportunity and accepts its responsibility to ensure it does not discriminate in the course of employment and service provision.

The Council seeks to ensure that no person receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of: gender; sex; race or ethnic origin; marital status; disability, age, sexual orientation, family responsibilities, religion, trade union involvement, political beliefs, or is disadvantaged by conditions or requirements which cannot be shown to be justifiable.

All employees will be recruited, trained and promoted solely based on merit and justifiable job requirements.

The policy embraces the areas of advertising, recruitment and selection, terms on which employment is offered, job allocation, promotion, training, discipline and grievance issues and all other aspects of day to day employment.

Disregard of the policy or acts of discrimination, abuse or harassment at work will not be permitted or condoned and will be dealt with under the Council's disciplinary/grievance procedures. Deliberate acts of unlawful discrimination will be regarded as gross misconduct.

When recruiting, we use structured interviews with defined criteria to reduce bias.

We have a safe process for employees to report discrimination or harassment without fear of retaliation.

#### Aims

1. A working group of Councillors has been set up to create greater diversity of councillors.
2. Consideration of a councillor allowance for 2024/25.

Rating 8/10

**Bullying and Harassment** : We will create and maintain a safe organisation, free from bullying, intimidation and harassment.



## Progress

Within WTC we have adopted the Civility and Respects Code of Conduct.

- We have developed and implemented clear policies and procedures that define and prohibit bullying, intimidation, harassment, and other unacceptable behaviours. We ensure these policies are widely communicated and understood by all employees.
- Councillors receive an annual briefing on the Code of Conduct
- We encourage a culture of respect, inclusivity, and open communication.
- We have a protocol on Member Officer working relationships to ensure that the roles and responsibilities are clearly understood.
- We foster an environment where employees feel comfortable reporting incidents without fear of retaliation.
- We have a formal complaint and investigation process for addressing reported incidents. Ensure complaints are handled promptly, fairly, and with appropriate confidentiality.
- We hold individuals accountable for their actions. Apply consistent disciplinary measures for substantiated cases of bullying, intimidation, or harassment, up to and including termination when warranted.
- Promote positive leadership and role modelling from management. Leaders should exemplify respectful and professional conduct at all times.
- Offer support resources, such as an employee assistance program or counselling services, for individuals who have experienced or witnessed bullying, intimidation, or harassment.
- Regularly review and update policies, procedures, and training to ensure they remain effective and aligned with best practices and legal requirements.

## Aims

1. We will continue to monitor both formally and informally and take corrective action / investigate where required.

Rating 8/10

**Data Privacy and Cyber Security** : We will ensure the correct use of data we hold and we will be mindful of the information we share.

<b>Progress</b>
<p>We have completed Cyber Security accreditation  A new password policy has been issued to all employees and Councillors.  The Privacy and Cookie policy was update in 2023, for review in 2026.  As part of our organisational values we pledge to ‘keep personal data secure’ this is evaluated annually as part of the appraisal reviews.</p>
<b>Aims</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. We will undertake a phishing request during 2024 to test compliance with the system.</li> </ol>
<b>Rating 8/10</b>

**Youth Engagement** : We aim to build meaningful relationships with young people through youth clubs, multi-sport sessions and in partnership with voluntary, statutory and community groups.

<b>Progress</b>																				
<p>Ware Town Council pride themselves in the activities and events made accessible to our community, many of which are aimed at children. This enables parents to have free/subsidised activities to do with their children which encourages social skills, improves health and wellbeing and benefits tight household budgets.</p> <p>The events aimed wholly or partially at children currently in the 2024 calendar are:</p> <table> <tr> <td>Cinema</td> <td>Makendoo</td> </tr> <tr> <td>School Holiday Activities</td> <td>Multisports</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Easter Egg Hunt</td> <td>Lego</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Silent Disco</td> <td>Gaming</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Popup Sports</td> <td>Carnival Day</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Planting</td> <td>Raft Race</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Archery</td> <td>Pavement Artists</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Climbing Wall</td> <td>Putting Competition</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Bungee Trampolines</td> <td>Writing Competition on Sustainability</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mini Golf</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	Cinema	Makendoo	School Holiday Activities	Multisports	Easter Egg Hunt	Lego	Silent Disco	Gaming	Popup Sports	Carnival Day	Planting	Raft Race	Archery	Pavement Artists	Climbing Wall	Putting Competition	Bungee Trampolines	Writing Competition on Sustainability	Mini Golf	
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<b>Aims</b>																				
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Continue to come up with innovative ideas and add to the events calendar.</li> <li>2. Consider events for children and young adults with additional needs.</li> <li>3. Contact event providers for their sustainability statements and/or work with them to keep sustainability at the core of their event provision.</li> <li>4. Work with the grounds maintenance team to ensure any waste is appropriately recycled.</li> </ol>																				
<b>Rating 8/10</b>																				

**Healthy Living** : We will encourage a healthy lifestyle to our community and colleagues through a programme of communications and subsidised events.

#### Progress

A schedule of wellbeing events are being booked for the 2024 calendar including:

- A talk titled “It’s okay not to be okay” with a Q&A session
- Ecstatic Dance event
- Moonlight Swim
- Kickboxing
- Zentangle event
- Funding has been provided to Larkspur School for a Wellbeing & Resilience Workshop

The launch of the Refill Scheme encourages healthy hydration and this will be marketed via our social media channels and events.

The Lido has opened for cold water swimming throughout the winter which has been extremely well attended with a regular club.

We promote the emotional and physical wellbeing of employees, ensuring practical support and the management of workload is properly resourced. Health related employee benefits include agile and home working, Employee Assistance Programme, Cycle to work scheme and Lido usage.

Employees have access to kitchen facilities which enable them to prepare healthy food or heat food brought from home rather than buying fast food which is more expensive and unhealthy.

Additional team members have been employed to enable a more manageable workload.

#### Aims

1. Start up an office fruit bowl to encourage healthy eating.
2. Hold a community event to promote Meat Free Mondays, giving recipe ideas and example taster dishes or include on the Council website.

Rating 7/10

## Governance Progress Update

**Governance and Compliance** : We will comply with all financial and legal requirements for the operation of WTC and associated organisations. This will be achieved by adherence to rules and policies approved by WTC and associated organisations.

<b>Progress</b>
<p>A qualified clerk            Gold Level Local Council Award Accreditation            A competent and qualified internal auditor            Any issue raised by the internal auditor are shared with the F&amp;P committee and appropriate actions taken.            The council are in agreement via the approval of the Statement of Internal Controls that the council operations are well run with no cause for concern            There are no significant areas of concern raised by the external auditor            We have a system for regular policy reviews            We have a risk management scheme that is updated annually            We have adequate insurance for our organisation            Our reserves management is aligned with our risk management and guidance for local councils</p>
<b>Aims</b>
No further action identified currently
Rating 9/10

**Risk Management** : We will meet our requirements for financial and other risk management including the assessment of risk for those projects with a greater value than £25,000.

<b>Progress</b>
<p>We have a risk management scheme that is updated annually by the RFO with reviews by the Clerk and ultimately approved at Full Council, we apply a similar rigour to the charity that we are the sole managing trustee.</p> <p>We have adequate insurance for our organisation that we keep under regular review.</p> <p>Our reserves management is aligned with our risk management and guidance for local councils.</p>
<b>Aims</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Introduction of risk management on project over £25K introduced, to be implemented as part of the project management update / training.</li> </ol>
Rating 8/10

**Ethical Business Practice** : We will adhere to the seven principles of business ethics: accountability; care and respect; honesty; healthy competition; loyalty; transparency and respect for the rule of law.

<b>Progress</b>
<p>Within Ware Town Council we will be</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Accountable:</b> Being responsible and answerable for our business decisions, actions and consequences.</li> <li>• <b>Care and Respect:</b> Considering the wellbeing of others and treating employees, customers, partners etc. with dignity and respect.</li> <li>• <b>Honesty:</b> Being truthful in all business dealings and not engaging in deception or fraud.</li> <li>• <b>Healthy Competition:</b> Competing fairly within established rules and not through unethical practices.</li> <li>• <b>Loyalty:</b> Being faithful to the organisation's values, people and commitments.</li> <li>• <b>Transparency:</b> Operating in an open way that avoids secrecy or attempts to mislead.</li> <li>• <b>Respect for the Rule of Law:</b> Complying with all relevant laws and regulations.</li> </ul>
<b>Aims</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Adoption of new Financial Regulations, particularly related to procurement (May 2024)</li> </ol>
<b>Rating 9/10</b>

**Avoiding Conflicts of Interest** : We will maintain a register of declarable interests and ensure that members and officers are aware of their obligations through training and information sharing.

<b>Progress</b>
<p>All register of interest recorded in WTC / EHC website. Councillors reminded to update on an annual basis.</p> <p>All council meetings record declared interests and requests for dispensations.</p>
<b>Aims</b>
<p>No further work required in this area.</p>
<b>Rating 9/10</b>

**Accounting Integrity and Practices** : We will ensure that the integrity of our accounting practices meets both the requirements of our Anti-fraud and corruption policy and that any data provided is trustworthy to enable improved business decisions.

<b>Progress</b>
<p>Our accounting practices are controlled by the RFO and overseen by an experienced qualified clerk.</p> <p>An experienced internal auditor complete three reviews pa with reports reviewed by Council.</p> <p>External Audit requirements met in June of each year and approved by Council.</p> <p>Budget / Management Accounts / Expenditure over £500 (Changing to £100 in 2024/25) published on WTC website.</p> <p>Tender documents published on WTC website.</p>
<b>Aims</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Adoption of new Financial Regulations (May 2024)</li> <li>2. Clerk / RFO / Finance Assistant attending internal audit accreditation 2024.</li> </ol>
<b>Rating 9/10</b>

**Investments** : We will seek to achieve the best return on investment versus risk in organisations with an ESG rating higher than 70. We will not invest in organisations that have fossil fuels as part of their portfolio of investments.

<b>Progress</b>
<p>Currently our day to day working account is with NatWest who have just published their sustainability statement. A comparison with the previous year has been detailed below:</p> <p>Global Corporate Sustainability Assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• December 2022 score 61 v December 2023 score 51 (reduced performance)</li> </ul> <p>ESG Risk Rating by Sustainalytics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• December 2022 score 17.4 (low risk) v December 2023 score 19.8 (low risk) (reduced performance)</li> </ul>

#### MSCI ESG Rating

- Score of AA in a scale of AAA-CCC in both December 2022 and December 2023

#### ISS ESG Rating

- Score of C+ (Prime Status) in both December 2022 and December 2023

Our reserve accounts are with Insignis and CCLA which are hubs including a collection of banking providers. They have recently confirmed that they will not be seeking an ESG rating of any sort but will instead be working with the FCA's SDRs (Sustainable Disclosure Requirements) which come into effect this year. They are currently advised that they are likely to be listed as "Improver" status.

#### Aims

1. Review banking providers and look to balance environmental performance and investment returns.
2. Seek to understand the investment decisions made by the Local Government Pension scheme and lobby for reduced investments in fossil fuels if applicable.

Rating 5/10

**Decision Making and Leadership** : We will scope the information that is required to inform our decision making and measure against KPIs. We will encourage a leadership style that is aligned with our organisational values.

#### Progress

WTC have published the 2024-28 Business plan and are actively working towards it completion.

WTC have an annual business planning day with quarterly updates.

Council meetings have moved to monthly from 7 meetings per year to encourage more dynamic decision making. The committee meetings will be reviewed in the Autumn to see if they should be reinstated.

Monthly meetings take place between the Clerk and the leader of the Council and Mayor.

Papers for Council meetings are published on the Wednesday preceding the Monday Council meeting to enable informed decisions to be made.

The Clerk holds quarterly review meetings with the Senior Leadership Team to ensure objectives are on track.

Monthly management accounts are published for review at the Council meeting.

Monthly Priory and Lido review meetings take place to review the commercial income, Councillors attend quarterly to review.

**Aims**

1. Review Committee structure Autumn 2024.

Rating 7/10

**Grant Income and Distribution** : We will seek grant income and other income for all projects with a value greater than £50,000. We will offer grants to local organisations that support the aspirations of our grant policy.



Wodson Sports Cage



Mens Shed 1 Year Anniversary

**Progress**

Grants for 2024/25  
General Grants £38K  
Loneliness Grants £5K  
Capital Grants £12K

Annual Grants provided to:  
Ware Museum £7.5K  
Dickensian Evening £5K  
Ware in Bloom £1.6K  
Men's Shed £2.4K

We also allocate grants to Community Groups based on income during Ware Festival.

All grants allocated are published on the WTC website.

We have recently received a grant via Utility Aid to carry out decarbonisation surveys for our Council buildings. This will help to identify improvements we can make to existing buildings and inform the specification for the proposed Lido and Fletchers Lea refurbishments. Surveys will be carried out in May 2024.



<b>Aims</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. We will work with other grant providers to publicise their schemes, in particular Skillman and Ware Charities whose beneficiaries include the parish of Ware.</li> <li>2. We will evaluate the 106 requirements for our community as part of the WTC business planning process.</li> </ol>
<b>Rating 7/10</b>

**Partnership Working** : We will create partnerships with individuals, organisations and tiers of government with a shared interest in order to ensure our communities receive high quality joined up outcomes.

<b>Progress</b>										
<p>We are partnering with Hertford Town Council to deliver the City to Sea Refill scheme across the two towns. The scheme aims to reduce single use plastic by encouraging the community to use refill stations.</p> <p>We are working to identify a suitable locker location in order to partner with Library of Things to deliver the community borrowing scheme.</p> <p>We are involved with the EHDC Energy Hub looking at ways to inform the community about energy and carbon efficiency measures for their homes and businesses.</p> <p>We are a founder member of the Community Rail partnership</p> <p>We actively support Ware pub watch and Ware Independent Traders Association.</p> <p>WTC actively support community groups :</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Friend of Ware Priory</td> <td>Town Twinning</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Southern Maltings</td> <td>Ware Drill Hall</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Ware Museum</td> <td>Ware Society</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Ware Charities</td> <td>Air Training Corps</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Ware Food bank</td> <td>Men’s Shed</td> </tr> </table> <p>We work with Southern Maltings for the provision of a monthly market.</p>	Friend of Ware Priory	Town Twinning	Southern Maltings	Ware Drill Hall	Ware Museum	Ware Society	Ware Charities	Air Training Corps	Ware Food bank	Men’s Shed
Friend of Ware Priory	Town Twinning									
Southern Maltings	Ware Drill Hall									
Ware Museum	Ware Society									
Ware Charities	Air Training Corps									
Ware Food bank	Men’s Shed									

<b>Aims</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Deliver the Library of Things scheme.</li> <li>2. Hold an Energy Hub event in Ware.</li> <li>3. WTC to host a collaborative working workshop including the senior leadership team from East Herts Council (EHC) and the five towns within the district (July 2024)</li> </ol>
<b>Rating 7/10</b>

## Summary

Ware Town Council have made considerable progress on their ESG journey achieving a 48% reduction in carbon emissions across the Council buildings since 2021.

The buildings themselves are extremely challenging due to their age, Listed status, public use and state of repair, however with a healthy budget allocated to refurbishment projects, this provides a unique opportunity to maximise energy efficiency and make another significant contribution towards zero carbon. Specialist advice and excellent project management will be key to delivering this goal, especially in the case of the Lido.

With the appointment of a Climate & Biodiversity Manager providing a more focussed emphasis on sustainability and carbon emissions, it is envisaged that further savings can be made via new internal and supply chain policies and procedures.

Our cohesion with the community will continue via the many events planned for the 2024 diary however these events will now strive to have a more sustainable approach.

We will work with local businesses and the community to encourage waste and energy reductions and new community services such as the Refill Scheme and Library of Things will reduce single use plastics, promote healthy hydration and reduce carbon emissions.

We will monitor our progress honestly and transparently towards our Eco Audit objectives and ESG Policy directives on our continuing journey towards zero carbon.