

London Borough of Waltham Forest

Report Title	Waltham Forest's Evening and Nighttime Economy Framework
Meeting / Date	Cabinet, Tuesday 13 January 2026
Cabinet portfolio	Councillor Ahsan Khan, Deputy Leader (Housing & Regeneration)  Councillor Rosalind Doré, Portfolio Lead Member for Libraries, Culture and Sports and Leisure 
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Wards affected	All Wards
Public access	Open
Appendices	Appendix 1 – Draft Evening and Nighttime Economy Framework Appendix 2 – Equalities Screener

1. Summary
 - 1.1 This report seeks Cabinet's approval of a new Evening and Nighttime Economy Framework for Waltham Forest. The Framework forms part of a coordinated, outcome-led approach to delivering key borough missions contained in Mission Waltham Forest, particularly the missions to build an economy that works for everyone and the creation of safe neighbourhoods. The Framework does this by articulating a programme of focussed action and activity to support the evening and nighttime economy in key nighttime areas (after 6pm).
 - 1.2 The Framework is intended to act as a guide to shape how the council works across all service areas and with partners. The focus of this work will be to address the diverse needs and challenges of our businesses and residents and support inclusive, safe, sustainable and accessible places to live, work, do business and access leisure and culture into the evening.
 - 1.3 The Framework identifies key nighttime areas across the borough, celebrates the nighttime initiatives already supporting our businesses and residents and establishes clear delivery plans. The delivery plans focus on opportunities linked to curation and promotion to improve the nighttime experience; supporting and increasing employment

opportunities at night; strengthening business friendly licensing, regulation and policy; and improving safety and wellbeing at night.

- 1.4 This piece of work feeds from and aligns with the council's Town Centre Framework, Waltham Forest Local Plan Part 1, the Cultural Action Plan and the Inclusive Growth and Economy Framework.
- 1.5 The Framework has been developed within the national context of proposed central government changes to licensing and regulatory processes including the new National Licensing Policy Framework (November 2025) which aims to support business investment and growth, high street revival, job creation and community cohesion. These changes align closely with the priorities set out in the Framework, providing confidence for, and recognition of the importance of, continued private sector partnership and investment in the borough's town centres.
- 1.6 The Framework recognises that safe and accessible nighttime experiences encourage more visitors, greater social connection and inclusion. It sets out how we will build on our successful multi-agency partnership approach to address anti-social behaviour and crime, continuing to embed community safety principles.
- 1.7 The coordinated action set out in the Evening and Nighttime Economy Framework will help to deliver the best outcomes for Waltham Forest's communities and economy, support inclusive growth and positively contribute to the council's financial position, including through commercial income in the council's properties and, more widely, business rates contributions.
- 1.8 The Framework has been prepared with cross-council input, including Regeneration, Culture, Licensing and Regulatory, Community Safety, Planning, Property and Communications services. We continue to engage key external stakeholders, including TfL, the Met Police, working with the council's Community Safety and Licensing teams, and businesses through area-based forums, such as Leytonstone Town Team and Blackhorse Collective.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Cabinet is recommended to:

- 2.1.1 Approve the new Evening and Nighttime Economy Framework for the borough.
- 2.1.2 Note the proposed launch of the Framework in February 2026, working in close collaboration with the council's communications team.

3. Proposals

Background

- 3.1 The definition of 'evening' and 'night' used in this report encompasses everything that happens between 6pm and 6am. This goes beyond

associations with pub and club activity, and includes everything from eating out, shopping, running errands, socialising, sport, exercise, culture, creativity, live music, performances, dance, play, studying and learning new skills.

- 3.2 In recent years, the borough has seen the growth of a vibrant evening offer. The council has played a key role in securing investment and facilitating the launch of exciting cultural venues like Soho Theatre Walthamstow in its commercial estate. There has also been a rise in business led nighttime activity like in Blackhorse Lane where the evening economy has grown anchored by the popular Blackhorse Beer Mile, including tenancies in the council's commercial estate at Lockwood Way. The council's pro-inclusive growth approach has also provided the confidence for external investors to commit to bringing forward cultural and evening venues in the borough, such as at The New Standard and Regal Cinema developments.
- 3.3 There is an important opportunity for services across the council to work together with external partners to support the existing and emerging nighttime offer to make sure that it maximises its potential to support local prosperity and quality of life for our residents.
- 3.4 The overarching aim of our Nighttime and Evening Economy Framework is to make our nighttime areas safer, more welcoming and inclusive for residents and visitors of all ages who are working, taking part in cultural, sports or leisure activities in the evening, all of which makes our town centres busier, more attractive and more successful destinations with more opportunities for local businesses and residents.

The Proposals

- 3.5 The Evening and Nighttime Economy Framework will identify key nighttime areas in the borough including locations where there might already be a concentration of evening uses and activities, places where people work or travel through at night or settings where there are clear opportunities for nighttime activities to be better supported. The intention is for these to initially include Walthamstow, Blackhorse Lane, Leyton, Lea Bridge and Argall Industrial Area, Leytonstone, Highams Park and North Chingford.
- 3.6 The Framework aims to strike a balance between evening and nighttime activity and the wellbeing of those who live, work and visit the borough.
- 3.7 It will establish four key action areas to guide the council and its partners to strengthen the evening economy. Each action area will include examples of the work the council is already doing to support these priorities and a delivery plan which outlines clear actions and outcomes to support our communities after 6pm.
- 3.8 The proposed key action areas include:
- 3.9 *Curation and promotion to improve the nighttime experience* working collaboratively to secure joyful, safe and inclusive evening uses in

council/private sector commercial assets, cultural programming after 6pm and promotion of activity happening across the borough.

- 3.10 *Supporting and increasing employment opportunities at night* with an emphasis on partnership working to improve pathways into training and work for residents and supporting people who work in the evening and at nighttime, so that they feel safe and welcomed when working in and travelling around the borough after 6pm.
- 3.11 *Strengthening business friendly licensing, regulation and policy* helping businesses diversify evening activity and guiding them through the licensing process, supporting and encouraging operators to invest in our nighttime areas.
- 3.12 *Improving safety and wellbeing at night* with an emphasis on ensuring a coordinated approach to improving community safety and supporting inclusive nighttime spaces.

4. Options & Alternatives Considered

- 4.1 The pandemic resulted in unprecedented measures affecting the economic, social and cultural lives of our communities at night, and alongside the increased cost of living our businesses and residents continue to face a range of interrelated challenges. The Evening and Nighttime Economy Framework has an essential part to play in tackling these issues, supporting local prosperity and the economy. Doing nothing is not an option if wider benefits of inclusive growth, improved community safety and cohesion are to be realised.
- 4.2 An Evening and Nighttime Economy Framework is key to establishing a coordinated and outcome-focused approach to delivering key borough missions through nighttime focused partnerships, activity, programmes and services. The Evening and Nighttime Economy Framework provides the basis for continued engagement and partnership building with residents, businesses, investors, employers, cultural organisations, and other public sector partners to support safe, accessible and joyful experiences after 6pm, attracting investment, creating new jobs and boosting footfall and spend on our highstreets.

5. Council Strategic Priorities (and other National or Local Policies or Strategies)

- 5.1 The Evening and Nighttime Economy Framework is designed to deliver key borough missions contained in Mission Waltham Forest, particularly the missions to 'build an economy that works for everyone', and 'creation of safe neighbourhoods where everyone can thrive' through focussed action and activity after 6pm.
- 5.2 It feeds from and aligns with the Town Centre Framework which sets out how the council will work with partners to unlock social, environmental and economic benefits in our town centres, Waltham Forest Local Plan

Part 1 including Policy 44 which sets out guidance for the conditions which evening and nighttime economy uses will be encouraged, the Cultural Action Plan and the Inclusive Growth and Economy Framework.

- 5.3 The Framework has been developed within the national context of central government's fast-track review of licensing rules launched in Autumn 2025 to support economic growth and it responds to guidance in the London Plan that recommends local authorities should produce visions for their area at night (Policy HC6).
- 5.4 The Evening and Nighttime Economy Framework is focused on four key (interlinked) action areas, which have been identified through cross-departmental collaboration and engagement.

6. Consultation

- 6.1 The Evening and Nighttime Economy Framework builds on and has been shaped through engagement carried out to develop the Cultural Action Plan and Town Centre Framework, resident and business engagement on the Government funded Local Regeneration programme (formerly Levelling Up Fund) in Walthamstow and Highams Park, as well as through business forums and delivery of the Blackhorse Lane Creative Enterprise Zone programme. This has provided us with a detailed understanding of the aspirations and challenges faced by resident and business communities in our nighttime areas.
- 6.2 The intention is to continue to utilise the council's Let's Talk resource <https://talk.walthamforest.gov.uk/> to ensure the Evening and Nighttime Economy Framework remains a live document enabling engagement with resident and business communities to continue once the Framework is launched.
- 6.3 The Evening and Nighttime Economy Framework builds on the council's Town Centre Framework (March 2025) which was informed by the council's Growth Scrutiny Committee's Town Centre Themed Review in 2022/23 and a subsequent series of Councillor Advisory Group workshops which took place during 2024.

7. Implications

- 7.1 Finance, Value for Money and Risk
 - 7.1.1 The recommendations in paragraph 2 of this report require no additional budget ask from the council.
 - 7.1.2 The Evening and Nighttime Economy Framework is designed to coordinate cross-departmental teams, programmes and priorities to make the most efficient use of existing resources to support positive outcomes for our businesses and residents after 6pm. It is also intended to secure additional resource – including potential for commercial income and increased business rates revenue - without placing an additional financial burden on the council. This includes helping

safeguard the council's commercial rental position and resilience, recognising the increasing importance of evening and nighttime occupiers in our commercial properties.

- 7.1.3 The council's Area Regeneration Team will lead this coordination, utilising existing area-based programme and project management resource. This is funded through an existing combination of a relatively small General Fund allocation, ring-fenced community infrastructure levy and external funding, recognising the service's contribution to increasing the council's commercial income and business rates generation as part of this.
- 7.1.4 The team recently secured £50,000 from the GLA's Summer Streets Fund to support evening activity in Leyton and more widely have a strong track record of securing external funding for programmes of area-based improvement and investment, most notably £39m from the Government's Local Regeneration Fund.
- 7.1.5 The Evening and Nighttime Economy Framework and its delivery plans will ensure recent investment in Waltham Forest's commercial and cultural assets is built upon, guiding further project funding strategies and business cases, working with local communities and private sector partners to continue to secure external investment in our evening economy and achieving inclusive benefits and outcomes.
- 7.1.6 The delivery plans and the data and analysis that supports them will be monitored at least annually to measure impact and ensure they remain aligned with wider programmes and priorities.

7.2 Legal

- 7.2.1 There are principally two public law regimes that can control the hours that businesses operate:
 - Businesses that sell alcohol, provide regulated entertainment and/or serve late-night refreshments require a premises licence under the Licensing Act 2003 from the Council as licensing authority. The Council must carry out its functions under this Act with a view to promoting the licensing objectives which are (a) the prevention of crime and disorder; (b) public safety; (c) the prevention of public nuisance; and (d) the protection of children from harm. Regard must also be had to its published licensing statement and the guidance issued by the Secretary of State
 - Conditions as to hours of operation may also be imposed by way of condition to a planning permission under section 72 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended). Planning conditions should only be used where they are considered necessary; relevant to planning; relevant to the development to be permitted; enforceable; precise; and reasonable in all other respects.

7.3 Equalities and Diversity

- 7.3.1 The appended Equalities Screener has shown that the Evening and Nighttime Economy Framework will help advance equalities, improve

inclusivity and community cohesion, particularly in relation to creating safe, welcoming and accessible environments and facilities for all the borough's communities after 6pm. One of the key aims of the Evening and Nighttime Economy Framework is to make our nighttime areas safer, more welcoming, and more inclusive for all members of our communities, particularly women and girls, LGBTQIA+ communities, people from ethnic minority backgrounds, younger and older people and people with disabilities and reduced mobility.

- 7.4 Sustainability (including climate change, health, crime and disorder)
 - 7.4.1 Waltham Forest's Evening and Nighttime Economy Framework is well aligned with Marmot principles on safety, inclusive culture, access, and employment, with clear opportunities to strengthen early-years focus, support small local businesses, and worker protections at night.
 - 7.4.2 The Evening and Nighttime Economy Framework sets out the council's approach to working in partnership with statutory stakeholders such as the GLA, TfL and the Metropolitan Police to invest in our nighttime areas to make the safer, more welcoming and inclusive in the evening and nighttime. This includes making transport hubs safer through lighting, CCTV as well as through natural surveillance which happens when high streets are busier. The Framework has been developed in close consultation with the community safety team and other partners to make sure that addressing local ASB and crime concerns at night are at the heart of the framework.
 - 7.4.3 Improved safety in our town centres, employment areas and at transport hubs is also key to encouraging sustainable and active travel as the preferred method to get around the borough at night for residents, visitors and workers, helping to tackle the climate emergency. The type of evening offer in any locations near green spaces, historic buildings, canals and waterways and churchyards will be carefully considered to avoid disruption to wildlife. Low energy technologies will be encouraged for any potential new energy usage as part of evening activities.
 - 7.4.4 The Evening and Nighttime Economy Framework will positively contribute to improving residents' health and wellbeing by enhancing access to culture and joyful experiences which bring communities together, encouraging exercise through access to leisure and sports spaces after 6pm; and by supporting community safety.
 - 7.4.5 The Framework aims to support significant positive impacts on the local economy through nighttime initiatives via improvements to nighttime safety, access to inclusive cultural programming and leisure activities and encouraging a diversified businesses offer to increase footfall and spend in our proposed nighttime areas supporting the resilience and growth of local businesses. The Framework also aims to help create pathways into good nighttime jobs for residents, ensuring that the evening and nighttime economy contributes to inclusive employment opportunities, strengthens community wellbeing, and delivers long-term sustainable growth across the borough.
- 7.5 Council Infrastructure

7.5.1 There are no known impacts on council infrastructure. The Evening and Nighttime Economy Framework's delivery plans will be developed and coordinated by the Area Regeneration team, working with cross-council teams, local communities and key stakeholders.

Background Information (as defined by Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985)

None.