

Woking Borough Council
Woking for all

2022-2027

June 2022

**Supplementary and
amended priorities
2022-23 from the
new administration**

Shaping the *future*
of our borough

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Taking on the gradual challenge of major change



Cllr Ann-Marie Barker

Leader of Woking Borough Council and elected member for Goldsworth Park

I am delighted to have been elected as the Leader of the Council with my new Liberal Democrat administration.

My first priority is being very clear with communities of the borough and officers of the Council on my priorities and on what my administration will be focussing. I delivered my Leader's speech to the meeting of Council on 23 May 2022 and set out the priorities we will drive forward, the issues we will address and the policy areas we will work on.

The mantra for my new administration is '**we will take on the gradual challenge of major change and take both decisive and targeted actions**'. This means that we have been voted in by the electorate of the borough to deliver change. We will focus on delivering change at pace. It will be responsible change, targeted at the areas of highest priority, and decisive so that our actions make a difference.

This change cannot be change at any cost. We have to manage within the budgets and resources available, ensure there is a continuity of services to the residents and businesses of the borough, protect as best we can the long-term investments that have been made and make sure the Council realises the benefits from these investments.

I was pleased to see the performance reset for the Council that new Chief Executive, Julie Fisher, established over 2021-2022. We will build on the principles of this **reset** and embed **affordable, responsible** and **sustainable** principles into how the Council conducts its business going forward.

My administration will therefore be using the **Woking for all** strategy as the corporate framework for our plans for 2022-2023. This strategy sets out the Council's priorities and objectives and was adopted by Council in March 2022. The framework this strategy provides is sound. My immediate focus is therefore to make sure the priority actions within it reflect the needs of the borough and our communities.

I am delighted to present this suite of supplementary and amended priorities for 2022-2023 that align with and enhance the **Woking for all** strategy. These priorities put the commitments I made in my Leader's speech into decisive and targeted actions that start the Council on a new journey of major change whilst making sure we responsibly deal with the issues we are facing in the here and now.

Taking into account how vocal and active the Liberal Democrat party were when we were in opposition, it will be no surprise that we have prioritised **financial responsibility, a Masterplan for Woking Town Centre** and **achieving carbon neutral** as our key priorities. Underpinning these priorities is my commitment to conduct council business with openness and transparency.

This supplementary document to the **Woking for all** strategy is the embodiment of my administration's additional priorities and actions. It takes the commitments in my Leader's speech into plans the Council will take forward. We will be open and transparent through monitoring and reporting on our performance and achievements.

There are 23 additional priority commitments I am therefore delighted to get my administration to take forward. They are listed in summary below and shown in full later in this supplementary document.

A high performing council

- Get the Council's finances under control – this is our first priority.
- Consider new approaches to increase income.
- Make decisions in an open and transparent way.
- Review the financial model used to fund council-owned companies.
- Get expert opinion to advise on the financial sustainability of the Council's investments in companies.

Greener communities

- Give greater visible leadership, pace and actions to the Council's Climate Change strategy.
- Complete the assessment of the Council's corporate carbon footprint so that we can improve the Council's knowledge of its environmental impact. This will help to further identify key areas of focus, in order to reach our net zero target by 2030.
- Commit the Council to fund its agreed share of the flood relief works in Byfleet and work with the Environment Agency and Surrey County Council to support the delivery of a viable scheme.
- Review the next steps in flood relief.
- Consider new, more-informed, and evidence-based approaches to car park provision that best supports the Council's priorities.
- Explore how we can provide improved safer cycle parking.
- Work with Surrey County Council on issues of highways maintenance - paths need to be well maintained, pavements kept in good condition, bushes cut back and road crossings safe.
- Through partnership working with Serco and communities we are seeking:
 - a year-round approach to sustainable gardening
 - an evaluation of a programme to adopt green flag standards for the borough, starting in Woking Park

Prospering communities

- Secure a design-led Woking Town Centre masterplan that:
 - responds to the characteristics of the town
 - supports sustainable economic and housing growth
 - is underpinned by wide-ranging public consultation.
- Protect the Council's interest and investment in Woking Town Centre and across the borough and ensure they are used for the benefit of Woking residents and businesses.
- Find solutions to make full use of town centre open spaces.
- Review the Victoria Arch widening project.

Healthier communities

- Use all methods possible to achieve more lower cost homes.
- Deliver new homes in the Sheerwater development to schedule whilst minimising the levels of disruption, as far as possible, to local residents and businesses.
- Put in place an updated programme for playground refurbishments, recognising the value and importance of accessible play provision.
- Given the scale of housing development planned for the east of the borough – we will work with partners to secure infrastructure to meet the needs of residents.
- Work with Surrey County Council and health providers to seek improvements to schools, transport and health infrastructure recognising the importance of local provision to the education, health and well-being agendas.

Engaged communities

- Be out and about meeting businesses, organisations and residents across the borough to ensure the administration understand what is important.

I recognise that my administration has ambitious plans, and it will be challenging to deliver on these additional priorities. I am however confident that officers of the Council and my administration will work tirelessly and collaboratively to deliver the best possible outcomes for the communities of Woking.



Priorities and delivery outcomes

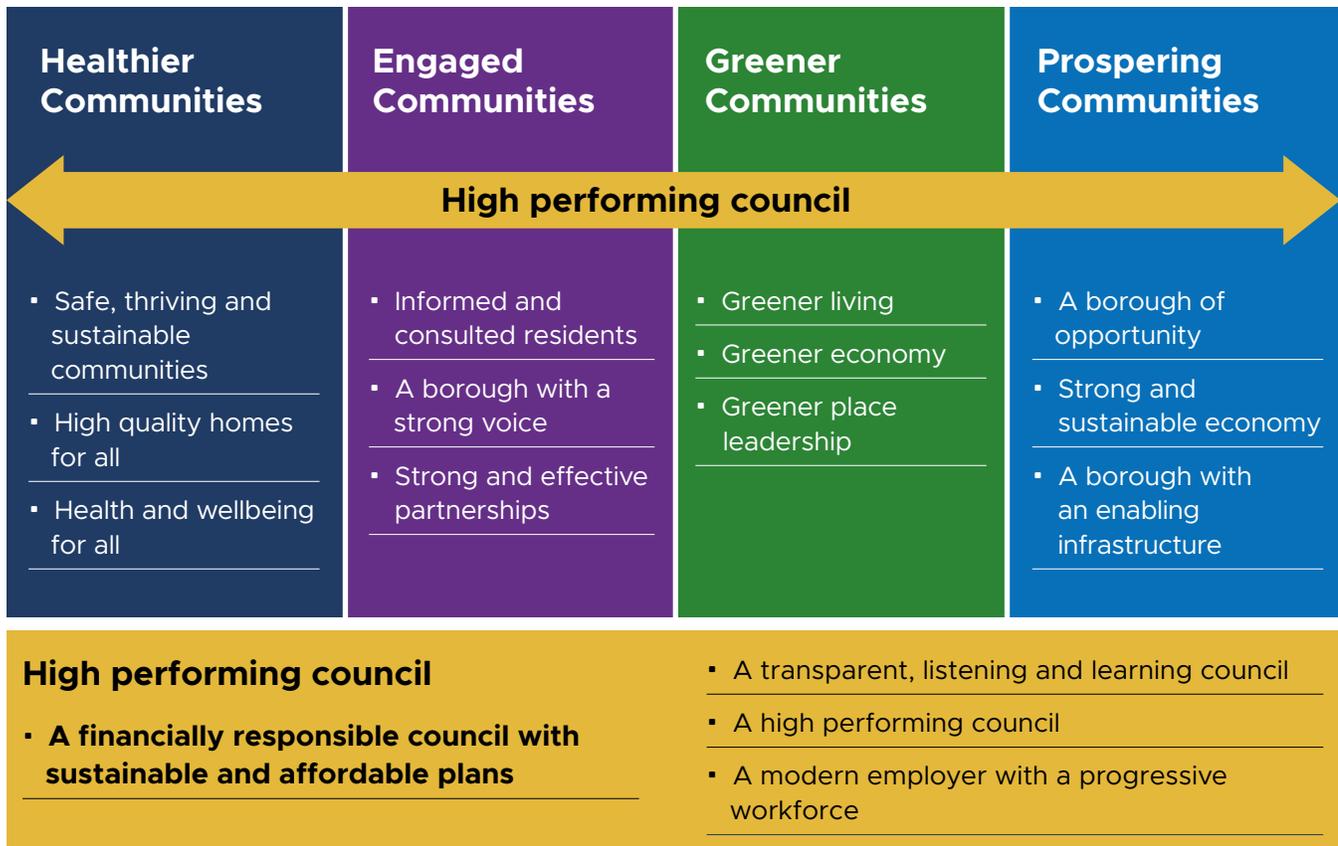
The priority outcomes

The Council has four community facing priority outcomes: **Healthier communities; Engaged communities; Greener communities; Prospering communities** and one cross cutting, **High performing council**, priority.

These priority outcomes shape our activities and resourcing decisions over the term of this five-year strategy and the priority actions we will deliver in the current year, 2022-2023.

The Liberal Democrat administration has committed to “take on the gradual challenge of major change and take both decisive and targeted actions”. This means we will:

- use the framework of the ‘Woking for all’ strategy to ensure a managed transition to the new administration and leadership of the Council
- make clear and targeted changes to priority actions in 2022-2023 to ensure our policies and priorities are reflected in these actions
- augment the High performing council theme with a new theme setting out the administration’s focus to ensure a financially responsible council
- work in an open and inclusive way to review the priority outcomes going forward from 2023-2024 to ensure there is a legacy of positive change because of our administration.





Supplementary and amended priorities for 2022/23

A high performing council

A financially responsible council with sustainable and affordable plans

Ensure that affordability, financial control and delivery of value for money are embedded in how the Council conducts its business

Additional priority commitments

- Get the Council's finances under control – this is our first priority
- Consider new approaches to increase income
- Make decisions in an open and transparent way

Actions

- Work constructively with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) to deliver plans for a sustainable budget and directly address the concerns the Government has about the Council's levels of debt and exposure to financial risk
- Deliver clearer and more transparent financial performance reporting through to meetings of the Council
- Seek greater leverage of private sector and market investment into Woking to enhance the economic vitality of the borough and maximise the benefit that Woking communities experience from this investment

A high performing council

Develop and strengthen strategic and financial planning and performance and risk management

Additional priority commitments

- Review the financial model used to fund council owned companies
- Get expert opinion to advise on the financial sustainability of the Council's investments into companies

Actions

- Review all council investments and set clear performance targets for the returns these investments need to provide for the Council and the borough

Greener communities

Greener place leadership

Deliver a carbon neutral council by 2030 and lead by example to support Woking businesses to be greener and more sustainable

Additional priority commitments

- Give greater visible leadership, pace and actions to the Council's Climate Change Strategy
 - Complete the assessment of the Council's corporate carbon footprint so that we can improve the Council's knowledge of its environmental impact. This will help to further identify key areas of focus, in order to reach our net zero target by 2030
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Actions

- Deliver a clear evidence-based assessment of the Council's corporate carbon footprint by September 2022
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Lead an integrated approach to the management of flood risk, air quality and conserving water

Additional priority commitments

- Commit the Council to fund its agreed share of the flood relief works in Byfleet and work with the Environment Agency and Surrey County Council to support the delivery of a viable scheme
 - Review the next steps in flood relief
-

Actions

- Develop and propose the next steps for flood alleviation along the River Wey and Hoe Stream
-

Work with partners to develop and incentivise greener travel choices, embed wider carbon reductions and greater biodiversity support in our operations

Additional priority commitments

- Consider new, more-informed and evidence-based approaches to car park provision that best supports the Council's priorities
- Explore how we can provide improved safer cycle parking
- Work with Surrey County Council on issues of highways maintenance - paths need to be well maintained, pavements kept in good condition, bushes cut back and road crossings safe

Actions

- As part of the Town Centre Management strategy – develop a new parking strategy that reflects emerging insights from hybrid working; promoting a night time and leisure economy; town centre living and the promotion of greener travel
- Work with partners to increase the provision of charging points for electric vehicles and cycles
- Work with partners to develop options for increasing safe, secure and well-located cycle parking provision
- Engage with schools and colleges to involve young people in greener Woking
- Work with our partner Surrey County Council, to ensure their spending on the maintenance of the highways and verges delivers the best outcomes from the funding available

Use the borough's natural assets and green spaces to support green and sustainable living

Additional priority commitments

- Through partnership working with Serco and communities we are seeking:
 - a year-round approach to sustainable gardening
 - an evaluation of a programme to adopt green flag standards for the borough, starting in Woking Park
 - to identify space for allotment and community garden space

Actions

- Establish and deliver a proposal for engagement with communities on the theme of sustainable gardening in communities
- Initiate a framework for achieving green flag standards in Woking parks

Prospering communities

A borough of opportunity

Establish the borough as a destination – a place that is open for business and investment

Additional priority commitments

- Secure a design-led Woking Town Centre masterplan that:
 - responds to the characteristics of the town
 - supports sustainable economic and housing growth
 - is underpinned by wide-ranging public consultation

Actions

- Deliver a comprehensive engagement strategy and extended public consultation for adoption in February 2023

Strong and sustainable economy

Create a vibrant town centre, bringing together a compelling offer of high-quality leisure, retail and sustainable living opportunities

Additional priority commitments

- Protect the Council's interest and investment in the town centre and across the borough and ensure they are used for the benefit of Woking residents and businesses
- Find solutions to make full use of town centre open spaces

Actions

- Explore and propose options for the animation of the Victoria Square and Henry Plaza public spaces so that they enhance town centre experience and vitality
- Explore use of council and privately owned office space to support flexible working and emerging modern workstyle demands

A borough with enabling infrastructure

Establish a strong case for investment in infrastructure that supports the vision and priorities of communities

Additional priority commitments

- Review the Victoria Arch project
-

Actions

- Get the Victoria Arch widening scheme on a sustainable footing this year and ensure residents are kept well informed
-

Healthier communities

High quality homes for all

Support the provision of high quality, sustainable, well managed and affordable homes to meet housing standards and local needs, including those for key workers

Additional priority commitments

- Use all methods possible to achieve more lower cost homes
- Deliver new homes in the Sheerwater development to schedule whilst minimising the levels of disruption as far as possible to local residents and businesses

Actions

- Identify additional council-owned sites which can be prioritised for affordable housing and come forward with plans for their development
- Bring forward an empty homes plan in autumn of 2022
- Expand the range of partners we work with to deliver affordable homes
- Review the Sheerwater development phasing plans

Safe, thriving and sustainable communities

Create safe and accessible public spaces through high quality development and regeneration

Additional priority commitments

- Put in place an updated programme for playground refurbishments, recognising the value and importance of accessible play provision

Actions

- Undertake an audit of the current play area provision and highlight options to achieve accessibility for all including provision for neuro-diverse children
- Develop a play area improvement plan and ensure delivery of the current plan to upgrade three play areas

Recognise the distinctive identity of our town, villages and neighbourhoods, ensuring they have vibrant centres that support community life, wellbeing pride and identity

Additional priority commitments

- Given the scale of housing development planned for the east of the borough – we will work with partners to secure infrastructure to meet the needs of residents
-

Actions

- Work with communities to develop plans for the use of the neighbourhood element of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds
-

Health and wellbeing for all

Work with partners to embed health and wellbeing into all that we do

Additional priority commitments

- Work with Surrey County Council and health providers to seek improvements to schools, transport and health infrastructure recognising the importance of local provision to the education, health and wellbeing agendas
-

Actions

- Commence the building works on the health and community campus in Sheerwater
-

Engaged communities

Informed and consulted residents

Reach and listen to all our communities and act on their feedback

Additional priority commitments

- Be out and about meeting businesses, organisations and residents across the borough to ensure the administration understand what is important
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Actions

- Hold a Cost of Living summit in September and develop actions in response to the outputs from the summit
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